

## Solar Festivals and Climate Bills: Comparing NGO Climate Change Campaigns in the UK and Australia

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**Abstract** This paper compares climate change campaigns conducted by environmental nongovernment organizations (NGOs) in the United Kingdom (UK) and Australia. The NGOs represent a diversity of political access, financial resources, and international connections. Three campaign activities common to both countries undertaken between 2004 and 2006 are analyzed for their effectiveness via interviews and document review. This examination is embedded within an analysis of the political, economic, policy, and social contexts of each country. It is shown that in the UK climate change has been used as a pivotal leadership issue, that the fossil fuel industry's influence is not predominant, and that NGOs enjoy political legitimacy. Whereas, in Australia climate change has only recently emerged as a political priority, the fossil fuel industry has had significant political and financial influence, and NGO advocacy has been marginalized. It is argued that NGOs are embedded in the political and policy contexts of their country, and the greatest campaign traction and NGO influence can only be achieved when these contexts provide favorable conditions.

**Résumé** Cette étude compare les campagnes sur le changement climatique menées par les organisations non gouvernementales (ONG) et le Royaume Uni et l'Australie. Les ONG représentent une diversité d'accès politiques, de ressources financières et de connexions internationales. Trois campagnes d'activités communes aux deux pays qui ont été menées entre 2004 et 2006 sont analysées pour leur efficacité par le biais d'interview et d'analyses de documents. Cet examen est intégré dans une analyse des contextes politiques, économiques et sociaux de chaque pays. Il apparaît que le changement climatique du Royaume Uni a été utilisé en tant que problème de direction central, indiquant que l'industrie du combustible fossile n'est pas prédominant, et que les ONG en endosse la légitimité politique.

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Tandis qu'en Australie le changement climatique n'a que tout récemment fait l'objet d'une priorité politique, l'industrie du combustible fossile a eu une influence considérable politiquement et financièrement, et l'appui des OGN a été marginalisé. Nous soutenons que les OGN sont intégrées dans les contextes politiques de leurs pays, et que les plus grandes campagnes et l'influence des OGN ne peuvent uniquement être obtenus lorsque ces contextes fournissent des conditions favorables.

**Zusammenfassung** In diesem Beitrag werden die Klimawandel-Kampagnen nicht-staatlicher Umweltorganisationen in Großbritannien und Australien miteinander verglichen. Die nicht-staatlichen Organisationen repräsentieren eine Reihe von politischen Einflussbereichen, finanziellen Ressourcen und internationalen Verbindungen. Es werden drei zwischen 2004 und 2006 durchgeführte Kampagnen der beiden Länder hinsichtlich ihres Erfolges anhand von Befragungen und Dokumenten analysiert. Diese Untersuchung ist Teil einer Analyse der gesamtpolitischen, wirtschaftlichen und gesellschaftlichen Zusammenhänge der beiden Länder. Es wird dargelegt, dass der Klimawandel in Großbritannien ein zentrales Thema für die Landesführung darstellt, dass die fossile Brennstoffindustrie keinen maßgeblichen Einfluss ausübt und dass sich die nicht-staatlichen Organisationen politischer Legitimität erfreuen. In Australien hingegen hat sich der Klimawandel erst kürzlich zu einer politischen Priorität entwickelt; die fossile Brennstoffindustrie übt bedeutenden politischen und finanziellen Einfluss aus, und die nicht-staatlichen Organisationen wurden bislang marginalisiert. Dem Beitrag zufolge sind die nicht-staatlichen Organisationen in den gesamtpolitischen Zusammenhängen ihrer Länder eingeschlossen und nur wenn diese Zusammenhänge von günstigen Bedingungen geprägt sind, können Kampagnen ihre höchste Zugkraft und die nicht-staatlichen Organisationen ihren größten Einfluss ausüben.

**Resumen** Este trabajo compara las campañas sobre el cambio climático realizadas por las organizaciones medioambientales no gubernamentales (ONG) del Reino Unido y Australia. Las ONG son muy distintas en cuanto al acceso político, a los recursos económicos y a las conexiones internacionales. Se analiza la efectividad de las actividades de tres campañas comunes a ambos países emprendidas entre 2004 y 2006 mediante entrevistas y revisiones de documentos. Este estudio se encuadra en el marco de un análisis del contexto político, económico, normativo y social de cada país. Se observa que en el Reino Unido el cambio climático se ha utilizado como una cuestión de liderazgo principal, que la influencia de la industria de los combustibles fósiles no es la predominante y que las ONG disfrutaban de legitimidad política. Sin embargo, en Australia, hace muy poco que el cambio climático ha emergido como una prioridad política, la industria de los combustibles fósiles ha tenido una influencia política y financiera y el apoyo a las ONG se ha visto marginado. Se afirma asimismo que las ONG dependen de los contextos políticos y normativos de su país y que sólo se logrará dar un gran empuje a las campañas y a la influencia de las ONG cuando estos contextos ofrezcan condiciones favorables.

**Keywords** Australia · Climate change · Environmental nongovernment organizations · NGOs · Global warming · United Kingdom

### NGO focus on climate change

Climate change is a topic of global concern that presents political, economic, environmental and other challenges due to the increase of carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>) and other heat-trapping greenhouse gases (GHG) in the Earth's atmosphere. A significant proportion of these gases are from human-derived sources. Recently, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change stated that “warming of the climate system is unequivocal, as is now evident from observations of increases in global average air and ocean temperatures, widespread melting of snow and ice, and rising global mean sea level” (IPCC 2007, p. 4). The global environmental movement, within which nongovernment organizations (NGOs) play a pivotal role, has advocated for adequate policy responses on climate change for the last 20 years (Hutton and Connors 1999). Today, some environmental NGOs are critical of the effectiveness of their own campaigns and are seeking a greater impact (Hall and Star 2007). It is valuable to ask which climate change campaigns by environmental NGOs have had “traction” and elicited responses from governments? And, if so, what were the social and political conditions that supported this traction? Two countries with NGO climate campaigns with apparently contrasting effectiveness are the United Kingdom (UK) and Australia, where UK climate policy responses have been well aligned with NGO demands; for while Australian NGOs still struggle to gain political access and media attention.

Climate campaigns in the UK and Australia have been undertaken within political and economic systems that have both parallels and differences. Both countries share similar parliamentary and political systems based on liberal-democratic principles and the Westminster tradition (Howes 2005, p. xx). They allow freedom of speech and have openly active NGOs, including those campaigning on climate change. Both countries have domestic sources of fossil fuels for electricity supply that are an important part of the economy—predominantly oil and natural gas in the UK, and coal in Australia (SBS 2006). Total national GHG emissions per year (including changes to land use) are similar in both countries: 663 million tonnes CO<sub>2</sub> equivalent (mt CO<sub>2</sub><sup>e</sup>) in the UK and 533 mt CO<sub>2</sub><sup>e</sup> in Australia in 2004 (UNFCCC 2006, p. 13). However, due to the significant difference in population size, the per capita emissions differ greatly, from 10 t CO<sub>2</sub><sup>e</sup> per capita in the UK to 27 t CO<sub>2</sub><sup>e</sup> per capita in Australia (CSIRO 2005; NSW GHO 2005).

Both countries have installed renewable energy technologies, including wind power. Both countries are “Annex 1” (“Western” countries) and signed the Kyoto Protocol in 1998 in recognition of the need to reduce GHG emissions. The UK Government agreed to stabilize emissions at 12.5% *below* 1990 levels, substantially more than the 5% agreed generally by the Kyoto parties, and ratified the Protocol into law in 2002 (UK Parliament 2005). In contrast, the Australian Government negotiated an increase of 8% *above* 1990 GHG emissions (Yu and Taplin 2000), and

despite securing this concession, the Howard Government has continually declined to ratify as it “is not in the national interest” (DPMC 2004, p. 24). These decisions reflect political and economic forces that have resulted in divergent responses to climate change in the UK and Australia. This paper explores the influence of these forces on climate politics and the social standing of NGOs in the UK and Australia, then compares three climate change campaign approaches undertaken between 2004 and 2006 by four environmental nongovernment organizations (NGOs) in the United Kingdom (UK) and seven environmental NGOs in Australia.

Environmental NGOs in both countries experience varying levels of political access, financial resources, organizational size, and international connections. A small number of NGOs were selected for in-depth examination from this diversity, noting that their comments provided through interviews represented perceptions only. Where possible, organizations that had a branch in both countries were selected. This analysis builds on earlier work that assessed the campaign strategies of these NGOs (Hall and Taplin 2007) and the specific efforts of NGOs to engage with, and influence, the climate policy process (Hall and Taplin 2006).

The UK NGOs were Friends of the Earth England, Wales and Northern Ireland (FE-EWNI), Greenpeace UK, and WWF-UK (formerly the Worldwide Fund for Nature UK). These are all organizations linked to international networks and offices. Also included was Stop Climate Chaos (SCC), the umbrella network of UK NGOs working on climate change with a mission to “build a massive coalition, that will create an irresistible public mandate for political action to stop human-induced climate change” (SCC 2006). SCC includes FE-EWNI, Greenpeace-UK, and WWF-UK as members. The 2005 formation of SCC reflected how “collaborative campaigns are now the norm,” with climate change no longer considered a “marginal issue,” but rather “as the unifying frame by which nature protection organisations [NGOs] might best hope to retain influence” (Rootes 2007, pp. 33–36). Each NGO has taken a different campaigning approach. FE-EWNI regards itself as a “campaigning organisation whose job is to raise the standards that others are charged to implement,” Greenpeace UK’s role as a “protest organization” works to “exploit media attention to put pressure on governments and corporations,” and WWF-UK maintains ongoing involvement with the Government, receiving such good political access that the former UK Environment Minister, Michael Meacher, described the organization as “his alternative civil service” (in Rootes 2007, pp. 19–28).

The selected Australian NGOs were Rising Tide and the Mineral Policy Institute (MPI), two small issue-focused NGOs, and the Australian Conservation Foundation (ACF), a national environmental organization with decades of political standing. Also included were Friends of the Earth Australia (FoE-Australia), Greenpeace Australia Pacific (Greenpeace A-P), and WWF-Australia—all Australian branches of the same organizations featured from the UK. The final NGO included was the Climate Action Network Australia (CANA), the Australian branch of an international collaboration of NGOs on climate change and to which all the selected Australian case study NGOs are members. While the Australian NGOs work together under the common CANA mission to “tackle the planet’s most challenging environmental problem—climate change” (CANA 2005), individually they

undertake different approaches. For example, ACF prefers to work “through conventional political forms rather than engaging in alternative lifestyle experiments or dramatic forms of direct action,” while Greenpeace A-P is well-known for its non-violent direct action tactics, although it also approaches policy change through “carefully researched briefs presented to courts, the press and governments” (Burgmann 1993, pp. 206–210). All NGOs that participated in this research agreed to the disclosure of their campaigner’s identities and the inclusion of their comments. They will be referred to by the acronyms hereafter.

The findings presented here are based on a literature and information review and an analysis of semi-structured interviews undertaken with climate campaigners from these NGOs between September 2005 and June 2006. The interview questions covered the campaigners’ perceptions of the influence of environmental NGOs on national climate policy in relation to campaign activities, the political context in which the campaigns operated, and the policy context that influenced campaign effectiveness.

The effectiveness of NGO campaigns is considered to be reflective of their “embeddedness” within their society’s legal system, economy, culture, history, technology, and geography. Reflecting on this situation, Poole et al. (2001) developed a “multivariate explanatory approach” to analyze the many variables that contribute to campaign success. Here, this approach has been adapted to focus on the standing and legitimacy of the NGOs, the influence of the Government, and the “institutional forces” that influence the development of government policy. Poole et al. (2001) recognized this approach often results in complex patterns, but suggested it provides a more accurate reflection of a situation.

## Context of climate politics in the UK and Australia

In his analysis of the factors that influence environmental policies, Bührs (2000, pp. 1–5) identified high level political support, opposition by vested interests, and public consultation and participation, among others. This is relevant to climate policies, a subset of environmental and energy policies. A literature review and analysis of the interviews with campaigners suggest these factors are more specifically leadership and governance, the influence of energy economics and the energy industry, and the status of civil society and NGOs.

### Leadership and governance

Former UK Prime Minister Tony Blair highlighted the issue of climate change in international fora on many occasions. In an address to the World Economic Forum 2005, he stated that “I am committed to using the UK’s Group of 8 and EU presidencies to try and make a breakthrough... on climate change” (Blair 2005). UK campaigners viewed this stance warily and stated that Blair had done “a huge amount on its international climate policy but not on the national level” (G. Canzi, FE-EWNI) and “even if the UK doesn’t deliver on climate change policies domestically, its

progressive approach has still been important internationally” (S. Fèvre, WWF-UK). Despite this prominence, Blair was unable to influence the US Administration to ratify the Kyoto Protocol, including during the G8 summit he hosted in 2005 at Gleneagles, Scotland (van de Hei 2005).

The UK’s participation in the European Union (EU) has required and encouraged action on climate change. The EU “accepts the strong scientific evidence by the IPCC,” and thus signed, ratified and achieved its emission reduction commitments under the Kyoto Protocol targets by 2000 (de Meyer 2005, p. 7; CTW 2005). Grant and Papadakis (2004, p. 282) considered the EU to be a “global leader in environmental diplomacy,” and identified a “leveling/integrating influence of the Union over the member countries.” This integrating influence has ensured that the UK, as a member country of the EU, has maintained the EU’s standards on issues such as climate change.

The UK Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) has emphasised the need for action on climate change, as demonstrated by their climate program, *Today’s Challenge, Tomorrow’s Climate* (DEFRA 2006a, b). However, environmental agencies are not always “conferred authority and political clout” (Newell 2000, p. 134), and DEFRA was no exception until a Cabinet re-shuffle in 2006. This involved appointing a high-profile Minister, David Miliband, to lead DEFRA. One campaigner observed:

DEFRA’s great, but it had very little influence on government... until Miliband came in ... I think that one of the reasons why Miliband got the post and why he will be listened to more is because David Cameron is leader of the Tory Party and has really, really grabbed the climate change agenda. So I think Blair felt the need to have someone in there who was going to [match him].  
(M. Davis, WWF-UK)

This inter-party competition on climate policy, in addition to the creation of a Ministerial portfolio on Climate Change, has leveraged NGO input on climate issues. The Prime Minister’s public support for climate issues has provided common ground for NGO—Government communication, and thus increased the possible influence of NGO campaigns.

In Australia, a number of differences to the UK Government’s approach to climate policy are evident. Grant and Papadakis (2004) identified these as the Government’s neo-conservative preference for market mechanisms and voluntary measures instead of Government control, a desire to avoid punitive regulatory measures, and Australia’s request for special consideration under the Kyoto Protocol. This special consideration was motivated by Australia’s land clearing and its reliance on black coal-fired electricity (Kent and Mercer 2006; Yu and Taplin 2000) yet despite it, the Howard Government has continually declined to ratify the Protocol. This position is aligned with that of the United States, and McGee and Taplin (2006, p. 174) critiqued this decision by both countries, stating that Australia and the US, “with arguably the greatest moral obligation to reduce greenhouse emissions have... been willing to jeopardise international collective resolve on this important issue.” Instead, to “complement, but not replace, the Kyoto Protocol,” Australia joined the technology-focused Asia-Pacific Partnership on Clean

Development and Climate in July 2005 with the US, China, India, Japan, and South Korea (Howard 2005).

Australian NGO campaigners considered the Australian Government's position on climate change was influenced by its ideological approach to environmental management. With regard to the Kyoto Protocol, one campaigner stated that the Government “[doesn't] believe the environment and the economy can both flourish” (M. J., ACF). Another said “the federal government has an ideological position where they don't want to regulate... they don't want to provide any barriers that will hinder economic development” (S. Phillips, *Rising Tide*).

However, recent political developments reflect the conservative Australian Government's perceptions of increased voter concern for climate change. This response is likely due to the Labor Party “getting traction in the electorate on global warming” (Hamilton 2007, p. 218) both rhetorically at a Federal level under the new leadership of Kevin Rudd in the lead-up to the 2007 Federal election, and practically at a state level, where every state is Labor-governed and involved in cross-border climate agreements such as state-coordinated emissions trading in lieu of national action (Robins 2007). Rudd appointed the recently-elected Peter Garrett, a high-profile environmental advocate (a former President of ACF) and former rock musician, as Shadow Minister for Environment and Climate Change in December 2006 (Lewis 2006). John Howard responded by commissioning a task group to report on the viability of a national emissions trading scheme (Shergold et al. 2007), by awarding the “Australian of the Year” award to prominent advocate of action on climate change, Tim Flannery (to “signal that he really did care about global warming,” according to Hamilton [2007, p. 220]), and by appointing the prominent politician, Malcolm Turnbull, as Environment Minister in early 2007. The increased profile of climate change has marked the beginning of inter-party competition, similar to the UK experience. This could provide NGOs with opportunities to pursue climate policy pledges from both major parties in the approach to Australia's 2007 Federal election.

### Influences of energy economics and the energy industry

Climate change politics and policies in the UK and Australia are strongly influenced by specific industrial interests and the economic structure of each country. In the UK, one campaigner observed:

The Confederation of British Industry is the traditional voice of big business... I don't think anyone would disagree they have far more influence in Downing Street than the Labour unions [and environmental NGOs]. (C. Kronick, Greenpeace-UK)

However, two aspects with regard to energy economics and the energy industry have influenced UK politics towards action on climate change. The first is that, despite its domestic fossil fuel reserves, the UK is a net importer of coal, gas, and oil (DTI 2006). This dependence on energy imports has seen government policy directed towards greater reliance on domestic energy, such as renewable energy



(DTI et al. 2003). The second aspect, noted by a campaigner, is “due to the increased awareness of different sectors, such as the financial, transport, power and aviation, these industries are affected by real climate change risks,” and these industries may have pressured for market certainty in climate policies (S. Fèvre, WWF-UK).

Australian fossil fuels are a significant export commodity for the nation. In 2004–2005, export volumes of coal, oil, and gas increased, and the export value of these products in 2006 totaled AUD\$19.3 billion (ABARE 2007). An Australian campaigner observed “coal is our largest export and the Government is trying to get it out the door as fast as possible because they make revenue from it” (A. Reynolds, WWF-Australia). Phillips (2006, p. 60) considered that the current Government regards “the market as more integral to governance and organisation than the rich pluralism that [NGOs] offer in policy... participation.” Pressure groups aligned with market economics and resource extraction appear to have greater political influence. Pearse (2005, p. 340) observed that:

There is an iron triangle of sorts operating between dominant sections of the bureaucracy, senior levels of successive federal governments, and the powerful advocates representing the resources and energy sector of the Australian economy. Voices from outside this triangle [such as environmental NGOs] have over more than a decade exerted little influence on the direction of government policy....

Maddison and Hamilton (2007, p. 85) reinforced this observation, stating “the problem is not influence per se, it is about who has influence and the sorts of values that inform their advocacy work.”

NGO campaigners also perceived that the fossil fuel and allied industries have influenced international climate change negotiations and domestic policy development through active policy engagement with politicians and public servants. This included having an industry presence at UNFCCC and Kyoto meetings and related conferences, as well as through social interactions “at dinners and on the golf course” (J.-A. Richards, CANA; M. J., ACF). One campaigner commented:

There’s a lot of interaction, regular interaction, and that regularity of interaction just does not exist with a number of the other players including the more progressive [renewable energy] industries and the NGOs. (M. J., ACF)

To counteract this dominance by industry lobby groups, NGOs have facilitated reports and statements by groups of business leaders in support of action on climate change through such fora as the ACF-facilitated Australian Business Roundtable on Climate Change. This group includes members from two resource companies that are broadening their investments from fossil fuels to include renewable energy (ABRCC 2006). While the Roundtable’s activities have attracted media attention, this is a minor activity in comparison to the established industry pressure groups that are better financed and have a more continuous lobbying presence.



## Civil society and NGO legitimacy

During the last decade, UK NGOs have enjoyed respect and standing from the public, politicians, and government departments in the UK which has allowed them political and bureaucratic access. For example, in 1998 the Blair Government's "Compact" formally recognized and supported the independence of the NGO sector, "including its right within the law to campaign, to comment on Government policy, and to challenge that policy" (Home Office 1998, para 9.1). The Compact led to NGOs being invited "onto central government panels, commissions, and action teams dealing with a wide range of issues and initiatives," with environmental NGOs particularly valued for their perceived "independent scientific evidence" (Taylor and Warburton 2003, pp. 328, 335). Blair demonstrated his commitment to the Compact in a letter to SCC, and stated: "although I know it won't always make comfortable reading for me, I welcome the growing public campaign, led by Stop Climate Chaos, for action on global warming... Together... we can make a difference" (Blair 2006).

The UK Government has actively sought environmental NGO input on certain issues. A UK campaigner said:

MPs certainly want to talk to us... want to be seen as being friendly to us... close to us because according to the polls and various surveys, groups like Friends of the Earth have a high level of trust from the public. (G. Canzi, FE-EWNI)

Political access was considered particularly open recently due to:

opposition parties seizing the potential and the opportunities of working on climate change and other environmental issues. Which means that the Government ... needs to be seen to be doing even more. (M. Davis, WWF-UK)

The legitimacy of NGOs in the UK is confirmed by the millions of UK citizens who are financial members of environmental NGOs. Rootes (2007, pp. 9, 11) detailed that in 1998, 20% of UK adults were members of an environmental NGO, and in 2005, three of these NGOs—WWF-UK, Greenpeace UK, and FE EWNI—had a total of 651,000 members. In comparison, although 20% of Australian adults donated "time or money" to environment protection, only 4% belonged to an environmental NGO in 2001 (ABS 2001). This difference in support reflects Howes' (2005, p. xx) observation that, in comparison to Australia, the UK has "traditionally had a more collective or corporatist approach to issues that encourages a larger public sector [involvement]."

Maddison and Hamilton (2007, p. 85) stated that in Australia there is "a clear agenda to restrict NGOs concerned with social justice, human rights, or environmental protection." Part of this agenda has been making NGOs' tax-deductible status "dependent on their working on conservation of the natural environment and not for any other purpose, such as political activity" (ibid, p. 99). This development has resulted in NGOs stating they have been "'frozen out' and others fear they will have their funding withdrawn or tax status threatened"

(ibid, p. 100). Australian NGO campaigners perceived that the Howard Government does not acknowledge the legitimacy of environmental NGOs, and instead “cultivated and co-opted” NGOs who support the Government’s approach, while employing a “sophisticated counter publicity strategy” with their messages around climate change (Hall and Star 2007). Phillips (2006, p. 61) detailed these developments, observing that since the current Government came to power in 1996, NGOs who continued to pursue:

the formal parliamentary process of public and Senate inquiries were... seeing no tangible outcome... multiple [NGO] voices that have traditionally informed governance are being ignored or deliberately excluded from the process.

This contrasts with the early 1990s, when Australian NGOs were integrally involved in the Keating Labor Government’s policy discussions on Environmentally Sustainable Development (ESD), climate change and other initiatives, although the ESD Roundtable outcomes ultimately disappointed many NGO and other participants (Bührs 2000). Access to politicians at a federal level began to wane in the mid-1990s (Hutton and Connors 1999). One campaigner said, “We had a good period in the early nineties... but we’ve had absolutely nothing delivered on” (E. Jackson, ACF). Another commented that now “the Federal Government doesn’t even listen [to] the concerns of environmental NGOs” (M. J., ACF).

### **NGO efforts toward climate change awareness and action**

Given the wide range of conditions under which NGOs operate in the UK and Australia, it is now useful to examine NGO campaign activities in detail to test Poole et al.’s (2001) “multivariate explanatory approach.” Hall and Taplin (2007) detailed the wide range of campaign themes and activities that Australian NGOs have undertaken to increase political and community attention and action on climate change. In the interests of allowing a comparison between countries, three campaigns undertaken to differing degrees in the UK and Australia were selected for detailed comparison of effectiveness. The activities were election campaigns, involvement in policy-making, and grassroots awareness-raising and community action.

As Hall and Taplin (2007) detailed, selecting campaign activities is a strategic decision for NGO campaigners, with consideration given to the impact, audience, and leverage that each activity will provide. The NGOs chose to undertake the activities listed below due to current political events, such as elections, and for strategic campaign opportunities, such as public invitations to comment on draft policy documents. General awareness-raising was undertaken to increase understanding and profile of the issue of climate change in the community, and the NGOs then encouraged community members to transfer this heightened awareness into politically-visible actions.

While these similarities exist and allow for comparison, there are significant organizational differences between these NGOs and their campaigns. First, the

selected NGOs that participate in international networks have different structures in their home countries. For example, FE-EWNI and FoE-Australia are members of FoE International which means that each NGO is “organisationally autonomous and politically independent, but bound together as part of FoE International by a shared name and a common cause” (Burgmann 1993, p. 208). FE-EWNI has 200 local groups, a national office with 100 staff, an annual budget of approximately US\$18 mill, and is central to the UK environment movement (Rootes 2007). FoE-Australia is a federation of 10 autonomous local groups with an annual budget of approximately US\$120,000; it varies in significance and campaign impact from state to state and is a less dominant participant than Greenpeace A-P or ACF in the Australian environment movement that FE-EWNI is to the UK environment movement.

Second, the apparent unity of the UK NGOs, with a division of specialties and a history of collective campaigning on climate change contrast with the more fractionated Australian experience. Burgmann (1993, p. 230) described the environment movement in Australia as:

Highly fragmented, due to very different ideas about the causes of ecological damage... Flowing from these contrasting beliefs about causes, and therefore culpability, are wildly divergent streams of thought about how best to prevent environmental degradation.

Maddison and Hamilton (2007) consider the Howard Government has exacerbated these existing tensions in recent years in an apparent attempt to divide the movement. They described how WWF-Australia publicly endorsed the Federal environment legislation, the Environmental Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999, in contrast with other NGOs’ dissatisfaction. Since then:

WWF [Australia] has enjoyed extensive financial support from the Howard Government, with a five-fold funding boost since 1996. It seems that WWF [Australia] is being used by the Howard Government to endorse unpopular environment policies as the government often deploys WWF’s name and statements in an effort to give credibility to controversial government policies (Maddison and Hamilton 2007, pp. 87–88).

A final difference between UK and Australian NGOs is structure of the levels of Government and the impact of this on the NGOs. The UK is a highly centralized polity with relatively centralized environmental NGOs. In contrast, Australia is a federation of six states and two territories with NGOs focusing their campaigns on both state/territory- and federal-level climate policies. Bührs (2000, p. 115) observed that in Australia “environmental policy development is complicated by the division of responsibilities between the federal government on the one hand, and states on the other... there is uncertainty about the boundaries of their respective mandates.” This dual focus has further reduced the already scarce resources and thus attention of Australian NGOs, potentially reducing the effectiveness of all of their campaigns.

## Election campaigns

In the lead-up to the 2005 UK elections, WWF-UK selected several newsworthy marginal seats that had experienced adverse climate change-related impacts, including Lewes in southeast England. Lewes was affected by a hurricane in October 1987, droughts in 1995, and severe flooding in October 2000 (LDC 2006). A WWF-UK campaigner felt that:

Climate change might resonate with [Lewes residents] more than in some other [electorates]... We did a number of different things to try and bring climate change up the agenda within those elections... The rationale for this was that at the time no-one was talking about the environment or climate change in particular, in the election. (M. Davis, WWF-UK)

One of the WWF-UK activities involved a hustings event on climate change policies “where you get all the candidates standing for that election in the same room being asked questions by the constituents” (M. Davis, WWF-UK). WWF-UK also placed radio and newspaper advertisements, and projected a campaign film about climate change impacts onto the side of the House of Commons in London. Following the 2005 UK election which resulted in the Blair Government retaining power, UK NGOs continued to encourage constituents to discuss climate change with their political representatives. FE-EWNI organized regular public events featuring MPs to “put the MP under pressure” to demonstrate that the constituents wanted action on climate change (G. Canzi, FE-EWNI).

The most recent Australian federal election was in 2004. At that time, Climate Action Network Australia (CANA) and its member organizations publicly evaluated each political party’s climate policies and called for a strong GHG emissions reduction target using renewable energy use and energy efficiency measures (Greenpeace 2004). The NGOs’ targets were a core demand of a report launched before the election by the WWF-Australia convened Australian Climate Group, comprising representatives from academia, business, and research organizations (ACG 2004). This group focused its lobbying on all parties. While the target was not adopted by the re-elected Liberal—National Coalition Government, a campaigner stated “I think the whole discussion helped to make it a part of the platform of the [other parties]” (A. Reynolds, WWF-Australia).

State-level elections were held in the southern states of South Australia and Victoria in 2006, and environmental NGOs actively attempted to place climate change on the election policy agendas of both the major parties, the Liberal—National Coalition and the Labor Party. A force behind this was local citizen “climate action” groups that were established in communities within each of the states to meet candidates, host hustings events, and attract local media attention. These groups were supported by Greenpeace A-P, among other state-level NGOs (Wakeham and Phelan 2006).

## Involvement in policy-making

In 2005 and 2006, NGO influences on policy-making and legislation in the UK centered on pressuring the Government to introduce a Climate Change Bill. This built on progressive climate-focused policies and rhetoric that already existed in the UK. Government initiatives to reduce UK GHG emissions included the Renewables Obligation, introduced in 2002 to require 10% of all electricity to come from renewable energy sources by 2010 (DTI 2007). The UK established an emissions trading scheme in 2002, and joined the EU's scheme in 2005 (DEFRA 2006c). The 2003 Energy White Paper set out a strategic vision for the UK's energy policy and security. In this, then Prime Minister Blair stated that, with regard to climate change, "the costs of action will be acceptable [but] the costs of inaction are potentially much greater" (DTI et al. 2003, p. 3). This preparedness to implement climate policy appears to be motivated by the energy insecurity wrought by increased reliance on energy imports, as well as the need to update and upgrade most UK energy infrastructure over the next 20 years. In July 2006, the UK Government released its Energy Review which presented proposals to achieve GHG reductions through energy and fuel efficiency, distributed energy, renewable energy and gas for new electricity supply, Carbon Capture and Storage (CCS or geosequestration) of coal-derived emissions, and nuclear power (DTI 2006).

FE-EWNI's "The Big Ask" campaign was initiated in 2005 to implement the Climate Change Bill. A draft Bill was devised by 10 NGOs and written by FE-EWNI and WWF-UK. It stated that the UK's GHG emissions should reduce to 20% below 1990 levels by 2010 and decrease a further 3% annually until 2050. FE-EWNI and WWF-UK called on the Prime Minister to develop a strategy to reduce emissions and to report annually to Parliament on the progress of these cuts. If emissions exceeded the target by more than 10%, the NGOs proposed that the Prime Minister and relevant Department Secretary have their salary reduced by 10% (WWF-UK 2005). FE-EWNI was confident throughout the campaign that it would result in legislation because "FoE has had a track record in getting new Bills through Parliament" (G. Canzi, FE-EWNI). In its initial form as an Early Day Motion,<sup>1</sup> it was promoted by over 200 local groups around the UK. FE-EWNI estimated that around 130,000 people contacted their MP to support the draft Bill, resulting in signed support from 200 MPs prior to the 2005 national election (G. Canzi, FE-EWNI; FE-EWNI 2006; WWF-UK 2006).

In response to the Early Day Motion, climate change was addressed in the Queen's Speech opening Parliament on November 15, 2006. The Queen's Speech was a significant event in which to announce these measures as it traditionally "contains an outline of the Government's policies and proposed legislative programme for the new parliamentary session" (UK Parliament 2006b). This led to the announcement in March 2007 of the UK Government's draft Climate Change Bill. This Bill mandated GHG emission reductions of up to 32% by 2020 and 60%

<sup>1</sup> An Early Day Motion is a notice for an issue-specific debate by an MP in the House of Commons. Although very few issues reach debate, it is used by MPs to state their opinion and gather support from other MPs (UK Parliament 2006a).

by 2050 on 1990 levels and, if passed, the UK will become the first country to propose legislation setting binding limits on GHG emissions (Reuters 2007). In response, FE-EWNI's Director stated his "delight" in the UK Government's recognition of the "need for a new law to tackle climate change," but reiterated the need for the Bill to include stronger cuts in GHG emissions (FE-EWNI 2007).

Australian NGOs are operating in a less progressive policy context. Nationally, Australian Government initiatives on climate change since 1998 have included a revision of the National Greenhouse Strategy in 1998 (AGO 1998). One of the outcomes of this strategy was the introduction of the Mandatory Renewable Energy Target which will only increase the purchase of renewable electricity by an estimated 2% of total electricity by 2010, and the scheme is due to terminate in 2020 (MacGill et al. 2006). The Government's 2004 Energy White Paper, *Securing Australia's Energy Future*, proposed funding for energy efficiency and commercial development of renewable energy technologies, but also proposed further petroleum exploration in "frontier areas" and a reduction in fuel excise (DPMC 2004). The Howard Government has been supportive of technologically-focused responses to climate change, such as CCS as a means to store CO<sub>2</sub> underground (DPMC 2004; DITR 2006). It also commissioned an inquiry into nuclear power in 2006 that found "nuclear power is an option that Australia should seriously consider among the range of practical options to meet its growing energy demand and to reduce its GHG signature" (Switkowski et al. 2006, p. 10).

Australian campaigners have been disappointed with federal policies, stating that, while the Government "has set up an Australian Greenhouse Office and they've got... things like the Mandatory Renewable Energy Target, they're totally inadequate" (G. Evans, MPI). They described the differences they saw between Australia and the UK, stating "we're dealing with a completely different [scenario]—you have governments in the EU that are actually engaged on this issue" (NGO campaigner, Australia). Responding to the Government's proposals for CCS, CANA stated that "given the range of risks and uncertainties associated with [CCS], it remains to be proven that [CCS] can permanently reduce GHG emissions" (CANA 2004). In a media response to the nuclear inquiry, Greenpeace A-P argued that current renewable energy technology and energy efficiency can reduce emissions more effectively and thoroughly than nuclear energy. It reiterated the inquiry's own findings that "if Australia built 25 nuclear reactors by 2050, it would only cut Australia's emissions by eight to 18 percent" (Greenpeace 2006).

A similar parliamentary tool to an Early Day Motion in Australia is a Private Member's Bill,<sup>2</sup> yet none of the Australian NGOs examined here has initiated such a Bill regarding climate change. Their main attempts to influence policy have been submissions on specific policy issues. For example, Rising Tide facilitated 250 submissions to the NSW Government on its Green Paper on Energy in 2005, and ACF published its own climate change-related policy statements, covering ozone protection, energy pricing, and CO<sub>2</sub> emissions (DEUS 2005; ACF 2005). Hall and

<sup>2</sup> Any member of the House of Representatives can propose a Private Member's Bill for debate and vote, regardless of Government support, and NGOs can provide their in-principle support. Although it is rare for a Private Member's Bill to become law, it is not uncommon for the Government to respond to this level of political and popular concern, and introduce similar legislation (APH 2004).

Taplin (2006) found that these attempts at policy intervention were not an assured channel for NGO influence on resulting policy decisions. However, from a strategic perspective, involvement in formal policy consultation processes could justify later direct action campaign activities if the NGO's concerns were not addressed (S. Long, FoE-Australia).

### Popular grassroots awareness and community action

With their awareness of the political influence of vocal and visible community concern, UK NGOs formed SCC in 2005, a coalition of environmental groups, trade unions, faith organizations, and womens' groups. SCC's director stated:

Our analysis is that the missing ingredient is public campaigning... that is of the scale and of the commitment necessary for the government to feel some pressure in political terms, but also for the government to feel that a mandate is developing within society for them to push forward on policy. So [SCC is] a catalyst and a conduit for public pressure. (A. Sinha, SCC)

SCC and other UK NGOs began their activities by raising community awareness of the climate change before encouraging people into taking action. The UK NGOs have structured their awareness-raising messages positively to increase community support and attention, despite the sobering subject of climate change. For example, the FE-EWNI awareness-raising materials and website intentionally maintained an upbeat tone to motivate people into "doing something that makes them feel they're part of something bigger, and that it's also cool and trendy to do something" (G. Canzi, FE-EWNI).

FE-EWNI's The Big Ask campaign has involved grassroots awareness-raising activities aimed at young people. FE-EWNI organized rock concerts, encouraged concert-goers to send an SMS message to politicians, distributed information at Summer festivals, ran a cinema advertisement, and used "viral marketing" to circulate cartoons and jokes by email with a link to the campaign website (FE-EWNI 2006; G. Canzi, FE-EWNI). FE-EWNI supported the formation of local climate action groups and supplied them with a regular newsletter of suggested activities (FE-EWNI 2005). Additionally, FE-EWNI increased awareness of the issue through a national Shout About Climate Change week of school activities, where activity and information kits were sent to around 1,700 schoolteachers and youth workers (FE-EWNI 2005).

The next stage of the community-focused campaigns was to translate the awareness into action. UK NGOs sought via SCC's diverse coalition to activate participants from a cross-section of society because climate change "is harder for MPs to ignore once it becomes more set into the broader civil society" (M. Davis, WWF-UK). One of SCC's activities was the I Count campaign, with the slogan "Together we are irresistible – Together we count" (I Count 2006). This campaign brought together 25,000 people, including celebrities and public figures, for a carnival-like rally from the US embassy to Trafalgar Square, London, for the International Day of Action on Climate Change on November 4, 2006. This was the



eve of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change conference in Nairobi. The rally was planned as “a day to highlight the need for action on climate change, and a celebration of change” (S. Fèvre, WWF-UK). Participants were encouraged to send an SMS message or email stating “I count” to the Government (I Count 2006).

Australian campaigners are similarly aware of the need for community pressure on politicians. One commented that:

In the past... not many people in the community in Australia have known much about climate change and even less have been doing anything about it. And I think that that’s why Australian politicians are such global laggards on the issue... Certainly once there’s a build up of community pressure then there’ll certainly be a lot more impetus on government. (S. Phillips, Rising Tide)

In response, Rising Tide and FoE-Australia have undertaken grassroots awareness-raising work. In addition to holding regular information and letter-writing stalls on weekends in city areas, Rising Tide held a Solar-Powered Solstice festival in December 2005. Newcastle residents were encouraged to “turn off the power for an hour” at home and attend an event in the city’s Civic Park powered by large solar cells (Rising Tide 2005). It was intended to be

a community protest, but also a bit of a feel-good event at the same time [aimed at] getting to the people... to convince people that climate change is very serious stuff and... that we have to change the way we live our lives. (S. Phillips, Rising Tide)

FoE-Australia’s Climate Justice campaign aimed to “illustrate that if we don’t respond to these issues of climate change, people from the Pacific region are going to be left with getting in boats and trying to find somewhere to relocate to” (S. Long, FoE-Australia). They shared their message through colourful street theatre and parades about climate refugees. FoE members also “dressed up in flippers and snorkels and floaties, and... put ourselves either at a really big shopping district on the weekend or early in the morning as people were going to work” (S. Long, FoE-Australia).

As part of a global network of NGOs campaigning for action on climate change, both UK and Australian NGOs commemorated the 2006 International Day of Action on Climate Change with mass-scale rallies. The Australian Walk Against Warming (WAW) was supported by Greenpeace A-P, FoE, ACF, and CANA, among other NGOs. The aim of the WAW was to publicly demonstrate community concern about climate change. The WAW attracted over 100,000 people around Australia, including around 40,000 each in Melbourne and Sydney, and was a significant increase from the total attendance of around 4,000 at the inaugural WAW in 2005 (WAW 2006).

The increased attendance at the WAW reflected growing awareness of climate change in Australia, perhaps influenced by increased political attention and thus mass media coverage of climate change in late 2006. Previous media inattention was due to a lack of political support, and a journalist stated: “Unlike in the United

Kingdom and Europe, where it was treated seriously by politicians and the press, the Howard Government wasn't a believer... because the Government wasn't interested in climate change, neither were political correspondents" (Frew 2006, p. 19).

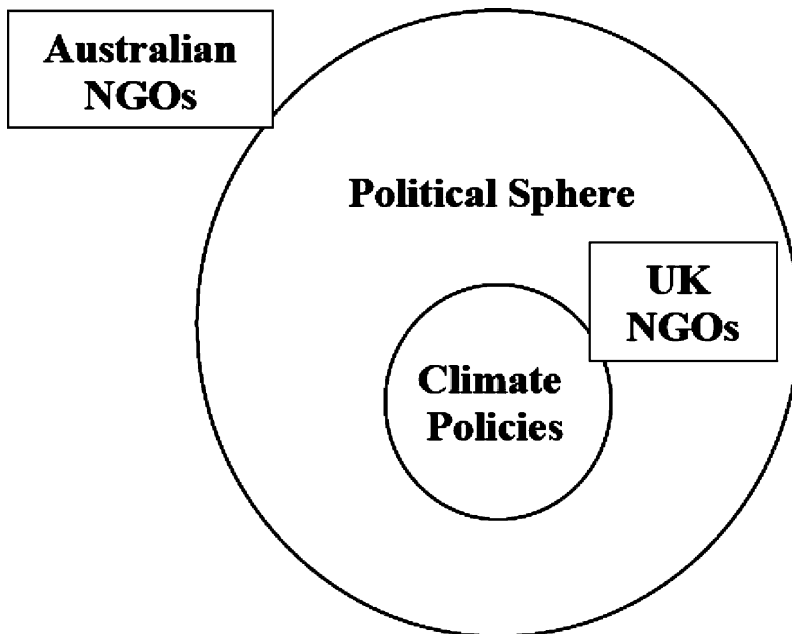
The Howard Government's lack of attention to climate change altered in early October, 2006, when an opinion poll conducted in 2006 by the Chicago Council on Global Affairs found 68% of Australians believed climate change was a "critical threat" (CCGA 2006, p. 68). Within a week, the Government admitted there was a link between the existing drought and climate change (ABC 2006). This new political position allowed media coverage to increase dramatically, and a journalist commented that "stories that had been rejected in the past ... were now making it to page one" (Frew 2006, p. 19). An estimation of the number of media stories (using the Factiva database of news stories from newspapers, TV, radio, and newswires) indicated that in the final 3 months of 2006, coverage of climate change increased by more than three times: from 1,100 stories between October and December in 2005, to over 5,000 over the same period in 2006. Describing John Howard's new position and the media's expanded coverage, Hamilton (2007, p. 194) stated "climate change had become mainstream with a vengeance." Al Gore's documentary on climate change, *An Inconvenient Truth* (Guggenheim 2006) was another "pivotal moment in the debate" (Hamilton 2007, p. 194). Other items covered in the media at this time included the release of the UK's *Stern Review* (HM Treasury 2006), the UNFCCC talks in Nairobi, and the Government Inquiry was released on increased uranium mining and nuclear power (Switkowski et al. 2006). Further analysis of the media's role and influence in raising awareness on climate change is provided by Hamilton (2007).

### Reflecting on NGO campaign "traction" in the UK and Australia

This research has explored the conditions under which NGO campaigns in the UK and Australia have been conducted with varying levels of effectiveness. NGO climate campaigns in the UK appear to have achieved more traction than their counterparts in Australia. However, it would be inaccurate to conclude that this was the result of the NGOs' efforts alone. Rather, it suggests there are conditions that are perceived to be favorable under which NGO campaigns can flourish, resonate, and bring about specific outcomes. Returning to Poole et al. (2001), these findings affirm the accuracy of the multivariate explanatory approach. The conditions that have influenced NGO campaign effectiveness in both countries are leadership and governance, including international commitments, bureaucratic support, political ideology, and inter-party competition. Economic conditions, such as the dependence on energy imports or exports, and the political power of the fossil fuel industry are also influential. Civil society's support of NGOs through funding, membership, and trust influence the political legitimacy bestowed upon NGOs and affects their political access. Additionally, the Government's position on climate change influences the level of media coverage, and thus public awareness. NGOs' structure, unity, and available resources are other conditions that affect campaign effectiveness.

The achievements by the UK NGOs stem from more conducive political and policy conditions provided by the UK Government over the last decade and its membership within the EU. There has been very strong political posturing on climate change by the Blair Government, and the fossil fuel lobby has not had predominant influence. NGOs are highly regarded by the UK Government and community and have millions of supporters from whom to draw their main financial support. UK NGOs are not prepared to declare campaign victory on climate change because of the gap they still observe between policy rhetoric and actual outcomes. However, they appear to have contributed to substantial climate change policy modifications through their strong credibility with the Government.

By contrast, climate change has only recently appeared as a political priority in Australia and the fossil fuel sector is financially and politically powerful. The Australian Government has not ratified the Kyoto Protocol, and recent policies are considered inadequate to seriously address climate change. NGOs do not enjoy great political legitimacy, public support has been eroded through the Government's use of the tax system to limit political advocacy, and they are challenged by limited resources to make a substantial and continuous impact in climate debates. However, these conditions are undergoing changes. The increased media profile of climate change in Australia since late 2006 has raised grassroots awareness and concern about climate change. This awareness has led to community action, including a significant attendance at the Walk Against Warming and the establishment of citizen action groups. As the 2007 federal election approaches, inter-party political



**Fig. 1** Political influence of NGO climate campaigns, 2004–2006

competition is increasing over pledges to address climate change. Together, these are beginning to provide the favorable political and policy conditions within which NGO campaigns can be most effective.

Figure 1 diagrammatically summarizes the situation of UK and Australian NGO campaigns over the period 2004–2006. Concentric circles represent the political context incorporating, and so directly influencing, the “core” circle of policy outcomes. UK NGOs are active and included—to an extent—within the political sphere. This situates them much closer to influencing climate policies. By contrast, the Australian NGOs and their lesser success, until very recently, situates them as outsiders. This is represented by Australian NGOs being positioned barely touching the outer edge of the concentric circles. This illustration and research demonstrate how NGOs are indeed embedded in the political and policy contexts of their country, and how the greatest campaign traction and NGO influence can only be achieved when these contexts provide favorable conditions.

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