



What is a Feminist Green New Deal?

It's the deal to save the world!



***US Representative Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, US Green New Deal champion
(Illustration: Chris Danger)***

Climate change is a feminist issue. It's easier to save yourself if your responsibilities don't also include looking after children. It's easier to move away or batten down the hatches if you have money. If global warming reaches 2 °C – which it will, unless we act immediately - then we will see extreme weather, rising sea levels, diminishing Arctic sea ice, and loss of ecosystems. The effects for humans include loss of land, jobs, pleasure and even life. As [Hinemoa Elder](#) reminded us at her kōrero a year ago, Indigenous mothers and children already in poverty will be among those bearing the brunt.

To avoid the worst effects, scientists advise we keep global warming to a maximum of 1.5 degrees. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change don't sugar coat what this means; instead, they warn it will require “rapid, far-reaching and unprecedented changes in all aspects of society.” For example, we will have to end the use of any and all fossil fuels. Zero emissions means zero: no coal, gas, petrol. Solely renewables. That will dismantle or radically

change all transport industries: haulage to tourism - with knock-on effects for virtually all industries in Aotearoa and around the world.

To work out how we can transform as quickly and radically as required, we need to look at the causes of the climate emergency: an economic system that

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encourages unsustainable production and profit-seeking. A political system that responds to COVID-19 by increasing inequities for women, Māori and families in poverty. Globally, we run “an extractive and unequal economy, one intimately bound up with ongoing histories of empire and colonialism, where those least responsible for the crisis are most exposed to the consequences of accelerating breakdown,” as one [UK thinktank](#) puts it.

Here’s where the hope comes in: transforming our economy to be grounded in justice, equity, rights, and respect for nature is not only necessary in order to reduce the climate crisis – it is better for people as well. As [Laura O’Connell Rapira](#) recommended to our community forum last year, we must invest far more in low-carbon jobs such as caring and teaching, both for Papatūānuku and our future generations. Such investment both requires, and leads to, better respect for women, particularly women of colour who are the most likely group to work in low-paid jobs in the healthcare industries. At the same time, we must protect and support those workers whose industries disappear, so they can retrain.

And that – in a nutshell – is the Feminist Green New Deal: saving the planet in a way that creates equity and strengthens communities. Following the leadership of Indigenous women such as Hinemoa and Laura (both of whom chose to speak about the climate emergency, with Te Wāhi audiences, without prompting). Ensuring no one gets left behind,

regardless of their current paid and unpaid work, when we reduce our carbon emissions to zero. As a US coalition for the [Feminist Green New Deal](#) puts it:

Incrementalism is a dangerous false comfort.

“A just transition requires that women are actively brought in and benefit from green jobs and social policies, including pay equity, paid family leave and free child care. A just transition must also recognise and redress gender-based violence across

industries, from sexual violence in mining towns to the exploitation of women farmworkers by industrial agriculture.”

We need a total emergency footing of government and society in order to be successful. Incrementalism is a dangerous false comfort. Instead, we must meet the interlinked systemic crises of climate change and wealth inequality with an agenda for systemic change. All our systems are broken.

What is good for Papatūānuku is good for wāhine Māori, other women, our children and future generations.

Yet that urgency just isn't there. While some action is happening in the US and elsewhere, disappointingly, in Aotearoa New Zealand, the Climate Change Commission's approach is not ambitious enough: it's hesitant rather than bold and wastes opportunities. It does not acknowledge the size of the issue here. We need to clamour for more, for action; we need

to follow the leadership of our young people on the school climate strikes.

Laura showed us that being guided by whakapapa past and future works: what is good for Papatūānuku is good for wāhine Māori, other women, our children and future generations. We face a stark choice between misery and hope.



**Te Wāhi Wāhine o
Tāmaki Makaurau**
AUCKLAND WOMEN'S CENTRE