

Statement of Eliza Evers

Name: Eliza Evers

Date of birth: 12 September 2003

Date: 24 March 2025

1. My name is Eliza and my pronouns are she/her. I live on Ngunnawal land in Canberra.
2. I am making this statement in support of my joint complaint to the United Nations Special Rapporteur on Climate Change detailing how Australia is violating mine, and other young people's human rights.
3. I am 21 years old. When I was 16, I became sick with a sinus infection and it was treated with antibiotics. After I had recovered, my symptoms like major fatigue, headaches and nausea stayed and started to massively impact my day-to-day life. I stopped being able to work and stopped being able to go to school because I was too unwell. At the time, I was diagnosed with New Daily Persistent Headache disorder (NDPH) and Chronic Fatigue Syndrome (CFS) and most recently I was diagnosed with Postural orthostatic tachycardia syndrome (POTS). I currently receive the Disability Support Pension and I am on the waitlist to get access to public housing.
4. Because of my disabilities, climate change and, particularly, extreme heat, really impact my day to day activities and the choices that I am able to make about my life. So that you can get a bit of an understanding about how my disabilities impact my day to day life, I describe them more below.
5. In my heart, I have always been an environmental advocate. Because of my disabilities, I haven't been able to protest but I try to do other things. I remember seeing the first school strike for climate when I was 16 and in Year 11 at school. I remember thinking that I would really love to go but I couldn't because I was too sick. I have felt guilty and sad about not being able to participate in protests about climate action which is why I am grateful to be able to share my story with the Special Rapporteur.
6. I'm also making this statement because I know if there isn't proper action on climate change now, my life as well as the lives of other people who live with disabilities, will be much worse as the temperatures rise. Just this summer, it has been so hot in Canberra that I've barely been able to get out of bed, do daily activities or see my friends and family. It's been months of feeling incapacitated because of the rise in temperatures.
7. I would like the Special Rapporteur to write to the Australian government and ask them to take stronger action on climate change as people like me are already feeling the impacts of the climate crisis. I would like the Special Rapporteur to come to Australia to see the impacts of climate change firsthand and to meet with me, so I can tell her my story.

About me

8. When I was little, I lived in Hong Kong for six years, in Kowloon. It is a big city and massively populated and there wasn't much nature around. Where we lived, I would look outside my window and just see hundreds of buildings. I remember the only trees were these massive 100-year-old trees in a park. I used to just crave to see nature when I lived in Hong Kong.



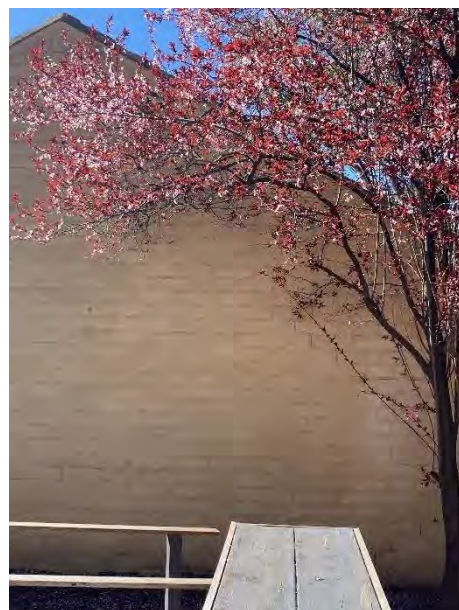
Pictures 1 & 2: 100 year old banyan trees on the street of Kowloon - the only source of nature found on the busy Hong Kong streets

9. When I was 12, my family moved back to Australia and we moved to Canberra. Now, I can look out my window and see mountain ranges and be in nature all of the time. The contrast in Australia's environment to Hong Kong is huge and makes me appreciate just how beautiful and precious nature is at home.
10. I have lived in Canberra for 8 years now. Canberra is the capital of Australia but it doesn't feel like a capital, it's quite suburban. It's not a city, it's not a town – it's a beautiful in-between. There are mountain ranges that surround Canberra and lots of nature parks like Cooleman Ridge which is 10 minutes' drive from me. From the windows in my home, I can see beautiful eucalypt trees. There are so many beautiful sounds outside my home, birds. The whole environment in Australia is totally different. You just hear chirping of insects and birds near my house. It wasn't like that in Hong Kong.
11. Canberra sits in a valley and usually has lots of extreme weather. For example, the coldest day in Winter in Australia for 2024 was in Canberra. In summer, it also gets really hot during the days and at night it gets much cooler. When it cools down, I will usually throw the windows open so I can get a nice breeze in and relax from the heat. I love Spring in Canberra. There is a Japanese ornamental plum in my garden and its bare in Winter but in Spring there are beautiful pink petals that grow. I always feel cured of Winter as soon as I see the petals.

Picture 3: the National Arboretum Canberra which is about an 8 minute drive away from my house which is absolutely beautiful



12. Being in nature is really important to me but being disabled makes it a whole challenge in itself to get into nature. I have so many houseplants and I love to see some of my plants sprouting. When I can, I also like to get into my native garden. It's really cool to see which native plants can thrive and which ones don't so much. I particularly love seeing billy button plants, they are so cute and I love wondering to myself why nature makes things that are so adorable.
13. Gardening really helps with my mental health. Even if I can't get out to nature, like Cooleman Ridge, it's nearby and I can be surrounded by nature. Having my garden close to me also means that even when I'm not well, I can still enjoy my garden. This past summer, gardening has even become a big challenge for me. It has been so hot that I've barely been able to leave my house or get out of bed – even to walk a few steps to my garden.



Pictures 4 & 5: Japanese plum tree in my garden taken in September when the flowers finally come back after winter

Living with my disabilities

14. I feel that people in my everyday life don't understand what it's like being in chronic pain all the time. I don't want people to understand by being in my shoes because it's devastating and sad to feel this way but I do wish that there was a bit more understanding. I often feel that you only get that acknowledgement through the experience of living with a disability.

15. My disability is my full-time job, I'm on call 24/7. I don't get a choice if these symptoms affect me or not and therefore it makes me think about how my body is going to react to the weather, the future of living in my house, my day-to-day temperature of the house, as examples. Because my disability is invisible, perhaps not well understood and also how my symptoms manifest are unique to me, I will explain what they are.
16. **New Daily Persistent Headaches (NDPH):** I was diagnosed with NDPH when I first got sick. NDPH is a rare chronic headache disorder which means I experience I have a constant headache. For me, I basically got a headache in 2020 and it's never stopped. I hate the name "new daily persistent headaches" because I don't think it captures my experience – I don't get daily headaches; I've had one long headache since 2020. I experience high pain from my headache which makes me quite nauseous.
17. **Chronic Fatigue Syndrome (CFS):** I was diagnosed with CFS as well around the time I first got sick. CFS is pretty self-explanatory - I am chronically fatigued - it's an extreme of being tired. I sometimes use a walking cane because I am chronically fatigued. That does terrify me because of the judgement that comes with a cane. I haven't ever used a wheelchair but maybe that's because I don't move around too much to need it.
18. **Postural Orthostatic Tachycardia Syndrome (POTS):** In November 2024, I was diagnosed with POTS. POTS is a nervous system disorder which makes me really sensitive to any change in positions of my body and to changes in the environment, like temperature rise. It was quite empowering to get my diagnosis as it felt like my previous diagnoses did not cover everything I was experiencing.
19. With POTS, when I go from sitting to standing up, my heart rate spikes and it causes so many problems. I feel like I'm going to faint, and my vision blacks out. It also impacts my ability to stand up. If I'm standing up for a long time, my heart rate increases and I feel dizzy and like I'm about to faint. I have to be careful, even if I'm standing for 10 minutes. This is a daily occurrence for me where I often black out or faint for a second because of my POTS.
20. With both my CFS and POTS, I experience fatigue where I cannot move or speak and sometimes I can't even get up to go to the toilet, get food or even move my arms. It often feels like I'm in a pool and I just don't have the muscle strength and I feel too weak to move.
21. Unfortunately, because there are no treatment options for POTS, or for CFS or NDPH, all I can do is manage my symptoms. This is made even harder when I'm not able to regulate my temperature because it makes my symptoms even worse. Extreme temperature changes make my POTS symptoms even worse and it affects everything in my life. With POTS, I don't sweat as much so when it is extremely hot, I experience sweating problems because my body can't cool down properly and I get flushed and feel like I'm about to faint. On these days, it can also spike my heart rate and cause chest pain and I sometimes have to gasp for breath to be able to get air. To fix this, I sometimes have to lie on the floor and get my legs higher than my heart to get things back to normal.
22. I was 16 when all of these symptoms started. Having all these symptoms at 16, meant that I couldn't go to school. Now I'm 21 and it impacts every single little thing I do in a day – from waking up to walking from my bed to the kitchen. If I feel well enough to go outside, I always have to think about how long I will be outside, whether I will need to stand for long periods and what the temperature will be like. It makes it hard to function properly.

23. With my disabilities, the only way people can know about them is if I tell them. People often make assumptions that I am a normal able-bodied person. My disabilities are dynamic disabilities, I can appear to function normally, but it might just be a good day. One day I might be okay, and the next I can be 'crashed out'. From what I know, about 80-90% disabilities are invisible. I wear a sunflower lanyard when I go out to share to others that I have a hidden disability. The Sunflower symbol in Australia is used by people to share that they have a hidden disability.
24. But even though I wear a sunflower lanyard, I still feel afraid to use mobility aids in public. I only recently got a disabled parking permit. When I go out, I sometimes feel afraid of what people might say about me and their judgement. I know when people don't understand, it is because they might just not have the knowledge but it is also exhausting explaining it to everyone all the time.
25. Unfortunately, this is the reality of being a minority, and to a point I think that you have to accept that the world isn't going to accommodate you in every single way. The world is not built for disabled people. Disabled people have always found ways to cope but it is unfair. To a point I can't expect people to change but in a dream world, I would want everything to change so that my experiences are accounted for. At the moment, nothing has shown me that anything is going to change to make the world more accessible for people living with disabilities. But I don't spend my time dwelling on this as it's not good for my mental health.
26. I've never met another person in real life who has NDPH but I have met people on Tik Tok and YouTube who are experiencing the same things as me. I try to make Tik Toks about what it is like to be in daily pain and I try to explain what NDPH and POTS are. It has been really great to connect with people online who are disabled. If we don't talk about our disabilities, then no one is going to understand what it is like. That's why I want to explain how climate change impacts me because how else would anyone find out about it?

My experiences with climate change and how I am impacted by climate change

27. Before I got sick, I worked as a pharmacy assistant during the 2019-2020 bushfires, one of Australia's most intense and devastating fire seasons on record. I remember people were coming in for air purifiers and masks, before we were used to seeing masks through covid. Those fires were so scary. My partner's brother had just been born while the bushfires were happening and they were so worried about the air quality for this baby. The bushfires were so extreme, we knew it had to be related to climate change.
28. Since falling sick and having disabilities, the biggest thing that I've been thinking about recently, is how much I have to regulate my temperature. I've always been sensitive to temperature and always had heat intolerance but with my disabilities now, extreme heat just smashes everything out of me.
29. At the beginning, when I was diagnosed with NDPH, I always kept an ice pack in the freezer to regulate my temperature – regardless of whether it was winter or summer. With my POTS, because my body can't regulate my temperature, my intolerance of extreme temperature is even harder. Having an ice pack available to me now rules what I do with my life. Like, if I want to go outside, I need to have an ice pack to manage my symptoms. The weather extremes are terrible for me and I am exploring other ways to make sure I can regulate my body temperature.
30. I feel for everyone when it comes to climate change. I am at the front lines with my body unable to regulate itself in response to extreme temperatures. Right now, it's not impacting the normal able bodied person but it will happen eventually. It will happen to everyone. It happens to me

now and I will have to deal with this in extreme ways. I'm thinking about it already because everyone needs to think about it.

31. Maybe that I'm paying more attention to the weather now that I have a garden in my own place but particularly this year, it feels so extreme. I don't think paid attention to the weather when I living at home with my parents when I was younger. But previously, I don't think it impacted me so much. I moved out of home after the 2019/2020 bushfires, and Canberra was okay but the fires were still on the horizon.
32. The weather in Canberra has been flip-floppy recently. This summer we have had really hot unbearable days but that has followed 2-3 days of heavy downpours and thunder. The heat has been completely unmanageable for me – it's been extremely hot in January, February and March. I haven't been able to do basic activities like get out of my bed or leave my house to go for a walk. My symptoms have been so bad, I've just had to focus on feeling better in the moment and that has taken a big toll on me.
33. But then there was also huge rains in January, and people around me had their homes flooded. It all happened in about 30 minutes of rain. We tried to help and get the water out of my friend's house but the drain was blocked so we had to put the water down a different drain. This involved filling up buckets to scoop out the water. This movement has lots of standing up and down which triggers my POTS and also fatigue. We tried to help but my friend's whole house still flooded and she can't live there anymore.
34. It makes me wonder how would people get through floods who are more disabled than me. It makes me feel for people going through these kinds of natural disasters. I wouldn't have the physical ability to protect my home and get myself to safety if this flooding was happening to me and I was alone. If my POTS was worse, I could faint as soon as I try to get water out of the house. What would happen then? It was a crazy amount of water to see in Canberra, it was scary. Why is Canberra flash flooding? My brain can't comprehend it. However, after a few days you look outside and it's a beautiful although very hot day.
35. I don't remember experiencing crazy rain in Canberra during summer before. I have been living here for 3 years in the house I am in currently. It just buckets with rain, but why does it? We are not in the tropics, but it seems like it with this recent weather.

My current housing situation

36. As I mentioned above, I am not able to work and I currently receive the Disability Support Pension (DSP) and I am on the waitlist to get access to public housing. In order to access any welfare payments in Australia, you must pass income and asset tests.
37. I currently have housing where I don't have to pay rent, but I am conscious that this situation could change. I think and worry about my finances regularly, especially when it comes to paying my electricity bills. I recognise that I am privileged compared to other people on this earth but the money I receive from the DSP is not a lot to live off. This means that I often think about energy usage in the house. Even though my partner helps with bills, in winter, we didn't turn the heater on until we really needed to because we didn't want to spend money on that. Even at the start of Summer I don't turn the air conditioning on even though it is boiling hot. I should be able to prioritise my health over worrying about how much it might cost but sometimes I feel like it's really unfair that I have to put that aside because of my finances.

38. I also worry about my future financial position. If I didn't have access to affordable housing, my DSP payments would not be enough to live on.
39. I am conscious that my current housing situation could change, and that I am not a priority on the public housing waitlist so I might not get access to public housing for a very long time. Because of this, I have been renovating a campervan to live in. I've renovated it all up so that I could move into it and live in it if I need to. When I was renovating the van, I wanted to make it as sustainable as possible, and it has solar panels, and I have put insulation in it to make sure that it can survive any change in temperature.



Pictures 6 & 7: my van featuring the solar panel I installed on the roof and the earth wool insulation

Thinking about the future and me and other young people living through climate change

40. If nothing changes, I don't feel positive about the future. I am currently dealing with crazy symptoms with my environment. If rising temperatures stays on this path, and unless somehow I get a bunch of money and can have air con all the time, I don't see my symptoms being managed well. If something extreme happened to my house, like if I was flooded, I don't have finances or housing security to be able to take care of myself. I'm sure even people who aren't disabled would be stressed about it. There are some things you just can't control, like bushfires or flooding. There's only so much homeowners can adapt but can't stop something like flooding.
41. Fingers crossed I have many more years to live, but as a young person I inevitably think about the future and how do we create an environment that is enjoyable to live in if my heat intolerance gets worse in hotter and hotter environments. I absolutely think that young people are thinking about the future in a way that older generations aren't. If you are 60 or 80 years old, you don't have to care about the environment, you're not going to be there. I will be experiencing the impacts of climate change regardless. My symptoms are incurable and I will continue to have these issues. I want to find a way to make the world more habitable for me but also make it more habitable for others. It makes sense that young people are out here talking about climate change, because it's going to impact us. My generation is also thinking about the two generations below me. How are they going to deal with it? Let's do something now about climate change.

What I would ask the Australian Government to do

42. Ultimately, the first step for me to be taken seriously by the Australian Government. I don't want to be ignored because climate change is not impacting 'you' yet. We need to address that there is an issue and a very serious one. I would like to see that able-bodied people can agree that something is going wrong for people with disabilities in terms of climate change. I want young

people to be taken seriously regardless of whether they are minority or not. As young people, we want change and you, the Government, have the ability to make that change or take steps to make those changes. The quality of our life is in your hands and we hope and pray that you take us seriously.

43. I wish the Government could understand my perspective. Not just the emotions, but also the physical inability to function and regulate body temperature. I feel like me and other people who have heat intolerances and other disabilities have been suffering with this for ages. At some point, people with power will think about it and it will be too late. When able-bodied people become impacted, will that be the time we think about it? Why is it only when it's a problem for people without pre-existing problems, will we do something about it? While we have a chance, we can do something about it and it's already affected people with disabilities. I don't understand why the Government doesn't accommodate people and I don't know what is stopping them.
44. A dream world for me is an accessible world and tackling climate change to stop extreme weather changes. This would help me so much. I am already at the frontline. Please do it now – take action on climate. The normal person has to deal with heat or cold issues, but I am dealing with the extremes. It may be a hot day for 'you' but it's hotter for me because my body can't cool down. What am I supposed to do about something like temperature changes? Why is a 21 year old telling these people in the workforce? Why do I have to be ill to know these things? It makes me feel really sad that ill people have to come and fight because we are not being taken care of. Our life experience makes a difference, but it is a bit sad.
45. The Australian Government hasn't shown anything to me that they are taking things seriously. They've seen some impacts of the extreme weather changes and I hope that stuff is happening behind the scenes but we haven't seen it. I feel that nothing has been done.
46. I could write a whole list of things to do – for example, let's stop coal mines and build more solar panels - but where they must begin is acknowledging us and taking us seriously. This acknowledgment is not an empty promise but a commitment they will actually fulfil.
47. Even though I am disappointed by the lack of action by Government on anything, I don't think it's too late. I don't think we are a lost cause and excited to see what the Government can come up with.
48. It's not too late to love the earth and to put that into action. I feel so much love for this earth and I hope other people can see that and want to make that change as well. I feel excited to be around to other people who are passionate about taking care of our earth and overcoming climate change.

49. I confirm the contents of this statement are a true and correct record of my evidence.

Name: Eliza Evers

E EVERS

24/03/2025

Signature

Date