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Making a statement: Nichola Ahern's climate change statement will be read by world leaders at Copenhagen later this year.

Brainstorm on climate change

By Miles Godfrey

NICHOLA Ahern has drafted a statement on behalf of all Australians which will be read by world leaders at December's Copenhagen Climate Change Conference.

The simple 32-word statement demands immediate action on global warming, including a new legally binding global agreement to limit temperature increases.

It is being sent on behalf of all Australian citizens to the COP15 summit, where US President Barack Obama, British Prime Minister Gordon Brown, and Chinese President Hu Jintao are among those expected to attend.

"It was a real responsibility trying to come up with something that will represent all Australians," said Mrs Ahern, 39, a student from Bundeena.

She was one of 100 randomly selected Australians chosen to take part in a two-day climate change meeting in Sydney late last month.

They were divided in to small groups and asked to vote on important climate change subjects, then develop statements.

Mrs Ahern's group's was selected as the best.

It reads: "Act now to limit warming [to] below 2C through a legally binding global agreement. Develop new technology in an ethical and accountable process. The need for leadership, education in technological advances is paramount."

The meeting was one of 38 being held around the world. Among other things, the Australian group voted overwhelmingly to raise the price of fossil fuels and for an urgent global climate deal to be struck.

The results of the vote are also being sent to Copenhagen.

"When they rang me up and asked me to take part I thought it was some kind of sales call, but I'm so glad I did take part because it was very worthwhile," Mrs Ahern said.

"I feel like we may well make a difference, at least on behalf of Australians."

Shire girl can sing, write and also act



Rising star: Alyse Barnhill.

CRONULLA'S Alyse Barnhill is sure to be a triple threat in the Australian entertainment industry.

The talented singer, songwriter and actress has scored a role in an Australian film, *Best Enemies*, which premiered at Sydney's Entertainment Quarter last week.

Ms Barnhill, 19, stars as Llane in the film, which is directed by Ross Bark.

At the red carpet event, Alyse performed her own original composition which she wrote for the flick.

Best Enemies is a new teen drama film about teenage friendships and their problems in standing up to cyber bullies. A parliamentary inquiry has endorsed the film, to be featured in educational institutions across Australia.

Plea for families of dead soldiers

By Murray Trembath

THE Federal Government is being urged to provide a better deal for families of soldiers killed in Afghanistan.

Widows should be given a home and continuation of the dead soldier's salary, Neil James, chief executive of the Australia Defence Association said.

The independent defence "think tank" joined a chorus of criticism of the system, first raised by Sutherland Shire resident Breeanna Till when she appeared before a review panel.

Speaking on behalf of other recent war widows, Mrs Till said she was receiving the same payment as a single mother on the dole.

She would normally have had to move out of her Defence Department-owned home within six months, but

this has been extended to 18 months. Mr James said his association, in its submission to the the Department of Veterans Affairs review, would urge more generous treatment.

"The number of casualties is quite small, so the cost involved would not be great," he said. "It is not like the numbers that were killed in World War II.

"We are suggesting that if the spouse or family does not already own a home, they should be given one of a certain value.

"The case should be handled administratively as if the soldier were still alive, so the surviving spouse would continue to get the wage her husband would have received until his likely retirement age, and then go on to superannuation."

Mr James said the system

would be simpler if deaths were separated from wounds or illness, because there was less administrative burden with deaths.

"The administrative simplicity would be likely to cancel out any additional cost," Mr James said.

He said the changes would mean families would not be forced to make big financial decisions at a difficult time. Soldiers would also know their families would be provided for as if they were still alive.

Mr James said it was "morally wrong" that a war widow's pension was indexed at a lower rate than a welfare pension.

He said the Department of Veterans Affairs did "a hard job pretty well" but it was more used to caring for elderly war widows than young families.