

Paris diary: Planet COP 21 is a strange place but it has nothing on Planet Oz

www.theguardian.com/environment/2015/dec/02/paris-diary-planet-cop-21-is-a-strange-place-but-it-has-nothing-on-planet-oz

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Delegates walk past the COP 21 logo at Le Bourget. After 21 years, the annual climate change summits have a familiar structure. Photograph: Stephane Mahe/Reuters

In [Paris](#) it's a sea of pillars, decorated for each participating nation. There's always a grand entry to these climate summits – or conferences of the parties (COP) to the UN climate convention – as if to remind the thousands of delegates traipsing in each day that they are entering Planet COP.

After 21 years the annual summits have a familiar structure even though each takes place in a different country.

There's a similar lay-out – huge halls with little prefabricated offices for each national delegation or international organisation. Some are fancier than others. The UN usually has a relaxation lounge. Some have gimmicks. This year China has a talking robot that tells you the greenhouse emissions you have created travelling to Paris and how you might offset them.

There's a pavilion where all manner of climate-related organisations set up stalls and a media room as big as a barn and some gimmicks to provide photographic backdrops – in Paris, somewhat unoriginally – a mini Eiffel tower.

And everything is climate-themed – from the water bottle in each participant's welcome pack (Did you know that most of us use around 650 plastic cups each year? For [France](#) alone that's 25 Eiffel towers of waste") to the chocolate bars handed out on the way in (containing letters from the world's children as a "sweet reminder" of the requests from young "climate justice ambassadors".)

Stretching the friendship

But while Planet COP is obsessively, earnestly devoted to a global agreement on climate change – it sometimes seems less weird than Planet Oz.

[Malcolm Turnbull](#) joined 150 world leaders on Monday urging a Paris deal that locks in current national greenhouse gas-reducing commitments and then ratchets them up every five years.

Related: [Welcome to the wonderful world of climate talks, where less means more](#)

But at home he was being warned – in anonymous quotes to the Daily Telegraph – that there would be

“hell to pay” if he even considered increasing Australia’s commitment because Tony Abbott had already “stretched the friendship” with the current 26-28% target by 2030. Apparently Australia’s fair share of avoiding catastrophic warming is to be determined by unspecified “friendships” within the Coalition.

And the same mindset inside his own conservative parties meant that – even as he pledged to increase spending on clean energy research and development, Turnbull could not say he had abandoned Tony Abbott’s plan to abolish the agencies that commercialise and fund that same technology – the Australian Renewable Energy Agency and the Clean Energy Finance Corporation.

Planet COP is a strange microcosm, but Planet Oz can sometimes seem stranger. And the gap between them looks even bigger than the gap between dangerous global warming and the world’s promised reductions in emissions.