

Common Belief

AUSTRALIA'S FAITH COMMUNITIES ON CLIMATE CHANGE

DECEMBER 2006



Common Belief

AUSTRALIA'S FAITH COMMUNITIES ON CLIMATE CHANGE

December 2006

© Copyright Climate Institute (Australia) Ltd 2006

The Climate Institute (Australia) Ltd

Level 2, 263 George Street

Sydney, NSW 2000 Australia

Phone: +61 (0)2 9252 5200

Email: info@climateinstitute.org.au

ACN 116 713 592

Contents

FROM THE CLIMATE INSTITUTE	4
<i>AND SPEAKING FOR ...</i>	
ABORIGINAL PEOPLE	6
ANGLICANS	8
THE AUSTRALIAN CHRISTIAN LOBBY	10
BAHÁ'Í BELIEVERS	12
BAPTISTS	14
BUDDHISTS	16
CATHOLICS	18
EVANGELICAL CHRISTIANS	20
GREEK ORTHODOX	22
HINDUS	24
JEWISH PEOPLE	26
LUTHERANS	28
MUSLIMS	30
THE SALVATION ARMY	32
SIKHS	34
THE UNITING CHURCH	36
CONTRIBUTORS AND CREDITS	38

“

**FOR MOST OF US, THE FATE OF THE PLANET AS A
RESULT OF GLOBAL WARMING IS REALLY A MORAL ISSUE**

”

FROM THE CLIMATE INSTITUTE

The faith dimension

The climate change debate has tended to be dominated by the language of science. The recent 2006 Stern Report from the UK began to extend the discussion to the economic effects of global warming.

But for most of us, the fate of the planet as a result of global warming is really a *moral* issue. Climate change is ultimately about what it means for people — especially children — and the whole creation.

Uneasily, we recognise that it is getting hotter. The drought does not break. The summer gets longer. Bushfires occur with worrying frequency. We are told it is all the fault of the 'big polluters', even poor countries like China and India. Yet we also know Australians are the worst greenhouse polluters per capita in the world. We wonder how it all got this far. We wonder what to do.

The Climate Institute invited Australia's faiths to join the discussion earlier this year. It was our hope that Australia's faith communities could aid the broader dialogue on climate change by speaking the language of morality and of faith itself.

Australia's religions responded enthusiastically. Here, for believers by believers, is the beginning of a dialogue on the morality of climate change.

The Climate Institute encourages this new and vital focus on morality and spirituality in the environmental conversation. We hope the moral dialogue may bring greater light into the debate.

CORIN MILLAIS,

CEO, CLIMATE INSTITUTE (AUSTRALIA) LTD

SYDNEY, DECEMBER 2006



SPEAKING FOR...

ABORIGINAL PEOPLE

Climate: No Time for Blame There is a Task Ahead

ABORIGINAL PEOPLE ARE FROM THE OLDEST CONTINUOUS CULTURE IN THE WORLD, REPRESENTING 2.5% OF THE AUSTRALIAN POPULATION. AS PATRICK DODSON EXPLAINS, ABORIGINAL TRADITIONAL RELIGIONS RECOGNIZE THAT HUMAN BEINGS HAVE RIGHTS TO ENJOY OUR LAND — BUT ALSO RESPONSIBILITIES.

The Circles of Life for Aboriginal people — of our law, our languages, our land and the responsibilities that both link and balance our lives within these circles — are the foundations of our Aboriginal society. Our spirituality, the lore of our community and the imperatives that sustain the Circles of Life have their basis in the physical environment of our land, our seas and our river systems.

As a people we believe that the Bugarrigarra is the source of all life knowledge and learning. This belief is centred on the relationship between our physical domain and the people and animals within that domain.

When the balance that exists between the earth and the people charged with its care and protection is disrupted, when we fail to honour the responsibilities that have come from the Bugarrigarra, there will be consequences for our society that will inevitably lead to our demise as a society.

Our capacity to fulfil our obligations as custodians and protectors of the land has been diminished by the presence on our country by a society that often sees the land, waters and the sea as simply opportunities for exploitation and the creation of alternative physical domains.

The damage and destruction caused pain not only to the country but to our own spirit and well-being.

This new society tended to see nature as something that must be managed for its maximum capital exploitation, an asset of power and dominance. The land, seas and river systems were something that must be controlled as though they were a threat — not a part of every element of ourselves, as Aboriginal people perceive it.

The outcomes for both Aboriginal society and our environment have been disastrous and have created a circumstance where it has become very difficult for Aboriginal people to fulfil our responsibilities to the land and the seas as prescribed in the laws passed to us through the Bugarrigarra.

The destruction of the planet has begun through our over-exploitation of our lands and seas. These are not times for blame nor accusation. There is a task ahead of all of us to address the outcomes of our avarice and sloth. We must all begin to understand the finite nature of our land, our seas and our rivers and to accept our responsibilities as custodians with rights to enjoy but with responsibilities to sustain and nurture the gifts of creation.

The opportunity exists and the task belongs to us all, but Aboriginal people bring a critical understanding of what is required to bring a sense of equilibrium to our land, seas and rivers. Aboriginal people understand the correlation between a society at peace with itself where all our values are recognised and accepted, and a physical environment where our lands, seas and rivers are seen as central to our being rather

“

**THE DESTRUCTION OF THE PLANET
HAS BEGUN THROUGH OUR
OVER-EXPLOITATION OF OUR LANDS AND SEAS. THESE
ARE NOT TIMES FOR BLAME NOR ACCUSATION. THERE IS A
TASK AHEAD OF ALL OF US TO ADDRESS THE OUTCOMES
OF OUR AVARICE AND SLOTH.**

”

than as matters of ownership, power and control that must be subdued, exploited and controlled.

We have the tools at hand to begin the task. We have the technical skills, we have the wealth created from our past misuse and we have the clear evidence that if we do not act promptly the opportunity will have passed and the destruction of our land, our seas, our river systems and the very air that we breathe will be beyond rescue and the inheritance of our children will be a barren bequest.

Perhaps then, at this point of crisis, we can finally come together with common cause to stop this destruction of the environment and build a society of equals where all our rights and responsibilities can be fulfilled in a shared nation. Where we might sustain the Aboriginal people in our ancient songs of this country in our lands while we work together to make new songs to celebrate that which has been given to us by the Bugarrigarra.

Kulia

PATRICK DODSON is a Yawuru man who leads the Lingiari Foundation, an independent self funding Aboriginal organisation focussing on the sustaining of the social, economic and cultural values of Aboriginal people in the Kimberley. The Lingiari Foundation is in Broome, Western Australia.



SPEAKING FOR...
ANGLICANS

Climate Change: A Core Matter of Faith

CANBERRA'S BISHOP GEORGE BROWNING IS THE CHAIR OF THE WORLDWIDE ANGLICAN COMMUNION ENVIRONMENTAL NETWORK (ACEN). LAST YEAR, THE ACEN DECLARED THAT 'WILFUL DESTRUCTION OF THE ENVIRONMENT IS A SIN'. SOME 22% OF AUSTRALIANS BELONG TO THE ANGLICAN CHURCH OF AUSTRALIA.

As Chair of the international Anglican Communion Environmental Network, it was my privilege last year to host a gathering in Canberra of Anglican bishops from all over the world. My brother bishops and I gathered to reflect on the current impact and threat posed by climate change.

Our delegates from Polynesia and Melanesia described how low-lying atolls in Tuvalu and Kiribati were experiencing coastal flooding and contamination of fresh water; our delegates from Kenya and the Philippines reported that due (in part) to rising temperatures, there was an increase in the range of mosquitoes, resulting in more widespread malaria; we heard that further melting of the tundra in Canada's frozen north could release catastrophic amounts of methane — an even more potent greenhouse gas than CO₂.

Delegates from Australia and Africa reported longer and more severe droughts, which, in the case of Kenya, were already affecting local food security, causing increased poverty and suffering. The storm activity in the US, Canada, Oceania and the Philippines severely affected vulnerable coastal populations. In Scotland and Wales (along with much of northwest Europe) widespread and severe flooding has occurred since 2000.

Holy Scripture reminds us that, *the earth is the Lord's and everything in it* (Psalm 24:1). All of creation belongs to God, not to human beings. We are part of the created order, and our first calling by God is to be stewards of the earth and the rest of creation (Genesis 1:28 -29).

So when we exploit God's creation to breaking point, we break the most fundamental commandment known to us: out of our greed and selfishness, we knowingly cause the degradation of the world's ecosystems instead of protecting the design that issues from the Creator's generosity. Wilfully causing environmental degradation is a sin.

The Christian faith is certainly about personal salvation. But it is more than that: Christianity is *first and foremost* a concern for the whole of the created order — biodiversity and business; politics and pollution; rivers, religion and rainforests. The coming of Jesus brought everything of God into the sphere of time and space, and everything of time and space into the sphere of God. All things meet together in Him: Jesus is the point of reconciliation.

Therefore, if Christians believe in Jesus they must recognise that concern for climate change is not an optional extra but a core matter of faith.

The Archbishop of Canterbury, Dr Rowan Williams, has warned that our continued failure to protect the earth and to resolve economic injustices within and between societies will lead not only to environmental collapse but also to social collapse. One of the Millennium Goals was to make poverty history by 2015, but unless we stop

“

CHRISTIAN FAITH IS CERTAINLY ABOUT PERSONAL SALVATION. BUT IT IS MORE THAN THAT: CHRISTIANITY IS, FIRST AND FOREMOST, A CONCERN FOR THE WHOLE OF THE CREATED ORDER — BIODIVERSITY AND BUSINESS; POLITICS AND POLLUTION; RIVERS, RELIGION AND RAINFORESTS.”

”

climate change, this great aim will be just an empty dream. Indeed without action now, we will assuredly make poverty permanent.

Therefore, I ask Australians to:

- Take targeted and specific actions to assess and reduce our environmental footprint, particularly greenhouse gas emissions. Such actions could include energy and resource audits, land management, just trading and purchasing, socially and ethically responsible investment.
- Promote and commit ourselves to use renewable energy wherever possible, preferably by purchasing green energy off the grid.
- Turn off unnecessary electrical goods; reduce use of heating and air-conditioning; retrofit energy saving devices, including light globes. Appliances on standby can use approximately 10 per cent of total electricity.
- Be aware of water usage. There are government rebates of up to \$500 for purchasing rainwater tanks, grey water systems and other water-saving devices. Appropriately used, grey water can save 20 per cent of a household's water.
- Press for urgent initiation of discussions leading to a just and effective development beyond the Kyoto Protocol, which includes all nations.
- Bring before governments the imperative to use all means, including legislation and removal of subsidies, to reduce greenhouse gases.

It has been said that if the total world population enjoyed the same lifestyle as the most affluent in Australia or the United States, we would need seven Planet earths to sustain us.

We are privileged to live in a wonderful world. We can abuse that privilege, or we can rise to the challenge climate change presents. The potential for success — or failure — is both stark and global.

God's grace has been poured generously into our hearts. It is reflected in the bounty of the natural order. Let us cherish these gifts, and do our part to leave the world in better harmony and justice than we found it.

Rt. Rev. GEORGE BROWNING is Bishop of Canberra and Goulburn, Chair of the Anglican Communion Environmental Network, and a member of the Climate Institute's Advisory Committee. The Anglican Church of Australia is part of the Anglican Communion, an international community of Anglicans in over 160 countries.



SPEAKING FOR...

AUSTRALIAN CHRISTIAN LOBBY

Climate Change: Good Stewardship Required

AS WE APPROACH THE NEXT FEDERAL ELECTION, AUSTRALIAN VOTERS WILL BE LOOKING CLOSELY AT THE 'DEGREE OF DETERMINATION' WITH WHICH EACH PARTY PLANS TO TACKLE CLIMATE CHANGE, ARGUES THE AUSTRALIAN CHRISTIAN LOBBY.

Christians have a moral duty to be stewards of the creation and to express God's love and care to all people made in his image.

There is a strong scientific consensus that the climate is changing and that this change will have significant consequences: economic and social, national and international.

Though the world's climate has changed many times over the course of its history, it has never before changed with the land and resource demands of 6 billion people and there is evidence that it has never before changed so fast. There is evidence enough that the current change is being significantly driven by increased levels of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere resulting from the burning of fossil fuels over the last 200 years. There may also be other atmospheric changes, all of which play their part.

There is an ongoing political debate about how to address the causes of human-induced climate change, with examination of carbon trading schemes, emissions reduction targets, renewable energy sources, and energy conservation attempts by individuals, families, communities, and businesses. The relative merit of each approach is still being debated, with experts often divided on their recommendations for the way ahead.

However, it is clear that there is a significant problem and Christians will be looking to weigh the degree of determination in each party to tackle it at the next Federal Election.

Within Australia, good stewardship demands that we mitigate the effects of drought and rising sea-levels on our water resources, our agricultural industry, our low-lying coastal cities and our biodiversity.

One of the ACL's main concerns is that the consequences of climate change will be felt most heavily by those least able to bear it. Developing countries, which already struggle with the burdens of poverty, corruption, and natural disasters, are likely to bear the brunt of climate change. We will be looking to the Australian Government to contribute to global action in order to protect this class of people from the consequences of climate change.

The Australian Christian Lobby

The Australian Christian Lobby (ACL) is a non-denominational, non-party partisan lobby group representing a broad constituency of Christian supporters. ACL's vision is to see Christian principles and ethics accepted and influencing the way we are governed, do business and relate as a community. ACL re-asserts the value of the Christian vote by activating a constituency that shares these values.

“

“ONE OF THE ACL’S MAIN CONCERNS IS THAT THE CONSEQUENCES OF CLIMATE CHANGE WILL BE FELT MOST HEAVILY BY THOSE LEAST ABLE TO BEAR IT...CHRISTIANS WILL BE LOOKING TO WEIGH THE DEGREE OF DETERMINATION IN EACH PARTY TO TACKLE IT AT THE NEXT FEDERAL ELECTION.”

”



SPEAKING FOR...

BAHÁ'ÍS

Climate Change: The Earth is but One Country

THE BAHÁ'Í FAITH IN AUSTRALIA, THOUGH SMALL, IS FIRMLY ESTABLISHED HERE. AUSTRALIA'S BAHÁ'ÍS ADVOCATE THE IDEAL OF WORLD CITIZENSHIP 'WITH THE POWER TO MOVE HEARTS, CHANGE MINDS, AND INSPIRE ACTION'.

Among the most basic tenets of the Bahá'í teachings is a belief in the unity and interconnectedness of all things. Bahá'u'lláh, the founder of our religion, taught that there is one God, Whose task for humanity today is the construction of a just and peaceful world-embracing civilisation.

Every man of discernment, while walking upon the Earth, feeleth indeed abashed, inasmuch as he is fully aware that the thing which is the source of his prosperity, his wealth, his might, his exaltation, his advancement and power is, as ordained by God, the very earth which is trodden beneath the feet of all men. Bahá'u'lláh

Bahá'ís believe unity should also characterise our relationship with the natural world. Nature, in all its diversity, reflects the qualities and attributes of its Creator, and hence must be respected and cherished as the living heritage of present and future generations.

There is no doubt that protection of the environment and the achievement of sustainable development are critical and challenging issues in today's world. Over the past century we have witnessed a great acceleration in the destruction of the earth's biological diversity and the ever-widening inequality in the distribution of its resources.

The changes in the earth's climate that we witness today are a consequence of a material civilisation that has been carried to excess. A civilisation that replaces the citizen with the consumer cannot concern itself with the long-term viability of life on earth.

Our teachings state that:

We cannot segregate the human heart from the environment outside us and say that once one of these is reformed everything will be improved. Man is organic with the world. His inner life moulds the environment and is itself also deeply affected by it.

We believe the financial, technical, human and moral resources required to respond to climate change will only be released when the peoples and governments of the world adopt a shared and connected sense of responsibility for the fate of the planet and for the well-being of the entire human family. Only a vision of a global society, supported by universal values and spiritual principles, and founded on justice and equality, can inspire individuals and government to take responsibility for the long-term care and protection of the natural environment.

The absence of this wider loyalty — to humanity as a whole, and to the planet we share — from decision-making processes at every level has contributed directly to the challenge of climate change facing the planet.

“

**THE BAHÁ'Í COMMUNITY ADVOCATES THE ADOPTION OF
THE CONCEPT OF WORLD CITIZENSHIP AS A GLOBAL
ETHIC. IN THE WORDS OF BAHÁ'U'LLÁH, THE
PROPHET-FOUNDER OF OUR FAITH, 'THE EARTH IS BUT
ONE COUNTRY, AND MANKIND ITS CITIZENS'.**

”

The Bahá'í community advocates the adoption of the concept of world citizenship as a global ethic with the power to move hearts, change minds, and inspire action. In the words of Bahá'u'lláh, the Prophet-Founder of our Faith, *the Earth is but one country, and mankind its citizens.*

World citizenship begins with an acceptance of the oneness of the human family and the interconnectedness of all the nations of the Earth. While it encourages a sane and legitimate patriotism, it also insists upon a wider loyalty, a love of humanity as a whole. World citizenship encompasses the principles of social and economic justice, both within and between nations; non-adversarial decision-making at all levels of society; equality of the sexes; racial, ethnic, national and religious harmony; and the willingness to sacrifice for the common good. Such an approach will lead to a heightened awareness of the impacts of climate change on vulnerable populations, whose core activities in sustaining their livelihoods will be directly affected. We need to take on shared responsibility, making best use of the sciences and technological developments, to proactively and compassionately respond to those affected most severely by climate change.

As the stewards of the Earth for our own and future generations, it is our God-given responsibility to learn to make use of the Earth's natural resources, both renewable and non-renewable, in a manner that ensures sustainability into the distant reaches of time. Fostering world citizenship is a practical and necessary strategy to achieve this.

The Australian Bahá'í Community

The Bahá'í faith is the youngest of the world's independent religions, originating in 19th century Persia (Iran). Its central message is that humanity is one single race which should be unified in one global society. The Bahá'í Faith arrived in Australia in 1920. The magnificent Bahá'í Temple in Sydney's northern beaches is one of only seven Baha'i Houses of Worship in the world.



SPEAKING FOR...

BAPTISTS

Climate Change: Action is a Moral Imperative

THE BAPTIST UNION OF AUSTRALIA REPRESENTS ABOUT 330,000 CHRISTIANS. THE BUA SAYS THAT IT IS IMPERATIVE THAT GOVERNMENTS, CORPORATIONS, INDIVIDUALS AND LOCAL COMMUNITIES ALL RESPOND TO THE CURRENT GLOBAL ENVIRONMENTAL CRISIS.

Baptists believe the Bible is the primary authoritative guide to faith and life. The Bible declares that God created all things and that God's creation (i.e. the natural environment and its ecosystems) is good. Humans are not separate from but are part of this creation, although humans alone are made in the image of God (Gen 1:1-2:2). The creation teaches us about God (Rom 1:20; cf Job 39:1-42:6). While all things belong to God, God has entrusted the care of creation to humans (Ps 24:1; Gen 1:28-29; 2:15).

The relationship between humans and the rest of creation is therefore one of interdependence and stewardship. We are creatures shaped by the same processes and embedded in the same systems as those that sustain all other life. Yet as God's stewards we bear an ethical responsibility for the care of the Earth and the welfare of all living things.

We bless God for his greatness and goodness, his mercy and grace, and his love and justice evident in the creation. We enjoy the beauty and pleasures of God's creation. We are sustained and satisfied by its provisions. We are amazed by what science reveals of its structure and systems. We are awed by the miracle of life that continues to unfold day by day.

We also acknowledge that humans have often denied our interdependence with the creation and abrogated our stewardship of the creation. One major result of this is the global environmental degradation and climate change we now face. Overwhelming scientific evidence shows that humans have caused much of the global warming occurring today.

Climate change is one of the most significant threats to our economic and social life. It is imperative that governments and corporations, as well as individuals and local communities, respond to the current global environmental crisis. Failure by national governments to respond to climate change in decisive ways may result in unmanageable cost blow-outs and irreversible devastation to ecosystems and biodiversity. Further, failure to address climate change may ultimately contribute to the suffering and death of millions of the world's poorest and most vulnerable people, and to the forced migration of millions more to cooler and less physically threatening regions such as Australia.

We affirm that godly stewardship of the creation includes:

- respect for the creation and its ecosystems as gifts from God
- teaching and learning about the creation and its ecosystems
- wise allocation and use of the creation's finite natural resources
- rejecting a lifestyle of over-consumption and greed-satisfaction in favour of simplicity
- an awareness that wilful environmental degradation is sin and will attract God's judgment

“

FAILURE BY NATIONAL GOVERNMENTS TO RESPOND TO CLIMATE CHANGE MAY RESULT IN UNMANAGEABLE COST BLOW-OUTS, IRREVERSIBLE DEVASTATION TO ECOSYSTEMS, THE SUFFERING, DEATH AND FORCED MIGRATION OF THE WORLD'S POOREST AND MOST VULNERABLE... WILFUL ENVIRONMENTAL DEGRADATION IS SIN. IT WILL ATTRACT GOD'S JUDGEMENT.

”

We deny that:

- the creation and its ecosystems are to be worshipped or venerated
- humans have a right to exploit natural resources in permanently destructive ways
- technological advances can be expected to solve global ecological problems “just in time”
- Christians have a responsibility to focus on “spiritual” or “heavenly” matters to the exclusion of godly stewardship of the Earth’s resources and proper care of the creation
- the present global warming is merely part of a natural cycle and does not warrant urgent action on a global scale

We call on the Australian Government to take immediate action, in collaboration with other governments, corporations, community organisations and faith communities to mitigate the effects of global climate change; and in particular to:

- reduce to a sustainable level human contributions to climate change
- address the adverse environmental effects of climate change
- address the human suffering and loss resulting from climate change
- restore and replenish the ecosystems that humans have used or misused
- pass on Earth’s resources responsibly and faithfully to future generations

We call on all Australian citizens to:

- urge their political leaders to take steps to reduce global “greenhouse gas” emissions by 50 per cent by 2050, and to encourage wider use of renewable energy sources
- take steps to reduce their own “greenhouse gas” emissions such as:
 - using public transport or walking where possible, and purchasing smaller vehicles
 - reducing household energy consumption (especially air conditioners)
 - reducing household water consumption and installing rainwater tanks where possible
 - reusing and recycling household products

The Baptist Union of Australia

The Baptist Union of Australia is a family of some 1000 churches representing over 100,000 members. Australian Baptists are broadly evangelical and are committed to evangelism, religious liberty, social justice and community service. Baptists emerged in 17th century Europe as a result of the Protestant Reformation and concerns about freedom from coercion in church life.



SPEAKING FOR...
BUDDHISTS

Climate Change: When our Hearts are Good, the Sky will be Good to Us

BUDDHISM IS THE FASTEST GROWING RELIGION IN AUSTRALIA. AUSTRALIAN BUDDHISTS BELIEVE THAT WE NEED TO BE AWARE OF THE GLOBAL EFFECTS OF CLIMATE CHANGE: RICHER COUNTRIES WILL SUFFER LESS THAN POOR ONES.

In all environmental issues particularly climate change, the Federation of Australian Buddhist Councils Inc. is mindful of the message of the Buddha more than 2550 years ago.

The three poisons greed, hatred and delusion have effects going beyond the now. The arising of unwholesome unpleasant states is the result of ignorance of the consequences of wrong action and perpetuation of bad habits. One who practices Sila— moral living, Samadhi — concentration leading to mindfulness, and Panna, wisdom, heeds the universe, and the preservation of all forms of life.

Today we see the consequences of not paying attention to the Buddha's warnings. In advancing science and technology, the earth is being poisoned.

We call on Australians to remember the wisdom of the Buddha, and remember that in caring for the whole of existence, we care for ourselves, and in caring for ourselves, we care for existence itself.

Buddhism teaches that the idea of separateness is an illusion. The health of the whole is inseparably linked to the health of the parts, and the health of the parts is inseparably linked to the health of the whole. This means that caring for the environment begins with caring for oneself. *When our hearts are good, the sky will be good to us*, says Venerable Maha Ghosananda of Cambodia.

Buddhist practice makes one feel one's existence is no more important than anyone else's. If one treats nature as a friend and teacher, one can be in harmony with other creatures and appreciate the interconnectedness of all that lives.

Australian Buddhists need to be aware of the global effects of climate change. The richer countries may feel the impact less than those poorer nations, who will be the first to feel the effects of the richer nations' greed for material things.

The Federation of Australian Buddhist Councils urges all Australians to think very carefully about how we manage the future of our land of Australia.

Federation of Australian Buddhist Councils

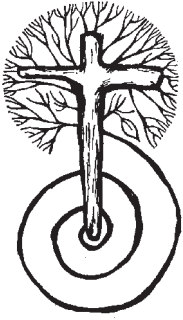
Buddhism was founded around 550 BC by Siddhartha Gautama, born in North India as a Hindu prince. In search of a solution to the problem of suffering, Buddha achieved enlightenment and spent the rest of his life teaching. There are around 500,000 Buddhists in Australia and 500 million worldwide.

“

BUDDHISM TEACHES THAT THE IDEA OF SEPARATENESS IS AN ILLUSION. THE HEALTH OF THE WHOLE IS INSEPARABLY LINKED TO THE HEALTH OF THE PARTS, AND THE HEALTH OF THE PARTS IS INSEPARABLY LINKED TO THE HEALTH OF THE WHOLE.

”





SPEAKING FOR...
CATHOLICS

Climate Change: Future Generations Should not be Robbed

CATHOLICISM IS AUSTRALIA'S LARGEST RELIGION, WITH NEARLY 28% OF AUSTRALIANS IDENTIFYING AS CATHOLICS. CATHOLIC SOCIAL TEACHING SAYS THAT 'THE ENVIRONMENT IS ONE OF THOSE GOODS THAT CANNOT BE ADEQUATELY SAFEGUARDED AND PROMOTED BY MARKET FORCES.'

(Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church, 470)

Rapid climate change as the result of human activity is now recognized by the global scientific community as a reality.

As pastors of more than a quarter of the Australian population, we urge Catholics as an essential part of their faith commitment to respond to the reality of climate change — with sound judgements and resolute action.

For our part, the Catholic Bishops of Australia offer the hand of cooperation to all spiritual and secular leaders in Australia. We do so in an act of solidarity, knowing that the Earth is our common home. Religion knows the natural world has value in itself. It belongs to God and is only on loan to humans, who are called to care for it. Therefore, the world and all in it must be freed from what can be termed 'a state of suffering'.

Humans are part of the created world, and inextricably part of a material existence. We are indebted to the scientists, environmental activists, rural people, foresters, fisher people, writers, artists, photographers, educators, business people, government officials, society leaders and all who have helped humanity become aware of the dangers of climate change, and created human choices for an alternative future. Such people show that humanity elevates itself when it reaches for a heightened consciousness of Life on Earth.

Future generations should not be robbed or left with extra burdens. Those who are to come have a claim to a just administration of the world's resources by this generation. We need to keep in mind the Precautionary Principle: where there are threats of serious or irreversible damage, lack of full scientific certainty should not be used as a reason for postponing remedial measures.

Each sector of the community has a role in imagining and building a future Australia with reduced greenhouse gas emissions.

Consumers send powerful signals to the market by their greenhouse-friendly choice of goods and services. We dream of a fuller view of humanity, greater than a mere owning of more material goods.

The three levels of government have duties of leadership to take decisions for the common good and the future of the nation. Internationally, Australia must continue to support structures that help reduce global warming. Strengthening biodiversity compliance and ratifying the Kyoto Protocol seem but minimal.

Business must appreciate that models of development, social structure and styles of technology must integrate environmental factors if there is to be authentic development. 'Super-development', often for the purpose of economic gain, poses an additional threat to the environment.

“

**“PROFIT IS A LIMITED GOAL
AND NEEDS TO BE LINKED TO SOCIALLY
AND ENVIRONMENTALLY RESPONSIBLE ETHICAL
INVESTMENT.... ULTIMATELY PROFIT IS SECONDARY
TO ECOLOGICALLY SUSTAINABLE LIVING.**

”

Profit is a limited goal and needs to be linked to socially and environmentally responsible ethical investment. Promoters of unsustainable lifestyles harm the environment now and will ultimately make Australia weaker. Infrastructure planners, the building sector, transport, manufacturing, electrical generation and related industries can all promote energy saving and seek alternative energy sources. Farmers and foresters do well when they respect nature’s rhythms. Ultimately profit is secondary to ecologically sustainable living.

The right to a safe ecological environment is a universal human right. As one of the world’s biggest emitters per capita of greenhouse gases, Australians have a particular duty to recognize the fact that they are directly implicated in the causes of atmospheric pollution. This is harming the many innocent peoples of the Pacific region, whose ecological footprint is radically lighter than our own. Of immediate concern are environmental refugees coming from our Pacific neighbours. More than periodic emergency relief they need long term structural help, debt relief, equitable trade policies and technological change.

Warfare has multiple negative environmental impacts and eats up much of the world’s financial resources. Therefore, we urge the choice of **dialogue and cooperation**. Catholics wish to participate in a future where all sectors of the community go beyond sectarian interests, secular and religious differences.

Our clear call as human beings is to renew the harmony between ourselves, our Creator and our world. We call on Catholics to lead by example.

Care for the Earth must become our purpose, and vocation.

The Catholic Church is the oldest institution in the Western world. It is the largest Christian Church, and also the largest organized body of any world religion, numbering upwards of 1,000,000,000 or approximately 1 in 6 of the world’s population. There are more than 5 million Catholics in Australia.

Climate Change: Just, Loving and Sacrificial Action Needed

THE AUSTRALIAN EVANGELICAL ALLIANCE IS A FELLOWSHIP OF INDIVIDUALS, CHURCHES AND ORGANISATIONS. FOR THE AEA, TAKING IMMEDIATE ACTION IS NOT ONLY A MATTER OF COMMON-SENSE — IT IS ALSO A MATTER OF JUSTICE.

Christians worship God who is Father, Son and Holy Spirit, the creator and redeemer of the universe. God entered into a protective relationship, not only with the people of the world, but also with its other creatures. God gave a particular privilege and responsibility to humanity to tend and care for the world as a participation in divine purposes. One day the whole of creation will be renewed. (Psalm 24; Genesis. 9: 1-17; 1: 26- 31; Ephesians 1:10; Romans 8:21; Revelation 21).

Christ has given the church the task of caring for people and the creation. In regard to large-scale environmental issues, God's call to love our neighbours means taking a global focus. It means recognising that there is unequal access to natural resources; that the effects of environmental disasters fall unevenly on the people of world. It means understanding the greater difficulty of poorer nations and the moral responsibility of wealthier ones. It means genuinely loving our global neighbours through just, loving and sacrificial action (Matt. 22: 34-40).

There is now no reputable science which denies either that climate change is happening or that a large part of global warming is human-induced. But there is still time to avoid the top range of risk — provided that we do what is necessary and act immediately. For the Australian Government, this would mean establishing a clear policy framework for significantly reducing emissions by the end of the next parliamentary term.

Global warming will affect everyone but its impacts will not be distributed evenly. The wealthy bear more responsibility for producing greenhouse gases, but the poor suffer more from their effects. We must acknowledge our special moral responsibility as a developed nation that has benefited from the causes of global warming by leading the way in finding solutions.

This problem requires a whole-of-society response. Individuals cannot leave it to community groups, or community groups leave it to business, or businesses leave it to government. Nor can Australia leave it to larger nations. Our credibility in the world, our moral responsibility to our global neighbours and our influence on others will be diminished unless we act.

It is also important to maintain a broad view that encompasses the needs of the whole world and future generations. The interests of business and scientists can coincide, as the collaborative venture of the Australian Business Roundtable on Climate Change and the Australian Conservation Foundation shows. It has called for nationally consistent climate change policies supported by all jurisdictions. We believe that the Christian community is willing to bear the cost needed to adopt their recommendations and those of the CSIRO.

We also support the call for a legal framework for a carbon price signal, which applies the costs of pollution to the technologies which cause it, and ultimately to those who

“

**WE CANNOT ALLOW THE CONSEQUENCES OF
GLOBAL WARMING TO FALL MORE SEVERELY ON THOSE
WHO HAVE NOT CAUSED IT; NOR CAN WE EXPECT
THE SOLUTION TO COME FROM OTHERS WHEN
WE ARE AMONG THE BENEFICIARIES OF THE ACTIONS
THAT HAVE CAUSED THE PROBLEM.**

”

use them; not to do so would be to subsidise greenhouse gas emitting technologies. It is also a means of encouraging the development of other energy options. Any additional cost will not ultimately be borne by either government or business, but by individuals and families. We are willing to bear this cost.

Taking immediate action is not only a matter of common-sense, it is also a matter of justice. We cannot allow the consequences of global warming to fall more severely on those who have not caused it; nor can we expect the solution to come from others when we are among the beneficiaries of the actions that have caused the problem.

If action is taken soon, the costs will not be excessive but modest and manageable. The Business Roundtable believes that deep cuts in emissions could be achieved with policies that would only reduce economic growth by 2.2 to 2.1 per cent per annum. We should be willing to accept this. Living standards and income can continue to rise strongly with these policies, and moving to more efficient modes of energy production might prove to be more economically beneficial than current, less-efficient processes.

To prevent Australian businesses from being disadvantaged by a unilateral policy on climate change, the Government must continue to negotiate with other countries. As we have benefited from policies that caused global warming, we have a moral responsibility to take the lead in negotiating and in acting to mitigate the effects of climate change.

Australian Christians are responsible to God for the way their actions affect the world and the lives of other people now and in the future. It is not only governments that should act to mitigate climate change, but also Christians and church communities who serve the Creator and Redeemer of the world, and the Lord whose love extends to all people. We need to examine not just the social, scientific and economic aspects of climate change, but also the biblical and ethical issues. Individuals, families and corporations should live by these ethical principles and use them as the basis of their response to climate change.

The Australian Evangelical Alliance

The Australian Evangelical Alliance aims to be a catalyst for Christian unity, cooperation and mission. AEA is affiliated with the World Evangelical Alliance, an international fellowship with National Alliances in 127 countries embracing more than 420 million evangelical Christians. This is a summary of a longer statement of 1,700 words accessible at www.ea.org.au.



SPEAKING FOR...

GREEK ORTHODOX

Climate Change: We are “Missing the Mark”

THE GREEK ORTHODOX ARCHDIOCESE OF IS PART OF THE EASTERN CHRISTIAN TRADITION THAT GOES BACK TO THE APOSTLES. WHEN WE CARE FOR THE ENVIRONMENT, SAYS HIS EMINENCE ARCHBISHOP STYLIANOS HARKIANAKI, WE ARE THEN TRULY ‘IN THE IMAGE AND LIKENESS OF GOD’.

You brought me into this life as into an enchanted paradise. We have seen the sky, like a deep blue cup ringing with birds in the azure heights. We have listened to the soothing murmur of the forest and the sweet-sounding music of the waters. We have tasted fragrant fruit of fine flavour and sweet-scented honey. How pleasant is our stay with you on earth: it is a joy to be your guest.

— *Orthodox Prayer in Praise of God’s Creation*

Human beings are created to express God; in particular to manifest the action –or the *energies* – of the Transcendent. Made in the ‘image and likeness of God’, we are ordered to become like God. This ‘hard-wiring’ of God’s image and likeness into humankind means that there can be no definition of the human person without God.

Yet, when we look at the consequences of our exploitation of God’s world that is exactly what we do see. Human beings have caused species to become extinct, and destroyed the biodiversity of creation; we have degraded the integrity of the Earth by causing excessive and rapid climate change; we have destroyed forests and wetlands, and contaminated the Earth’s waters; we have polluted its lands and its air with poisonous substances.

This is sinful. Sinfulness means we *have ‘missed the mark’* as to God’s original purpose for creation, choosing instead to become beings consumed by avarice and greed, contrary to the will of our Creator. When we consume the Earth’s resources with no care for God’s labour in creating them, we become estranged from our inner most purpose. Each person becomes estranged from his very ‘self’.

To be made in God’s ‘image and likeness’ as the Bible tells us, is to do with man’s concrete responsibility for the whole created universe. To reflect God’s ‘image and likeness’ means we are created to *do as God does* in a creaturely way. God’s primary action towards the world is Grace. Thus human beings are called receive the Divine Grace. It is unreasonable and arrogant (not to say un-Biblical) to imagine that this Scriptural text gives humans any God-given authority to destroy or otherwise desecrate God’s creation.

God makes Adam out of the soil of the ground (Gen. 2:19). This alone shows that human beings are fundamentally connected to the Earth. That Scripture makes man ‘lord’ to the rest of creation indicates Man’s singular responsibility for creation. It does not in the least signify any alienation between the two. We are organically bound to the rest of the universe.

The Greek Orthodox Church believes that Man is effectively a *Locum tenens* (Latin: “holding the place”), a person who is temporarily fulfilling the duties and responsibilities of a particular office) of God over the entire creation. The instruction to ‘subdue the earth’ cannot mean external ‘conquest’ nor mere ‘taming’ of the elements of the world. This would be fuel for war between man and all other beings.

“

**TO BE MADE IN GOD’S IMAGE AND LIKENESS AS THE
BIBLE TELLS US, IS TO DO WITH MAN’S CONCRETE
RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE WHOLE CREATED UNIVERSE.
TO REFLECT GOD’S IMAGE AND LIKENESS MEANS
WE ARE BUILT TO DO AS GOD DOES.**

”

Man is called to become ‘lord of the Earth’ and this ‘lordship’ should be understood as *concern and love to lead the world - through humankind - towards the destiny set by God.*

The Genesis account also tells that God permits Man to name the creatures God has made out of nothing (Gen 2:19-20). The giving of a name suggests a duty to know and to recognise each creature, in its particularity and uniqueness. To give a name presupposes love. It is love - the surest way of knowing - that delivers us profound understanding of each being.

When we know, when we love, when we understand - how may we then destroy?

To be called to God’s ‘image and likeness’ does not mean we are isolated, nor does it mean we should see ourselves as separate from the world, or to become ‘perfect’ apart from the world.

To be in the ‘image and likeness’ of God implies that we accept our place in the centre of all creation as a vigilant servant and celebrant of the ‘cosmic liturgy’ - that interconnected, subtle, beautiful web of life - so that the sanctification by Grace of all may be attained.

The Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of Australia

The Orthodox Church Australia - “Orthodox” signifies both “right believing” and “right worshipping” - today numbers around 250 million throughout the world. The Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of Australia lies within the jurisdiction of the Ecumenical Patriarch at Constantinople (Istanbul). There are more than 600,000 Orthodox in Australia today.

This essay is adapted from a statement by Archbishop Stylianos in the article, “The Sacredness of Creation”, in the annual journal of St Andrew’s Theological College, Phronema Vol. 5 (1990): 5-14.



SPEAKING FOR...
HINDUS

Climate Change : Om! Shanti! Shanti! Shanti! – Om! Peace! Peace! Peace!

HINDUISM IS THE WORLD'S OLDEST RELIGION AND ITS THIRD LARGEST. MOST HINDUS ARE VEGETARIANS, DUE TO THEIR BELIEF IN THE SANCTITY OF ALL LIFE AND COMMITMENT TO SIMPLICITY. THERE ARE ALMOST 100,000 HINDUS LIVING IN AUSTRALIA TODAY AND ABOUT 1 BILLION GLOBALLY.

*Live in complete harmony with Nature,
Experience the grace of God in the splendour of the universe.
Be blessed by God's reassuring love,
The sweet dawn will sweeten your soul,
The dazzling mid-day will set your hearts aflutter,
And the serene music of your soul will guide you towards peace and prosperity.
And when the day's task is over, you will sleep in the lap of Mother Nature,
All the deities will be favourable to you.
— Mother Nature, Yajur Veda 34.37*

This is the message of living in harmony with Mother Nature from the Holy Scriptures of Hinduism, one of the oldest religions of the world. It is a pity that we have ignored this sublime message of living in complete harmony with nature and enjoying the many splendours of the universe. By our indiscriminate use and abuse of its abundant resources we have spoilt its beauty. Consumerism has been at the core of our ever-increasing desire to possess more and more to add to our so-called comforts for living. We have complicated our lives, and have added lots of mental worries. The ever-increasing demand on our energy resources has led to climate change and warming of the earth's atmosphere with some drastic consequences.

Mahatma Gandhi, one of the greatest human beings of recent times, had said that there is enough provided by nature to meet everybody's needs, but not to fulfil their wants. He led a very simple life himself, living with very meagre personal possessions and setting an example for humanity. There is no limit to our wants and that is the basic cause of our problems. The Scriptures have always emphasised that we should control our desires.

In the Gita, Lord Shri Krishna says:

Thinking of objects, attachment to them is formed. From attachment longing and from longing anger grows. From anger comes delusion, and delusion leads to loss of memory. From loss of memory comes the ruin of discrimination and from the ruin of discrimination the person perishes. Hence be a self-controlled man, moving amongst objects of desire with senses under restraint, free from attraction and aversion, attain tranquillity and peace.

The message is to control our desires and thus reduce the demand on precious resources. Conserve energy and help save the environment.

Mahatma Gandhi was also a vegetarian and had propagated the cause of vegetarianism. Many recent health studies have pointed out the obvious health advantages of vegetarian diet. In *The Ethics of What We Eat*, Peter Singer and Jim Mason write:

It has become apparent that the human appetite for animal flesh is a driving force behind virtually every major category of environmental damage now threatening the human future,

“

... A VERY IMPORTANT ASPECT OF THIS ISSUE IS THE POLLUTION OF INTERNAL ENVIRONMENT — OUR INNER PEACE AND TRANQUILLITY. UNFORTUNATELY, THE ATMOSPHERE NOW IS FULL OF HATRED AND MUTUAL FEAR... WE HAVE TO FIND PEACE... WE HAVE TO OVERCOME MUTUAL HATRED.

”

deforestation, erosion, fresh water scarcity, air and water pollution, climate change, biodiversity loss, social injustice, the destabilisation of communities and the spread of disease.

The authors claim that since European settlement in Australia, 13 per cent of the land has been cleared of native vegetation, mostly for grazing animals. When it comes to feeding the world, an acre of land used for crops could feed about 10 times as many people as an acre for grass-fed beef. The emissions from cows belching accounts for about 11 per cent of Australia's total national emissions, or 61 million tonnes of CO₂-equivalent per year. Hence, by switching to vegetarian diet we can help save the environment.

Animal rights is another aspect of this. According to Mark Berriman, Director of the Australian Vegetarian Society (NSW): *Over 50 billion animals are killed worldwide each year. It is hard to comprehend. We must develop compassion towards other creatures who at the moment have no legal rights or respect.*

This brings us to another very important aspect of this issue and that is the pollution of internal environment, our inner peace and tranquillity. Unfortunately, the atmosphere now is full of hatred and mutual fear. We are living under the constant fear of terrorism. This so-called war on terrorism cannot be won through violent means: violence begets violence. We have to find peaceful means to solve this terrible situation. We have to overcome mutual hatred.

Hinduism believes in unity of existence. Vedas boldly declare, “*Sarvam Idam Khalu Brahma* —all this is nothing but Brahman”. The Christ says, “Love Thy Neighbour”. Why? Hinduism provides the answer — because you and your neighbour are one. The same God resides in him and in you. Let us hope and pray that good sense prevails with all of us and that we do the right thing to help overcome the damage we have been causing to the inner and the external environment and learn to live in peace and harmony with mother nature.

Om! Shanti! Shanti! Shanti! — Om! Peace! Peace! Peace!

The Hindu Council of Australia

Hinduism is the indigenous religion of India. It predates recorded history. It is called the Sanatan Dharma — the eternal religion. It was not founded by any one individual prophet. It is based on the revelations of the highest truth by the ancient Rishies — seers, the wise men and women of ancient India.



SPEAKING FOR...

JEWISH PEOPLE

Climate Change: All Religious Groups must Unite

JUDAISM HOLDS THAT GOD IS ONE, AND THAT GOD'S KINDNESS EXTENDS TO ALL CREATION BECAUSE 'THE EARTH IS FOUNDED UPON KINDNESS'. AUSTRALIAN JEWS HERE CALL FOR AN 'ACROSS-THE BOARD-COMMITMENT' TO ACTION ON CLIMATE CHANGE.

Soon after mankind's Divine creation, the record of human intervention in the natural order is marked by devastation on a massive scale. Most significant of all is the pressure on the environment by the growth of human population, from around half a billion in 1600 to six billion and rising today.

There is a religious tone to public awareness about environmental sustainability because it is here that humanity comes face to face with the fundamental questions of our place in the universe and our responsibility for it.

The opening passages of Genesis have had a profound influence on Western civilisation with their understanding of the universe coming into being as the work of God, Who then gives humankind dominion over nature and the ability to shape the environment.

But the second chapter of Genesis defines human responsibility. The first man is set in the Garden of Eden "to work it and take care of it". The first of the verbs in Hebrew has the sense that man is to "serve" nature, the second means to "guard" it, a word used later in the Bible to mean guarding property which does not belong to him – he must exercise vigilance in his protection and is liable for loss through negligence.

Jews believe that we do not own nature – "The earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof". We are trustees of nature on behalf of God who made it and owns it, and for the sake of future generations. Creation has Divine purpose as God's masterpiece and though we have the mandate to use it, we have none to destroy or despoil it.

While there is danger in reading 21st century concerns into ancient texts, there is little doubt that much biblical legislation is concerned with what we call sustainability. This is particularly true of the three great commands concerning periodic rest in which the earth is given its entitlement to rest – the Sabbath, the sabbatical year and the Jubilee year. Other commandments are directed against our interfering too much with nature; though the Bible permits us to use some animals for food, for example, we are not permitted to cull them to extinction.

Some scholars have believed that any intervention in the natural order is forbidden; others that creation was left deliberately incomplete so that we could also play our part in "perfecting the world under the sovereignty of God".

The power of religious thought is that it provides a framework of thought for such large intractable issues and those surrounding sustainability. It is easier to understand the moral constraints on action when we believe that there is God to Whom we owe responsibility; that we are not absolute owners of the planet; and that we are covenantally linked to those who will come after us. The simplest image in thinking about our ecological responsibilities is to see the earth as belonging to the source of being, and us as its trustees, charged with conserving and if possible beautifying it for the sake of our grandchildren not yet born.

“

**THE JEWISH COMMUNITY URGES ALL FAITHS
TO WORK TOWARDS A DECLARATION OF COMMITMENT
TO THE STUDY OF CLIMATE CHANGE
AND HOW TO CONTAIN AND CONTROL IT.**

”

This trusteeship will be vitiated and the world will become uninhabitable and useless if man's carelessness and greed adversely affect nature and the environment, including the climate. Even if unacceptable changes occur without man's direct involvement, man must work to understand, contain and control such changes. Therefore it is essential for nations, including Australia, to devote adequate funds and energy to the study of climate change — what it is, how it occurs and how to contain and control it. This task requires across-the-board commitment without fear or favour.

In Australia all religious groups must unite in supporting and signing a declaration of commitment to this task.

Every technological civilisation faces two opposing dangers. One is the hubris that says: we have godlike powers, therefore let us take the place of God. The other is the fear that says: in the name of God, let us not use these godlike powers at all. Both are wrong. Each technological advance carries with it the possibility of diminishing or enhancing human dignity. What matters is how we use it. The way to use it is in covenant with God, honouring His image that is mankind.

The Executive Council of Australian Jewry

The Executive Council of Australian Jewry is the democratically-elected roof body of the Australian Jewish community. As Judaism is the mother faith out of which all monotheistic faiths emerged, Jewish ethical teaching is influential in many parts of the world. There is considerable dialogue between Judaism and other faiths, both in Australia and elsewhere including Israel. Australian Jewry numbers about 120,000 and many of its members have made major contributions towards the upbuilding of the nation.



SPEAKING FOR...
LUTHERANS

Climate Change: The Greatest Danger Facing Our Planet

THE LUTHERAN CHURCH OF AUSTRALIA IS PART OF THE GREAT REFORMED (PROTESTANT) TRADITION. THE LCA BELIEVES THAT THE POSSIBILITY OF UNCHECKED CLIMATE CHANGE CAUSING IRREPARABLE DAMAGE MAKES IT ONE OF THE MOST IMPORTANT MORAL ISSUES FACING HUMANITY.

The Lutheran Church of Australia accepts the view of the large majority of the world's scientists that climate change (global warming) is the greatest danger facing our planet. It recognises that this is not merely a future danger but already to some extent a reality. It also recognises that feedback loops may already have begun that will result in the acceleration of global warming in a process that may become irreversible (e.g., as the polar icecaps melt, less of the sun's heat will be reflected back from the earth and more will be absorbed, speeding global warming). Tim Flannery presents the scientific evidence in *The Weather Makers: The History and Future Impact of Climate Change*.

The church recognises that climate change is mainly the result of human activity, particularly the burning of fossil fuels and the destruction of forests.

The church recognises that climate change is already having damaging effects and will potentially have catastrophic effects on the world's climate systems, its ecosystems, the survival of plant and animal life and the human populations. Global warming will cause the extinction of large numbers of animal and insect species through the destruction of habitats and the disruption of normal weather and climate patterns. Human populations will suffer from the loss of food supplies as rain decreases, agricultural and grazing lands are lost and coral reefs and fisheries disappear. Diseases such as malaria will become more widespread. Extreme weather conditions and natural disasters will become more common. Large areas of land (including cities and farming land) will be inundated, water supplies will be contaminated and vast numbers of people will be displaced as sea levels rise.

The church recognises that urgent action on a global scale is required immediately to halt the production of greenhouse gases and to slow the warming process if irreparable damage to our planet and untold suffering to humanity is to be averted.

The church recognises that the possibility of unchecked climate change causing irreparable damage to our planet and placing the survival of human life on earth at risk makes the issue of climate change one of the most important moral issues facing humanity.

From a Christian point of view, the destruction of the earth's life-sustaining systems represents an affront to God as the creator of all things and also represents a dereliction of our God-given duty as human beings to care for our world and to use its limited resources responsibly.

Global warming and its consequences involves a failure on the part of humanity to recognise that our responsibility as human beings is to care for each other and to act for one another's good, not just our own. From a Christian perspective it involves a failure to follow Christ's command to "love one another as I have loved you". Our duty to love one another applies not only to our own generation but also to all generations to come, whom we may be condemning to death or a life of suffering by our actions.

“

**FROM A CHRISTIAN PERSPECTIVE
(INACTION ON CLIMATE CHANGE) INVOLVES A FAILURE
TO FOLLOW CHRIST’S COMMAND TO “LOVE ONE
ANOTHER AS I HAVE LOVED YOU”.... THERE IS A
PARTICULAR RESPONSIBILITY ON THOSE OF US WHO ARE
THE MOST EXTRAVAGANT USERS OF THE EARTH’S
RESOURCES TO CHANGE...**

”

A particular moral issue for the developed world is that, although we are responsible for most of global warming, the poorer people in the less-developed countries of the world will suffer most from climate change. They will be most adversely affected by such things as rising sea levels, less availability of food and water, greater susceptibility to disease and more severe natural disasters.

This places particular responsibility on those of us who are the worst polluters and the most extravagant users of the earth’s resources to change what we are doing and to take remedial action.

Urgent action is required at the global, national and local levels to drastically reduce the production of greenhouse gases, to encourage and promote energy conservation and energy efficiency and to energetically develop and promote the use of renewable forms of energy production.

As citizens we need to urge our political leaders to develop and put in place long-term policies and strategies to effectively combat climate change. As Tim Flannery has pointed out, *It’s only in Australia and the United States we find there is opposition, still, to addressing the problems¹¹.*

Education programs about climate change are needed and information needs to be disseminated about what individuals, organisations and groups can do to reduce waste and pollution and conserve energy.

We acknowledge that, as a church, we have particular responsibilities in relation to this issue. We need to study it more thoroughly; educate our members about it and provide guidance for them about ways in which they can respond to it; encourage our governments to take greater action in relation to it; and set an example for others to follow of responsible action towards the environment and loving action towards other people, especially the most disadvantaged and most vulnerable.

Lutheran Church of Australia

The Lutheran church is the oldest and largest Protestant church, with nearly 83 million members worldwide. It dates back to the Reformation in the sixteenth century when Martin Luther challenged some of the teachings and practices of the church of his day. Luther insisted that the Bible is the authority that decides what the church should teach and do. The Lutheran Church of Australia has around 250,000 members.



SPEAKING FOR... **MUSLIMS**

Climate Change: Green is the Colour of Islam

ISLAM IS THE THIRD OF THE SO CALLED 'RELIGIONS OF THE BOOK', THE OTHERS BEING JUDAISM AND CHRISTIANITY. AUSTRALIAN MUSLIMS HERE CALL FOR ALL PEOPLE OF RELIGION TO FORGET THEIR THEOLOGICAL DIFFERENCES - AND WORK TOGETHER TO SAVE THE WORLD FROM CLIMATIC RUIN.

Many verses of Qur-an prescribe a way of life which expects human beings to conserve and enrich the environment. The environment is God's creation. The creation of earth and all its natural resources is a sign of His wisdom, mercy and power for the benefit of humans. It is God's best creation, and serves to develop human awareness and understanding of the creator.

God entrusts humans to enjoy the bounty of nature on the strict condition that they take care of it and preserve it. The colour of Islam is green, signifying the importance of nature.

The conditions Islam imposes on the use of the gift of nature are:

- strict restrictions on the use of life-supporting water
- eating and drinking modestly
- compulsory fasting to teach the followers of Islam to value of food and drink they enjoy
- austerity in all aspects of life, so that wastefulness and extravagance are great sins.

Our economic and social systems are totally at odds with the teachings of Islam. The economy is based on perpetual growth, which means ever-increasing production and consumption of goods and services. The protagonists of the free market system promote growth without considering its impact on nature.

The results of this policy are:

- increasing production and consumption
- increasingly use of non-renewable resources to manufacture disposable consumer products
- unsustainable use of fossil fuel to generate power and run motor vehicles
- longer working hours.

The consequences are staggering:

Resources, particularly fossil fuels, have started running out, which is causing political conflict over supplies.

Unrestricted exploitation and destruction of nature have produced unimaginable climatic changes. Polar ice is melting, threatening low-lying countries. As most of the world is enduring high temperatures and lack of rain, shortage of water is becoming a world problem and is affecting the production of food grains.

With climate change, natural calamities such as drought, cyclones and flooding are becoming more frequent and unpredictable.

These changes are taking a heavy toll on plants and animals, and many species are disappearing fast.

Too much work in search of wealth is taking a heavy toll on our health and family life.

“

**WE ARE LIVING IN A WORLD WHICH IS ON THE VERGE
OF CALAMITY, BUT WE DO NOT SEE ANY AWAKENING
IN THE MINDS OF OUR POLITICAL MASTERS.
THE RECORD OF THE GOVERNMENT OF AUSTRALIA
IS POOR.**

”

We are living in a world which is on the verge of calamity, but we do not see any awakening in the minds of our political masters. The record of the Government of Australia is poor:

It has refused to endorse or adopt all the very modest attempts by the world community to change course in order to save the climate.

It has failed to place any restraints on the use of fossil fuels. The provision of a subsidy to convert motor vehicles to LPG use was a matter of political expediency, and the price of LPG will also rise as consumption increases.

The Government has effectively reduced funding for many scientific project aimed at finding sustainable energy sources and alternative technologies to reduce our dependency on fossil fuels.

The Australian Federation of Islamic Councils believes it is the responsibility of all social and religious organisations to cooperate on a public awareness program about the calamity awaiting us before it is too late. The measures necessary to prevent further deterioration are difficult. We list them along with the easier one:

- The use of motor vehicles should be reduced in favour of public transport.
- Alternative technology must be adopted or motor vehicles, e.g., hybrid cars and hydrogen fuel cell cars.
- Urban consolidation must be encouraged to reduce the need for long-distance commuting.
- The use of disposable items must be restricted, and recycling encouraged.
- Alternative energy development programs must be introduced and encouraged.
- The Government must promote measures that emphasise quality life rather than consumption.

None of this will happen unless there is a shift away from growth economics and the concept of profit above everything.

Time is running out. Unfortunately there is no sign of awakening in sight. People of religion must forget their theological differences and work together to save the world from climatic ruin.

Australian Federation of Islamic Councils (AFIC)

The Australian Federation of Islamic Councils represents Muslim congregations and their councils in Australia. Islam (meaning ‘submission and peace’) is the world’s second largest religion. There are just over 250,000 Muslims in Australia. Islamic law (or ‘Shariah law’) specifies that human beings are responsible for the planet, that they must avoid unnecessary waste and protect animals from cruelty. Shariah law also insists on the conservation of forests, and limits the growth of cities.



SPEAKING FOR...

THE SALVATION ARMY

Climate Change: Love of Poor Means we Must Speak Out

THE SALVATION ARMY AFFIRMS THAT WE MUST ADOPT LARGE SCALE AND PERMANENT CHANGES IN ATTITUDES AND BEHAVIOUR TOWARDS GOD'S CREATION. IF WE FAIL TO DO THIS, WE RISK THE LIVES OF THE WEAKEST AND MOST VULNERABLE — ESPECIALLY CHILDREN AND THE ELDERLY.

The Salvation Army believes that, as people made in the image of God (Genesis 1:27), we have a responsibility to use the resources of the earth in a way that ensures that people in this and future generations do not suffer from poverty or injustice. This is part of our stewardship of the earth and our love of others. In the modern world, Christian stewardship implies large-scale and permanent changes in attitudes and behaviour towards God's creation, so that we begin to "replenish the earth" (Gen. 1:28).

Responsibility was given to humanity to "cultivate and keep" the earth (Gen. 2:15), but humanity has destroyed or is destroying much of God's creation (Isaiah 24: 4,5).

God's instruction to "subdue" the earth and "rule" over every living thing (Gen. 1:28) cannot be interpreted to justify exploitation. God gave His people rights and privileges, but these included duties and responsibilities.

Given the finite resources of the world and its expanding population, together with the impact of industrial and rural activities, development must take account of the need to preserve the earth — an exercise in responsible stewardship.

Therefore Salvationists believe the following principles:

- concern and regard for all life forms, not only human life
- a striving for a more responsible lifestyle in order to do less damage to the environment
- investment in regeneration, taking a long-term view rather than short-term expediency in thought and action
- care for those who become the victims of the need for environmental stewardship, or who are the victims of environmental vandalism.

Salvationists are encouraged to consider seriously their personal responsibility for the environment by taking practical steps to regenerate and conserve God's creation.

General Eva Burrows, for the Worldwide Salvation Army.

The Salvation Army came into being in 19th Century England as a response by founder William Booth to the human devastation caused by the industrial revolution. The Salvation Army is a hierarchical church structure (in true military style!) with all positions except that of General being held by appointment. The Salvation Army in Australia is involved in aged care, drug and alcohol counselling, with domestic and other violent offenders, and helps to find missing persons. There are about 100,000 members of the Salvation Army in Australia.

“

**WE MUST CARE FOR THOSE WHO BECOME THE VICTIMS
OF THE NEED FOR ENVIRONMENTAL STEWARDSHIP, OR
WHO ARE THE VICTIMS OF ENVIRONMENTAL VANDALISM.**

”





SPEAKING FOR...

SIKHS

Climate Change: Harmony, Rights and Justice for all

SIKHS BELIEVE THAT WE FACE TWO URGENT CRISES: A SOCIAL JUSTICE CRISIS, CAUSED BY HUMANITY'S CONFRONTATION WITH ITSELF AND THE ENVIRONMENTAL CRISIS, WHICH IS CAUSED BY HUMANITY'S CONFRONTATION WITH NATURE.

The Sikh scripture, *Guru Granth Sahib*, declares that the purpose of human beings is to achieve a blissful state and to be in harmony with the earth and all creation: *Creating the world, God has made it a place to practice spirituality* (Guru Granth Sahib, 1035). It seems, however, that humans have drifted away from that ideal. For the earth is today saturated with problems. It is agonising over the fate of its inhabitants and their future! It is in peril as never before. Its lakes and rivers are being choked, killing its marine life. Its forests are being denuded. A smoky haze envelops the cities of the world. Human beings are exploiting human beings.

There is a sense of crisis in all parts of the world, in various countries and among various peoples. The demands of national economic growth and individual needs and desires are depleting the natural resources of the earth.

There is serious concern that the earth may no longer be a sustainable biosystem. The major crises facing the earth — the social justice crisis and the environmental crisis — together are heading the earth toward a disastrous situation. The social justice crisis is caused by humanity's confrontation with itself and the environmental crisis is caused by humanity's confrontation with nature.

The environmental crisis caused by humanity's exploitation of nature is leading to the depletion of renewable resources, destruction of forests, and overuse of land for agriculture and habitation. Today pollution is contaminating air, land, and water. Smoke from industries, homes, and vehicles fills the air. Industrial waste and consumer trash is polluting streams and rivers, ponds and lakes. Much of the waste is a product of modern technology; it is not biodegradable and not reusable, and its long-term consequences are unknown. The viability of many animal and plant species, and possibly that of the human species itself, is at stake.

The social justice crisis is that poverty, hunger, disease, exploitation, and injustice are widespread. There are economic wars over resources and markets.

A Sikh theologian, Kapur Singh, explains that Sikhism has three postulates implicit in its teachings:

- There is no essential duality between spirit and matter.
- Humans have the capacity to consciously participate in the process of spiritual progression.
- The highest goal of spiritual progression is harmony with God, while remaining earth-conscious, so that the world itself may be transformed to a spiritual plane of existence. The rights of the poor and the marginal must not be violated. Women, constituting half the world's population, must not have their rights abused.

These crises cry out for an immediate and urgent solution. The answer requires returning to the basic question of the purpose of human beings in this universe and an understanding of ourselves and God's creation.

“

THERE IS SERIOUS CONCERN THAT THE EARTH MAY NO LONGER BE A SUSTAINABLE BIOSYSTEM. THE MAJOR CRISES FACING THE EARTH — THE SOCIAL JUSTICE CRISIS AND THE ENVIRONMENTAL CRISIS — TOGETHER ARE HEADING THE EARTH TOWARD A DISASTROUS SITUATION.

”

We are called to the vision of Guru Nanak, a World Society comprising God-conscious human beings who have realised God. To these spiritual beings the earth and the universe are sacred; all life is unity, and their mission is the spiritualisation of all.

Spiritualisation is a liberation from material compulsions and attractions. It means an awareness of the Cosmic Order and striving toward the execution of Divine Will. So, the spiritualised human is creative and constructive. Therefore a Sikh life is a life of harmony with other individuals, with other beings, and with other forms.

For an enlightened individual the world has only one purpose: to practise spirituality. That is the ultimate objective of all humans. Such a person is involved in human problems and society and has to prove his or her effectiveness there. Such a person lives with a mission — and works for the emancipation of all. A true Sikh is for individual human rights, the environment, and justice for all.

Australian Sikh Association

Sikhs profess the belief in one God. There are approximately 20,000 Sikhs in Australia, but about 25 million worldwide, of whom 80% of live in the province of Punjab, in India. Sikhism began in the Punjab in the 15th Century. The word ‘Sikh’ means ‘student of the Truth’. This statement was originally published by the Alliance of Religions and Conservation and is used by permission.



SPEAKING FOR...

THE UNITING CHURCH IN AUSTRALIA

Climate Change: For the Reconciliation of all Creation

...WE ARE CONCERNED WITH THE BASIC HUMAN RIGHTS OF FUTURE GENERATIONS AND WILL URGE THE WISE USE OF ENERGY, THE PROTECTION OF THE ENVIRONMENT AND THE REPLENISHMENT OF THE EARTH'S RESOURCES FOR THEIR USE AND ENJOYMENT.

The Uniting Church in Australia, in its first public statement in 1977, expressed (above) what would be an abiding concern with the well-being of the planet for the rights of future generations. The natural environment is, however, not merely a resource for the benefit of human beings but has intrinsic value as part of God's good creation.

Our commitment to the environment arises out of the Christian belief that God, as the Creator of the universe, calls us into a special relationship with the creation — a relationship of mutuality and interdependence which seeks the reconciliation of all creation with God. We believe that God's will for the earth is renewal and reconciliation, not destruction by human beings. This was expressed as the very heart of our mission in our foundation document:

God in Christ has given to all people in the Church the Holy Spirit as a pledge and foretaste of that coming reconciliation and renewal which is the end in view for the whole creation. The Church's call is to serve that end.

The Uniting Church has always been concerned about the welfare of all creatures and plant life and believes that nature is not to be plundered and abused. We must acknowledge, however, that the Church has been complicit in the abuse of creation. We have lived out a doctrine of the domination of nature by accepting and engaging in practices which have failed to safeguard the integrity of creation. We have supported systems and structures which exploit the natural environment in the service of human greed. We make this confession and we renew our commitment to move towards sustainable non-exploitative living, believing that God's creation — the earth itself and all the life that it supports — is precious and the earth's resources exist for the good of all creatures and future generations.

We regard climate change as a serious threat to the future of humanity and the planet. Our creation of greenhouse gas emissions and our failure to plan for a sustainable future is seriously exacerbating the problems we face. The threat posed by climate change therefore challenges the way we live in a fundamental way. If we are to meet and overcome the challenge we must think creatively about the organisation of our social and economic institutions, our relationship with each other across national and cultural boundaries and our relationship with the environment.

Some humans consume the earth's resources whilst others pay the price. As one of the major producers of greenhouse gas emissions per capita, Australia must acknowledge that it has a responsibility to address the social, economic and environmental policies which support our continued reliance on fossil fuels. As long as we abuse the atmosphere and entire ecosystems for the sake of short-term economic gain for a few, we undermine our own future. It is important that Australia's social, economic and environmental policies begin to reflect that social justice and ecological justice are not

“

...THE CHURCH HAS A LONG HISTORY OF CONCERN ABOUT THE NUCLEAR FUEL CYCLE AND REMAINS UNCONVINCED ABOUT THE USE OF NUCLEAR POWER AS A SOLUTION TO GLOBAL WARMING..... WE MUST PROMOTE RENEWABLE ENERGY SOURCES.

”

competing interests, but have shared solutions. It makes good economic and political sense to spend money to ensure the long-term well-being of our natural world — there can be no security for humanity without a healthy ecosystem.

UnitingJustice believes that the Australian Government must set serious targets for greenhouse gas emission reductions, primarily through the promotion of renewable energy sources, measures to reduce energy demand and promotion of energy efficient measures. The Church has a long history of concern about the nuclear fuel cycle and remains unconvinced about the use of nuclear power as a solution to global warming. We believe that the continued research, development and implementation of renewable energy is an absolute priority for governments and industry in order to minimise greenhouse gas production. As a matter of urgency we must reduce our dependence on fossil fuels.

As the impact of climate change will affect some of the world's poorest people first, we are particularly concerned with the fate of some of our most vulnerable Pacific neighbours. Our partner churches in the Pacific have called on the Church throughout the world to act in solidarity to reduce the causes of human-induced climate change by supporting the Kyoto Protocol, reducing energy use and developing clean, renewable energy sources. Lives, livelihoods, societies, cultures and ecosystems of the Pacific Islands have already been affected by rising sea levels, diminishing agricultural space, diminishing reserves of fresh water and changing weather patterns, including more frequent and unpredictable storms. The coral reefs and fishing industry have already been devastated. The Uniting Church calls on the Australian Government to prepare to provide assistance for the peoples of the Pacific as they are forced to leave their homes and their land.

The situation in the Pacific is a clear signal to us: in order to secure our future, we must change how we live as nations, communities and individuals. Governments, business, community and faith-based organisations must commit now to working together to address the impacts of climate change for the sake of our planet and all its people.

Uniting Church in Australia

The Uniting Church in Australia, formed in 1977 as the result of the union of the three largest Protestant denominations, is our third largest religious community, with about 2 million adherents. UnitingJustice advocates on behalf of the Church on issues of social and ecological justice and peace including human rights, asylum seekers, industrial relations, violence and peace, economic justice and the environment.

CONTRIBUTORS AND CREDITS

FOR ABORIGINALS

PRINCIPAL AUTHOR

Mr Patrick Dodson, Convenor, Lingiari Foundation

Authority: Lingiari Foundation

Contacts: Lingiari Foundation

PO Box 1375 Broome WA 6725

<http://www.lingiari.org>

FOR ANGLICANS:

PRINCIPAL AUTHOR

Rt. Rev. George Browning, Bishop of Canberra and Goulburn, Anglican Church of Australia

Authority: Anglican Communion Environmental Network (ACEN)

Contacts: Anglican Church Canberra Goulburn

Jamieson House, 43 Constitution Avenue Reid ACT 2612

<http://www.canberragoulburn.anglican.org/index.htm>

FOR THE AUSTRALIAN CHRISTIAN LOBBY:

PRINCIPAL AUTHOR

Mr Jim Wallace, AM, Managing Director

Authority: The Australian Christian Lobby

Contacts: The Australian Christian Lobby

Suite 9, 1st floor, National Press Club

16 National Circuit

Barton ACT 2600

<http://www.acl.org.au/national/index.stw>

FOR BAHÁ'ÍS:

PRINCIPAL AUTHOR

Ms Natalie Mobini-Kesheh, National Assembly,

Bahá'í Faith in Australia

Authority: Bahá'í Faith in Australia

Contacts: Bahá'í Faith in Australia

173 Mona Vale Rd

Ingleside NSW 2101

<http://www.bahai.org.au/>

FOR BAPTISTS:

PRINCIPAL AUTHOR

Rev Rod Benson, National Council, Baptist Union of Australia

Authority: Baptist Union of Australia

Contacts: Baptist Union of Australia

Private Bag 8, Glebe, NSW 2037

<http://www.baptist.org.au/>

FOR BUDDHISTS:

PRINCIPAL AUTHORS

Mr Graeme Lyall, AM, President, Buddhist Council of NSW Inc. Ms Mohini Gunesekeera, President, AFBC Inc.

Authority: Australian Federation of Buddhist Councils, Inc.

Contacts: Australian Federation of Buddhist Councils, Inc.

PO Box 157 Oatlands NSW 2117

<http://www.buddhisticouncil.org.au>

FOR CATHOLICS:

PRINCIPAL AUTHORS

Fr Charles Rue, SSC. Mr Colin Brown

Authority: Catholic Earthcare,

Bishops' Committee for Justice, Development,

Ecology and Peace

Contacts: Catholic Earthcare

2 Bond Street, Bellambi, NSW 2518

<http://www.catholicearthcareoz.net/index.html>

FOR EVANGELICALS:

PRINCIPAL AUTHOR

Rev. Dr Brian Edgar, Director of Theology and Public Policy

Authority: Australian Evangelical Alliance

Contacts: Australian Evangelical Alliance

PO Box 175 Box Hill VIC 3128

<http://www.ea.org.au/default.php>

FOR GREEK ORTHODOX:

PRINCIPAL AUTHORS

His Eminence, Archbishop Stylianos Harkianaki**Mr Philip Kariatlis**

Authority: Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of Australia

Contacts: Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of Australia

242 Cleveland St Redfern NSW 2016

<http://www.greekorthodox.net.au/pages/Welcome.html>**FOR HINDUS:**

PRINCIPAL AUTHOR

Mr Vijai Singhal, Editor Hindu News

Authority: Hindu Council of Australia

Contacts: Hindu Council of Australia

17 The Crescent Homebush NSW 2140

<http://www.hindu council.com.au/>**FOR JEWISH PEOPLE:**

PRINCIPAL AUTHORS

Chief Rabbi Jonathan Sacks**Rabbi Raymond Apple**

Authority: Executive Council of Australian Jewry

Contacts: <http://www.ecaj.org.au/>**FOR LUTHERANS:**

PRINCIPAL AUTHOR

Mr John Pfitzner

Authority: Lutheran Church of Australia

Contacts: Lutheran Church of Australia

197 Archer St North Adelaide SA 5066

<http://www.lca.org.au/>**FOR MUSLIMS:**

PRINCIPAL AUTHOR

Br Faruk Choudhury

Authority: Australian Federation of Islamic Councils

Contacts: Australian Federation of Islamic Councils

932 Bourke St Zetland NSW 2015

<http://www.afic.com.au/index.htm>**FOR THE SALVATION ARMY:**

PRINCIPAL AUTHOR

General Eva Burrows

Authority: The Salvation Army

Contacts: The Salvation Army

2 Brisbane Avenue Barton ACT 2600

FOR SIKHS:

PRINCIPAL AUTHORS

**Sri Singh Sahib Manjit Singh (Jathedar of Anandapur)
and Sri Akhal Takhat Sahib**(used by permission of the Alliance of Religions and
Conservation)

Authority: Australian Sikh Association

Contacts: Australian Sikh Association

PO Box 834 Blacktown NSW 2140

<http://www.communitlink.org.au/communities/1459/home.asp>**FOR THE UNITING CHURCH:**

PRINCIPAL AUTHOR

Rev. Elenie Poulos National Director

Authority: Uniting Justice, Uniting Church in Australia

Contacts: Uniting Church in Australia

PO Box A2266 Sydney South NSW 1235

<http://nat.uca.org.au/unitingjustice/>**FOR THE CLIMATE INSTITUTE:****Corin Millais, Chief Executive Officer**

Religious Consultant and Communities Liaison

Kate Mannix

Project Coordinator Consultant

Jackie Peterson

Media

Sky Laris

Design

Tristan Riguet

Document editor

Susan Geason



© Copyright Climate Institute (Australia) Ltd 2006
The Climate Institute (Australia) Ltd
Level 2, 263 George Street Sydney, NSW 2000 Australia
Phone: +61 (0)2 9252 5200 Email: info@climateinstitute.org.au