

## **OPEN LETTER FROM AUSTRALIAN RELIGIOUS LEADERS TO THE AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT**

**August 2008**

We, the undersigned leaders of faith communities in Australia, urge for a strong commitment to address the causes and consequences of climate change.

We believe that time is running out for the many communities across the globe who are already suffering from the devastating effects of climate change, including in the small island nations and low lying areas of the Pacific region. We recognise that livelihoods, communities and cultures in the Pacific are increasingly threatened by extreme weather events and sea level rise, foreshadowing what is to come if concerted action is not taken. The future impact of unabated climate change on families, communities and all other life will be significant.

Australia bears a disproportionate historical responsibility for this grave situation. We are the largest greenhouse gas emitter in the Pacific, with per capita emissions exceeding those of most Pacific nations by a factor of ten. And yet it is those who have contributed least to the causes of climate change who suffer its impacts most severely. Australia therefore has a moral obligation to both prevent further climate change and mitigate its impacts in our region.

As people of faith, we affirm the fundamental value of the whole of creation, and assert that the responsibility to safeguard human flourishing and ecological integrity extends beyond economic considerations of costs and benefits. We believe that we are called to stand with those who are most vulnerable in the world, and that when one part of our community is suffering, all are diminished. True happiness and fulfilment do not result from excessive consumption on the part of the few at the expense of the many.

We therefore commit ourselves to:

- work for ecologically responsible and sustainable living in our faith communities;
- listen to, support, and advocate for our partners in the Pacific and in other communities worldwide which are already affected by climate change; and
- advocate towards all sectors of society to intensify cooperation in response to climate change.

We call on the Australian government to:

- take quick and decisive action to reduce Australia's rising greenhouse gas emissions, playing its part in ensuring the deep global emissions cuts that are urgently needed to stabilise the climate;
- develop and implement all of the policies outlined in Labor's 2007 national platform regarding climate change in the Pacific (policies not addressed by the Carbon Pollution Reduction Scheme Green Paper)
- allocate a proportion of the income generated by an emissions trading scheme to assist Pacific Island countries in adapting to and mitigating the effects of climate change, and to ensure that they benefit from low-carbon technologies.

We are one human family and one creation. Our future is shared, and can only be assured by living together in love and respect for each other and for the earth. We ask all Australians to join us in praying and working for this goal.

## **SIGNATORIES**

Father Abram Abdelmalek, Coptic Orthodox Church, Diocese of Melbourne and Affiliated Regions, WA Delegate

Miss Soemya Agarwal, Coordinator, Hindu Youth Council of Australia

The Most Rev'd Dr Phillip Aspinall, Archbishop of Brisbane and Primate of the Anglican Church of Australia

Mrs Devi Bala, President, Hindu Women Council of Australia

Dr A. Balasubramaniam, Chairman, Hindu Council of Australia

Craig Brown, Federal Coordinator, Churches of Christ in Australia

The Right Rev'd George Browning, recently retired Anglican Bishop of Canberra and Goulburn

Bishop Albert Chiew, Bishop, Chinese Methodist Church in Australia

Phyllis Dorey, President, Union for Progressive Judaism

Rev. Rod Dyson, Moderator of the Synod of South Australia, Uniting Church in Australia

The Rev. Aloese Filipaina, Moderator of the Congregational Federation of Australia

Rev. Wendell Flentje, Moderator of the Northern Synod, Uniting Church in Australia

Imam Riad Galil, Chairperson, Jewish Christian Muslim Association of Australia

Dr Joe D. Goodall, Moderator of the Queensland Congregational Fellowship

Rev. Gregor Henderson, President, Uniting Church in Australia

Rev. Dr. Jonathan Inkpin, General Secretary, NSW Ecumenical Council

Rabbi Jeffrey Kamins, Chairman of the Moetzah, the Council of Progressive Rabbis of Australia, New Zealand and Asia

Rev. Jason Kioa, Moderator of the Synod of Victoria and Tasmania, Uniting Church in Australia

Bishop Brian Kyme, Administrator of the Diocese, Anglican Diocese of Perth

Mr Keith Lyons, General Secretary of the Congregational Federation of Australia

Archdeacon Philip Newman OAM, Archdeacon for Christian Unity and for Relations with the World's Religions, Anglican Diocese of Melbourne

Mr Ikebal Patel, President, Australian Federation of Islamic Councils

Rev. Dr David Pitman, Moderator of the Queensland Synod, Uniting Church in Australia

Bev Polzin, Clerk of the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) in Victoria

Ms Maureen Postma, General Secretary, Victorian Council of Churches

Rt. Rev'd. Graeme Rutherford, Assistant Bishop of the Anglican Diocese of Newcastle

Pastor Asi Saioloa, Moderator of the Congregational Federation of New South Wales & Victoria

Mr John Walker, National Secretary, Australian Baha'i Community

Roger Walmsley, West Australia Regional Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends Representative

Robert Watson, Moderator of the Synod of Western Australia, Uniting Church in Australia

Mr Brian White, Chairman, Buddhist Council of NSW