

Watermark.

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WHERE DO YOU STAND?



YOU THINK CLIMATE CHANGE IS ONE OF THE MOST IMPORTANT ISSUES OF THIS CENTURY.

YOU THINK WE SHOULD PROBABLY BE DOING MORE TO COMBAT CLIMATE CHANGE.

YOU'RE NOT SURE, OR YOU DON'T REALLY CARE.

YOU KNOW THE CLIMATE IS CHANGING, BUT YOU DON'T WANT TO DO ANYTHING ABOUT IT.

YOU DON'T THINK CLIMATE CHANGE IS AN ISSUE AT ALL.

IS EXTREME WEATHER THE PROOF THAT YOU NEED?

According to the World Wildlife Fund, 72% of Australians believe that humans are contributing to climate change, with over a quarter claiming that they are more sure of this today than they were one year ago. The reason for this? Australia's higher frequency of unpredictable and dangerous weather events. This shift in public sentiment is reinforced by science, with reports from organisations such as the Climate Commission showing that climate change is already increasing the intensity of weather events.

THINGS TO THINK ABOUT:

Regardless of where you fit in this scheme, the truth of the matter is incontrovertibly clear:

According to the 2013 Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change,

HUMANS HAVE CAUSED MOST, AND PROBABLY ALL OF THE RAPID GLOBAL WARMING OVER THE PAST 60 YEARS.

97% OF CLIMATE EXPERTS support these figures.

Evidence shows the connection between human-induced climate change and the recent frequency of **EXTREME WEATHER EVENTS.**

To say that climate change is not an issue or that it does not exist is to say that you disagree with basic scientific fact - it's like arguing that the earth is flat.

CLIMATE CHANGE IS NOT A QUESTION OF FAITH.

Debate about climate change inevitably revolves around the question of whether or not someone "believes" that the climate is changing, or that human behaviour is at fault. This is the wrong question. It's time to acknowledge the fact that people and groups who deny the existence of climate change do so because political - and not scientific - reasons. In this

THE 'GLOBAL WARMING' DEBATE ISN'T ABOUT SCIENCE - IT'S ABOUT POLITICS.

Scientific evidence of climate change is what it is, and can be trusted because it is not influenced by political bias. Media coverage of climate change, however, is not unbiased, and it is this - not the science - that we need to think skeptically about.

SO, WHY AREN'T WE WILLING TO PAY FOR IT?

The truth is, **Australians today are better off** and more financially secure than ever before. In spite of a recent trend towards conservative economics, Australia's economy has actually flourished since the global financial crisis, and not merely because of our mining industry. With our relatively comfortable economic status, **we are in a position to begin investing in measures to stem the onset of climate change.**



THE ECONOMY HAS COME TO DOMINATE QUESTIONS OF ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY IN AUSTRALIA.

The government and opposition talk more about taxes and jobs than they do about climate science.

When it comes to this argument, we can choose to think about economic growth in one of two ways.

1. THE ECONOMY AND THE CLIMATE ARE IN OPPOSITION:

That is, as the economy grows, the environment is destined to suffer as a result.

2. ECONOMIC GROWTH CAN DRIVE CLIMATE SOLUTIONS:

The two can have a mutually beneficial relationship. Devoting funds to mitigation and adaptation for climate change-related events (for example, bushfires and floods) and the renewable energy sector are **smart investments.**

These investments will bring not only a valuable

FINANCIAL RETURN, but also produce a better outcome for **HUMAN HEALTH AND STABILITY.**

While economics are certainly important, **CLIMATE CHANGE IS A MORAL PROBLEM.**

Questions about climate policy test us on our regard for human life of the present and future, and ask us what it is that we value the most.

"ONE MIGHT LEGITIMATELY ARGUE THAT THE FIGHT AGAINST GLOBAL WARMING IS AS MORALLY IMPERATIVE AS ABOLISHING CHILD LABOUR OR SLAVERY."

- Ottmar Edenhoffer, IPCC Co-Chairman

ENVIRONMENTAL REGULATIONS DON'T KILL JOBS.

In fact, implementing simple fiscal measures like a price on carbon may be the only way to stop human-induced climate change from avoiding massive economic issues in the future.

THE U.S. ENVIRONMENTAL TECHNOLOGY SECTOR GENERATED \$300 BILLION IN 2008 AND IS RESPONSIBLE FOR ALMOST 1.7 MILLION JOBS.

WHERE DOES YOUR MORAL COMPASS LIE WHEN IT COMES TO THE CLIMATE?



Our responsibility towards the Earth and its changing climate is bound up inexorably with faith. Here are a few principles to think about when considering how you might take leadership on climate change in your community:

1. THE IMPACT OF CLIMATE CHANGE FALLS HEAVIEST ON THE WORLD'S POOR.

2. "MAY THE RISEN JESUS... MAKE US RESPONSIBLE GUARDIANS OF CREATION." - Pope Francis

3. "YOU OUGHT NOT TO CAUSE HARM TO PEOPLE FOR YOUR OWN BENEFIT... YOU CAN AVOID HARMING PEOPLE BY OFFSETTING YOUR EMISSIONS."

- Prof. John Broome, philosopher and economist.

WAYS TO BE A LEADER:

1. BE A STORYTELLER.

Learn from the people of at-risk Pacific island nations, who have taken their stories to the world.

Sometimes facts are not enough to convince us of the real consequences of the way we treat the planet.

Residents of Kiribati, Tuvalu, the Marshall Islands and many other

low-lying nations can see the physical mutations occurring to their shores and homes as the effects of a changing climate take hold.



tell the stories,
show the examples,
prove the urgency,

and make the case that it matters for the whole world to get its act together.

2. ACT

Simple actions can have a meaningful impact in reducing your carbon footprint.

Turn off lights when leaving a room.

Eat less meat: try having at least one meat-free day per week.

Consider the social and environmental cost of goods and service: Who is making this product? How and where is this made? Using what resources? How long will it last?

Encourage your community to support mass transit and other alternatives for commuting.

Write to your local and federal representatives and urge them to act with urgency and put care for Creation, the poor, and the common good ahead of short-term special interests.

Visit www.ClimateCouncil.org.au (formerly the Climate Commission) and consider donating to help support this vital service.

3. KNOW YOUR STUFF

READ WIDELY on the topic of climate change. The more you read from different sources, the more facts you will have in your ammunition to combat misinformation about environmental science or policy. For example, someone falsely saying that "Carbon prices don't work!"

ABC Special Coverage on Climate Change:

www.abc.net.au/news/specials/climate-change/

Visit:

ClimateCouncil.org.au

CatholicClimateCovenant.org

Here are a few facts to get you thinking:

While Australia has always experienced bushfires, climate change is increasing the probability of extreme fire weather days.

In Australia, climate change is influencing both the frequency and intensity of extreme hot days. This increases the risk of bushfires.

Economic modelling from Monash University has suggested that lifting Australia's 2020 emissions reduction target from 5% to 25% would only take an extra 0.06% from our national income.

The World Health Organisation estimates the direct damage costs of climate change to health to be between US\$ 2-4 billion/year by 2030.

4. REFLECT ON YOUR OWN VALUES.

PRAY and reflect on the duty of care for God's Creation and protect the poor and vulnerable.

LEARN about and educate others on the causes and moral dimensions of climate change.

ASSESS how we - as individuals and in our families, parishes and other affiliations - contribute to climate change by our own energy use, consumption, waste, etc.

AN OPEN LETTER TO GREG HUNT

Dear The Hon. Greg Hunt MP,

Congratulations on your new position as Environment Minister. In taking charge of this portfolio, you would be as keenly aware as we are of your duty to the Australian people to protect and develop our one-of-a-kind ecosystems, balance our precarious relationship with the elements, and be a responsible global leader on issues of climate change.

First of all, we would like to thank you for ordering an inquiry into the current uses of the Great Barrier Reef, and for initiating a long-term strategy to protect this most precious resource. We hope that you and your government will be able to see through a plan that prioritises the survival of this national icon.

However, we would like to express concern about some recent statements you have made. For example, you have made clear your support for repealing a price on pollution and have denied the possibility of Australia working towards an emissions trading scheme. This is disappointing, given the clear benefits of such a scheme. I think you would agree that there is a huge cost to pollution, and that this cost should be shouldered by the major emitters. I think you would also agree that global action on carbon emissions is inescapable. By choosing to wait until global pressure forces us to act, we sacrifice any advantage we will receive from the early transitioning of our economy to its inevitable green future.

We are also anxious about the Coalition government's 'Direct Action Plan' as a means to reduce emissions by 5% in 2020 (an already meagre goal). This plan will not have a meaningful impact on emissions - it is a figleaf for action on climate change, and an expensive one at that. What we would like to see is an Australian government which redirects its efforts into increasing the availability and accessibility of renewable energy, and of recognising the clear economic and environmental benefits of doing so.

Ultimately, we worry that Australia is not adequately prepared for the future. We all know that human-induced climate change is an incontrovertable fact, and we have already had a taste of the challenges Australia is going to face as a result. It makes plain sense that we try to mitigate the impact of climate change *now*, and adapt for those changes which are unavoidable.

We sincerely hope that you can show leadership and insight on these critical issues during your tenure as our minister.

Regards,

Social Justice Committee
Conference of Leaders in Religious Insititutes, NSW

REFLECTION

Lord, we thank you for the beautiful, life-sustaining gift of Creation. We pray that, as individuals and communities, we become better stewards of what you have entrusted to us. For our political leaders, we ask that they may be guided by conscience and concern for the common good, not by the expediency of vested interests.

AMEN.

Watermark is an occasional publication of the Conference of Leaders in Religious Institutes in NSW.

TO-DO LIST

- **Follow** the Social Justice Committee of CLRI (NSW) on Twitter for news and opportunities for action: www.twitter.com/clrinsw
- **Who's under your carbon footprint?** Watch this video from the Catholic Climate Covenant: www.catholicclimatecovenant.org
- **Write to Greg Hunt or your local member about your concerns for the environment.** Use our letter as a template or simply write your own! For contact information for MPs, visit www.australia.gov.au/directories/contact-parliament