



Brief CACE

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New director for CACE: John Altmann

law firm, the Equal Opportunity Commission, the AFES, St. Jude's Carlton unichurch, and the Glen Waverley Anglican Church.

"Apart from discussing theology and ethics, I am interested in solving world poverty, wealth creation and entrepreneurship, philanthropy and investment markets, and developing new models for doing things. I am married to Cathy and have two primary school age children, Matthew and Sophie. On the weekends I enjoy squash, gardening and cooking.

"I am passionate about the potential for CACE to form alliances with other Christian groups thinking through issues, present more comment in the media from a Christian perspective, and help equip Christians to speak or write about issues at work or in their everyday lives."

"I became the director of CACE in October 2006.

"I am a past student of Ridley College, graduating with a first class honours BTh in 1993. I am currently the leader of an emerging anglican mission in Bulleen, otherwise known as St. Timothy's, and also involved in a variety of social entrepreneurial projects.

"I studied law, philosophy, languages and coffee drinking at Melbourne Uni in the early 1980's. I became friends with some Christians, argued with them for two years, and became a follower of Jesus in 1985. Subsequently I worked for a big commercial

God and Climate Change

Australia's Christians on Climate Change

It is not immediately apparent to everyone that climate change is an issue on which Christians have a distinctive view. And in one sense, that is right, as it ought to be considered a matter of universal concern. Yet many Christians now believe that climate change is an issue which can be addressed very specifically in a biblical and theological fashion as a matter of significant ethical concern. This can be seen in the nine Christian statements on climate change published on December 5 in the Climate Institute's *Common Belief: Australia's Faith Communities on Climate Change*.

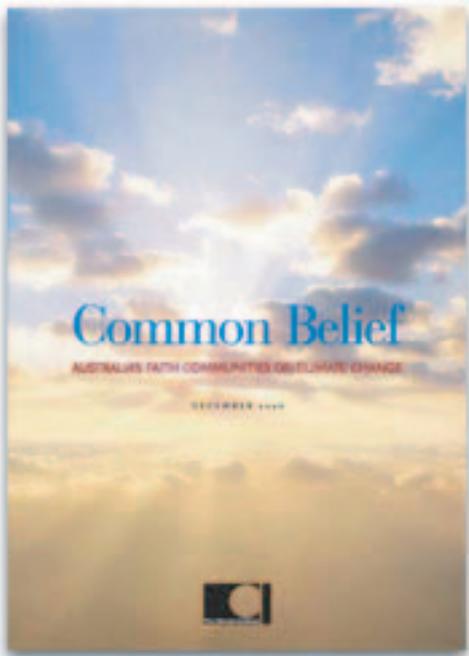
In this document there are also statements representing the views of Aboriginal people, Baha'i believers, Buddhists, Hindus, Jewish people, Muslims and Sikhs. They all address the religious and ethical dimensions of climate change. This document is

possibly a world first. It clearly demonstrates the religious and ethical dimension of climate change. The following material provides a brief introduction to the theological and ethical position of the nine Christian papers (see www.climateinstitute.org.au for a pdf version of the document).

Common Belief

While *Common Belief* expresses a clear common conviction about climate change there is no common statement. The various groups simply present their own point of view, expressed in their own way. The Christian statements come from The Anglican Communion Environmental Network; the Australian Christian Lobby (ACL); the Baptist Union of Australia; Catholic Earthcare, the Bishops Committee for Justice, Development, Ecology and Peace; The Australian Evangelical

The enjoyment of summer holidays with beautiful weather and lots of sunshine has now become a guilty pleasure as a result of national concern about global warming, drought and bush-fires. So we hope, God willing, that you will actually see rain while enjoying your summer holidays! And if you haven't done so already, that would be a good time to read the following article about what Australian Christians believe about climate change.



Alliance (EA – for which I was the principal author); the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of Australia; the Lutheran Church of Australia; the Salvation Army and Uniting Justice, Uniting Church in Australia (UCA).

Despite their different backgrounds there is a comprehensive unanimity concerning the theological foundation for addressing climate change. The variations which exist are not contradictory and it is likely that those involved in the production of these various statements would willingly subscribe to all of the others.

The main theological emphases of the majority of statements can be summarised in four parts concerning

- ▶ the nature of God as Creator
- ▶ human nature, responsibility and sin
- ▶ a holistic view of spirituality and salvation, and
- ▶ the nature of authority.

God the Creator

Christians are primarily concerned about climate change because of their faith and trust in God, who is the Creator of all things. The Anglican statement says, *'Holy Scripture reminds us that, the earth is the Lord's and everything in it. All of creation belongs to God, not to human beings (Psalm 24:1). 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).'*

Other statements stress the positive relationship that humanity has with the wider creation. For example, *'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.' (Baptist)

Human Responsibility

The concept of God as Creator provides the foundation for a discussion of responsible stewardship, often connected with the being made in the image of God, as in Genesis 1:27-28: *'God created humankind in his own image... and said to them, 'Be fruitful... fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over... every living creature.'* Consequently, the Lutheran statement says that the destruction of the earth's life-sustaining systems represents *'a dereliction of our God-given duty as human beings to care for our world and to use its limited resources responsibly'* and the ACL statement says, *'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.'*

In several reports there is a defensive attitude which anticipates criticism of the Christian position as being historically responsible for the attitude that the earth is simply a resource to be used for human benefit. The Salvation Army contribution says, *'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.'* And the Greek Orthodox statement says, *'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. 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.'* Subduing the world is thus interpreted as responsible stewardship rather than subjection or domination.

While responsible stewardship is the most common theme some statements also ground action in the biblical command to love one's neighbour. The EA statement says, *'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'* and the Lutheran statement says, *'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 failure to act constitutes 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.'*

Both concepts – responsibility to the natural order and love for fellow human beings – require action but it is the transition to the obligation to fulfil the command to love which allows for a significant development in attitude. A failure to act properly as a steward may merely be seen as unfortunate irresponsibility, but a failure to love one's neighbour clearly indicates that the human contribution towards climate change can be named as sinful.

'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.' (Greek Orthodox).

Not all the statements are as strong as the Orthodox statement with regard to the sinfulness involved in the human dimension of climate change causes. It is possible to assume that some of the events that have produced climate change are the result of ignorance or good intentions gone wrong rather than evil intention. But in all statements the concept of sin is to be applied at the point where one becomes aware of the problem: 'Wilful destruction of the environment is a sin' (Anglican) and 'wilful environmental degradation is sin and will attract God's judgment' (Baptist).

Doing and Being

One point of significant variation is between the functional approach of most of the statements (ie, the emphasis on the responsibility to be good stewards and love neighbours) and the Greek Orthodox contribution where the focus is not so much on what we 'do' to the environment or for our neighbours but who we demonstrate ourselves to 'be' in the way that we live in the world. This approach is also derived from our human status as being made 'in the image of God' but with the recognition that the concept has as much to do with human 'being' as much as with human 'doing'. The fundamental human calling is that 'human beings are created to express God' and a failure to exercise stewardship not only damages the world but also, significantly, damages our own very being. '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'. The statement concludes, 'When we know, when we love, when we understand – how may we then destroy?' The destruction of the environment is thus connected with our own alienation from God. A failure to care for the world is a lack of care for our own souls. As it has been said the new deserts of our world are a reflection of our own souls.

A holistic view

A number of statements try to anticipate objections by addressing criticisms that have been made of Christian positions on the environment. This is seen in the re-definition of 'subduing' the earth and also in the attempt to counter the view that the Christian faith is so concerned about personal salvation, evangelism and spiritual issues that it has no time for care of the physical world.

The argument against this involves demonstrating a more holistic view of spiritual and physical and some ground this in the doctrine of *creation* and others in the doctrine of *redemption*. The Baptist statement focuses on creation: 'We deny that 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. ... 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)'. Similarly, the Catholic view is that 'humans are part of the created world, and inextricably part of a material existence.'

Other statements point to the fact that the Christian doctrine of redemption involves the whole of creation and not merely a 'spiritual' new life: 'One day the whole of creation will be renewed.'

(EA) and, '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.' (UCA). The Anglican contribution addresses this most fully: '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.'

Authority

All of the statements are grounded in some authority but there is a significant difference in approach between the Catholic statement, which is grounded in universal human rights and responsibilities, and the other eight Christian statements which are theologically grounded in the life, character and actions of God, particularly as evidenced in the words of Scripture. The Baptist contribution is the most explicit about this: '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.' (Baptist) More often, in other statements, the place of the Scriptures is simply implicit in the language used and the references cited.

The Catholic statement makes for a notable exception as it which principally locates the arguments about concern for climate change in the solidarity that Catholics share with the rest of humanity. This is not to say that this is not part of their faith commitment, for the bishops explicitly speak 'as pastors of a quarter of Australian population'; yet they do so in the context of 'offering the hand of cooperation to all spiritual and secular leaders in Australia' and issuing a call to people 'as human beings' dealing with a global issue which needs a global response as a matter of human rights: 'The right to a safe ecological environment is a universal human right.' Their statement is primarily an appeal to rational argument and natural law rather than biblical text. This is illustrative of the different traditions of the church. The two approaches are not mutually exclusive but do involve different expectations concerning the nature of public dialogue. Both approaches are rational and theological and both come to the same conclusion. One relies more on persuasive argument based on common foundations, the other relies more on the authority of faith and the appropriateness of groups expressing their religious beliefs in open, democratic dialogue.

The moral dimension

All of the statements use their theological base to point towards the moral imperative involved in climate change. Cumulatively, they point to four broad areas of theological and ethical concern: climate change can

- ▶ hurt other people
- ▶ create a spiritual 'dis-ease' in oneself
- ▶ damage the environment, and
- ▶ offend God.

Those identified as being hurt by climate change can be categorised in three groups. Firstly, reference is frequently made to the people of the Pacific because they are among the poorer nations of the world, they are among the first affected by climate change (having the first 'climate change refugees' as a result of ocean levels rising) as well as being among our closest neighbours. Then there are references of a more general nature to the fact that those who will suffer the effects of climate change are those who are least able to deal with it. *'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.'*

The third group that gains mention is that of future generations. For example, the Uniting Church statement says, *'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 Catholic statement says, *'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.'*

The reality

None of the statements exhibit any doubt about the reality of human related climate change. Tim Flannery has claimed (see *The Weather Makers: the history and future impact of climate change*, Text Publishing, 2005) that it is really only in Australia and the United States (the only two developed countries which declined to adopt the Kyoto convention) that there is still opposition to addressing climate change problems. There is still some scepticism in both countries, and among Christians, but it is not as strong in Australia as in the USA.

Many people will be familiar with Al Gore's climate change documentary, *An Inconvenient Truth*, in which he makes use of Naomi Oreskes' research on a random sample of 928 of the most recent, relevant, peer reviewed, scientific articles. She found that there were none that questioned the reality of human induced climate change. In contrast, a survey of newspaper articles in the US for the same period showed that over half of them expressed doubt about its reality, demonstrating a huge disconnect between scientific research and public perception.

Recently, Melbourne journalist Andrew Bolt used social anthropologist Benny Peiser's follow-up research of the same material which claimed that considerable levels of doubt were expressed. This led to Monica Attard of the ABC's *MediaWatch* roundly criticising Bolt for poor research by disclosing that Peiser had, some months earlier, actually retracted his critique and had

conceded Orestes' point (see www.abc.net.au/mediawatch). While Bolt continued supporting the claim Peiser himself, could only nominate a single scientific article that conceivably showed any doubt about climate change. He also said, 'I do not think anyone is questioning that we are in a period of global warming. Neither do I doubt that the overwhelming majority of climatologists is agreed that the current warming period is mostly due to human impact.'

It is perhaps with these kind of issues in mind that the Catholic statement on climate change refers to the Precautionary Principle. In environmental matters this principle is well understood and frequently used. It was developed in Europe where it has been necessary to deal with serious environmental issues across national borders since the 1960's. It has also been enacted as an interpretive rule in numerous pieces of Australian legislation relating to the care of the environment. It says that 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. The rationale for this is that it is critically important to do our best for the environment because it is the only one we have got! Waiting for 100%, definitive, unambiguous certainty means not operating according to the best evidence but according to some far less likely evidence. It may mean waiting until after decisive and dangerous events have already occurred. It is a process which risks much and possibly achieves little.

When considering the devastating potential of climate change the high level of urgency can be matched with significant optimism, based on the fact that the worst scenarios can be avoided at relatively little cost. Changes in social and economic life will have to occur, but it makes no sense to hold back from acting sooner rather than later as a failure to act now will simply mean more cost in the long run. As it has been said, the economy is a wholly-owned subsidiary of the environment.

The Australian Business Roundtable on Climate Change (a consortium of some major companies including oil and insurances companies and banks) indicates that the necessary cuts in emissions could be achieved in Australia with policies that would only reduce economic growth from 2.2% to 2.1% pa. In other words, living standards and income can continue to rise strongly with these policies. And this is in a country which, due to reliance on fossil fuel (coal) powered energy production, is arguably the world's highest per capita emitter of greenhouse gases! The more recent Stern review in the UK (see www.hm-treasury.gov.uk/independent_reviews) argues that globally the cost is a manageable 1% of global GDP each year.

The value of creation

A number of statements treat the destruction of the natural order as an issue in itself, in addition to any effect on people. The EA statement says, *'God has given the church the task of caring for people and creation'* and the Baptist statement argues, *'as God's stewards we bear an ethical responsibility for the care of the Earth and the welfare of all living things.'* The Anglican position is that we must not *'exploit God's creation to breaking point'* and the Catholic church says, *'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"'* and the Uniting

Church is 'concerned about the welfare of all creatures and plant life and believes that nature is not to be plundered and abused'.

In some statements it is argued that a lack of concern for the environment is 'an affront to God'. The Lutheran statement says, '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.'

In none of the statements is climate change seen as simply a scientific issue. It is very specifically linked to a range of significant theological themes which have profound ethical implications.

Implications for action

The usual development of the statements is from theology to ethics and then to proposals for specific actions. The ethical imperative to act is often accentuated by reference to the fact that Australia is a particularly significant contributor to global warming through the emission of greenhouse gases. '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.' (Lutheran). The Catholic contribution argues, '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.'

The question as to whether Australia is, per capita, the world's largest emitter of green-house gas emissions or simple one of the largest tends to generate a lot of discussion. The claim that we are the worst is often challenged and used as an example of climate change exaggeration. In simple terms the answer to this debate is that, scientifically, there a number of different ways of measuring greenhouse gas emissions. In many of them Australia comes out as the worst. But not in all. Hence EA's compromise statement, 'we are, arguably, the world's biggest per capita contributors to greenhouse gas pollution.'

As a nation which has the capacity to act on climate change the question then arises: does the responsibility for action lie primarily with government or with individuals? Does the answer lie in policy or personal lifestyle? The obvious answer is that they are inter-related and the majority of statements recognise this. The ACL contribution, is not surprisingly, orientated towards government policy but the others speak more broadly, many of them quite explicitly: The EA statement says, '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.' And the Catholic response is that 'each sector of the community has a role in imagining and building a future Australia with reduced greenhouse gas emissions.' The Baptist response addresses government and citizens, the Lutherans speak to global, national and local issues and the Uniting Church to government, community and individuals. If there is an area that is perhaps not addressed with sufficient force it is the need for churches as churches (rather than as individuals) to ensure that they fulfil their responsibilities as community groups to ensure that have a corporate lifestyle that is appropriate for the new global situation.

The call for government action is sometimes cautious: '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.' (ACL) Others are more precise in their aims: to urge political leaders to take steps to reduce global greenhouse gas emissions by 50 or 60 per cent by 2050. (EA; Baptist).

Some perhaps find such specific proposals as premature, but a distinction needs to be made here between the aim involved in greenhouse gas emission reduction and the methods by which that is achieved. The two are often confused in people's minds. The aim is best expressed in terms of some specific percentage by some particular time. Then there are a variety of possible methods for achieving that. Sometimes people think that the ongoing debate about the best methods means that the aim is necessarily called into question. Obviously aim and method are related but the aim is determined by the need to avoid the worst possibilities inherent in climate change rather than by the methods employed to do that. The EA statements argues that 'the scientific evidence which connects greenhouse gas emissions with climate change is the same evidence which indicates that the goal for developed nations ought to be in the order of a 60% reduction in greenhouse gas emissions from year 2000 levels by 2050. It makes no sense to accept the conclusions about the reality of climate change and not accept the conclusions about the necessary goals for rectifying it as they are based on the same evidence.' (EA)

In other words the aim for a reduction in emissions should be primarily based on a scientific assessment as to what is required to avoid the worst disasters. The methods should be appropriate to the need and in determining the methods there are a range of considerations and a number of possibilities. Debate on this will include social and economic as well as scientific considerations. However, a reluctance to embrace a specific aim because of the fear that it would have a damaging impact on Australia's GDP is misplaced. A failure to act will cost even more in the long run.

In addition to government policy the statements emphasis the fact that it is important for individuals to address lifestyle issues and use less, avoiding over-consumption which contributes to the production of green-house gases. While there would inevitably be debate among the authors of the various statements about some of the following, a collation of recommendations from the various statements might look like this:

1. Take targeted and specific actions to assess and reduce our environmental footprint, particularly greenhouse gas emissions.
2. Urge political leaders to take steps to reduce global greenhouse gas emissions by 50 per cent by 2050.
3. Urge our political leaders to develop and put in place long-term policies and strategies to effectively combat climate change.

4. Press for urgent initiation of discussions leading to a just and effective development beyond the Kyoto Protocol, which includes all nations.
5. Address the human suffering and loss resulting from climate change
6. Care for those who become the victims of the need for environmental stewardship, or who are the victims of environmental vandalism.
7. Individuals take steps to reduce their own greenhouse gas emissions. Strive for a more responsible lifestyle in order to do less damage to the environment
8. 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.
9. Study climate change more thoroughly; educate our members about it and provide guidance for them about ways in which they can respond to it;
10. 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.
11. Reduce environmental damage via energy and resource audits, land management, just trading and purchasing, socially and ethically responsible investment.
12. Restore and replenish the ecosystems that humans have used or misused
13. Promote and commit ourselves to use renewable energy wherever possible
14. Use public transport or walk where possible, and purchase smaller vehicles
15. Reducing household energy consumption (especially air conditioners)
16. Reducing household water consumption and installing rainwater tanks where possible
17. Reuse and recycle household products
18. Encourage and promote energy conservation and energy efficiency and to energetically develop and promote the use

of renewable forms of energy production.

19. Invest in regeneration, taking a long-term view rather than short-term expediency in thought and action

Conclusion

The Christian consensus is that Christians are to care for the world as a response to God's calling to be responsible stewards. It is important for our own spiritual well-being, as well as an act of concern for the natural world and part of our responsibility to care for our neighbours and for future generations.

In these statements Australian Christians, along with other faith communities, have made a significant contribution to Australian thinking, helping the public dialogue move -

- ▶ From utilitarian attitudes towards the natural world towards a consideration of the intrinsic value of the world,
- ▶ From self-centred nationalistic approaches to an appreciation of global humanity, and
- ▶ From economically focussed approaches towards a consideration of moral issues and a concern for our global neighbours.

The question of precisely how much of a temperature increase is 'too much' is subjective (as the world's first climate change refugees the people of Tuvalu have a good argument to say it has already been too much!) but the worst scenarios (involving ocean levels rising, increases in tropical diseases, loss of drinking water, alteration to local climates etc) which affect large numbers of people need to be avoided. The scientific evidence which connects greenhouse gas emissions with climate change indicates that the goal for developed nations ought to be in the order of a 60% reduction in greenhouse gas emissions from year 2000 levels by 2050.

Consequently, human induced climate change requires a decisive response, especially as Australia is a high level producer of greenhouse gases. There is no equivocation in any of the statements on the universal responsibility of government, business, community groups and individuals to act appropriately. This is a Christian responsibility.

Dr Brian Edgar, Director of Public Theology, The Australian Evangelical Alliance.

Brian was responsible for the AEA statement on climate change referred to in the article. It is available at www.ea.org.au

Christians and Climate Change

A statement from the Australian Evangelical Alliance Inc.

God and Creation

1. Christians worship the only God who is Father, Son and Holy Spirit, whose creative, dynamic relationship of love overflowed in the creation of the universe. Christians trust in God who created all things and who said that 'it was good', and they continually affirm that 'the earth is the Lord's and all that is in it'. They learn about God from seeing and appreciating the environment and the creatures in this wonderful world (Genesis 1-2; Psalm 24: 1; Job 39: 1-42:6).
2. God entered into a protective relationship, not only with the people of the world, but also with the other creatures. God also gave a particular privilege and responsibility to humanity to tend and care for the world as a participation in divine purposes (Genesis. 9: 1-17; 1:26- 31).
3. God not only created the world, but will also redeem it through Jesus Christ – through whom all things originally came into being. One day the whole of creation will be freed from stress and disorder through Jesus Christ and his cross and will come to be a renewed creation (John 1: 1-3; Ephesians 1: 10; Romans 8: 21; Colossians 1: 19-20; 2 Corinthians 5: 17; Revelation 21).
4. The hope of a new creation does not detract from, but actually encourages Christians to care for our present creation as there is a direct connection between the two. Life in the Spirit and the Christian calling to serve God means sharing in the vision of the redemption of all things and having a concern for the whole of creation as well as for individuals. (2 Corinthians 3: 6; 1 Corinthians 15: 35-49).
5. A Christian understanding of creation means seeking forgiveness for the occasions that we have treated the world as ours and not God's and for the times we have inappropriately exploited and polluted the world without thought for others – present or future – or for the good of creation itself. Repentance involves a commitment to turning away from harmful action and turning towards a lifestyle and a way of relating to others and the world which is most caring for both people and the world and honouring to God (Luke 11:4).
6. The task which Christ has given to the church also means, in particular, a commitment to caring for people through care for the creation. When thinking of large-scale environmental issues God's call to love our neighbours means taking a global, rather than purely national 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).

Climate Change

7. 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. In 2001 the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change provided strong evidence of climate

change, the warming of the earth and of the dominant role of human induced greenhouse gas emissions in causing this. But the extensive scientific research that has been undertaken since then is even stronger.

8. The 2001 IPCC report expected an end-of-century increase of 1.4° to 5.8°C in global average temperature. The most recent scientific work since then indicates that average temperature is likely to rise by 3°C or more unless there is effective action to substantially reduce emissions. If this occurs the consequences will be devastating and will have severe impacts on human life and health as well as on the environment and biodiversity. These impacts will affect everyone but will not be distributed evenly. Generally, those who are wealthier bear more responsibility for producing greenhouse gases while those who are poorer suffer more from the effects - due to their lesser ability to deal with them. But there is still time to avoid the top range of risk – provided that we do the necessary things and act immediately. As far as government policy is concerned that probably means establishing a clear policy framework for significantly reducing emissions by the end of the next parliamentary term.
9. The scientific evidence which connects greenhouse gas emissions with climate change is the same evidence which indicates that the goal for developed nations ought to be in the order of a 60% reduction in greenhouse gas emissions from year 2000 levels by 2050. It makes no sense to accept the conclusions about the reality of climate change and not accept the conclusions about the necessary goals for rectifying it as they are based on the same evidence. Nor does it make sense to hold back from acting on this because of the fear it would have a damaging impact on Australia's GDP. A failure to act will cost even more in the long run and the use of fossil fuels (the major causes of human-induced climate change) is itself distorting the economy as it is highly subsidised through not being required to pay for its effects.
10. Although globally Australia is nowhere near being the leading overall emitter of greenhouse gases we are, arguably, the world's biggest per capita contributors to greenhouse gas pollution. Australians are directly involved in the causes of climate change which is damaging the world and, for example, harming the people of the Pacific region more than ourselves, even though they have far less influence on global warming than we do. The response to this has to be a whole-of-society response. It would not be right for individuals to leave it to community groups, or for community groups to leave it to business, or for businesses to leave it to government. Or for Australia to leave it to larger nations. Australia's contribution to the overall amount of greenhouse gases may be small by international standards but our credibility in the world, our moral responsibility to our global neighbours and our influence on others will be diminished unless we act. Internationally, much more has to be done beyond Kyoto and negotiations with other nations are of great importance. But we must remember our special moral responsibility as a developed nation whose way of life has benefited most from the causes of global warming to continue to lead the way in finding solutions.

11. It is important to maintain a broad view in which the needs of the rest of the world, and the needs of future generations are considered as seriously as the needs of present-day Australians. The interests of business and the work of climate scientists can go together, as in the cooperative venture of the Australian Business Roundtable on Climate Change and the Australian Conservation Foundation. It brings together business interests and scientific data and, very appropriately, calls for nationally consistent climate change policies, supported by all jurisdictions. We find their proposals to be helpful and believe that the Christian community is willing to bear the cost needed in order to adopt the recommendations of 'The Business Case for Early Action', and the CSIRO report 'Climate Change Impacts on Australia and the Benefits of Early Action to Reduce Global Greenhouse Gas Emissions'.

12. The report also calls for a legal framework for a carbon price signal. While the nature of any such mechanism will be complex and subject to appropriate expert advice, it seems fair and appropriate that the costs of pollution should be applied to the technologies which cause it and, ultimately to those who use them. Not to do so would be to subsidise greenhouse gas emitting technologies. It is also important as it is 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 and so it is not inappropriate for community groups, such as AEA, to indicate a willingness to bear this cost. It is not only a matter of common-sense to act quickly, but also a matter of justice. We cannot fail to act about global warming and allow the consequences to fall more severely on others who have not caused it. Nor can we fail to act and expect the solution to come from others when we are among the beneficiaries of the actions that have led to global warming.

13. If action is taken soon the costs are modest and manageable – not excessive. The Australian Business Roundtable on Climate Change indicates that deep cuts in emissions could be achieved with policies that would only reduce economic growth from 2.2% to 2.1% pa. Nothing less than a willingness to accept this is satisfactory. Living standards and income can continue to rise strongly with these policies. It may also be that moving to more efficient modes of energy production will soon be more economically beneficial than current, less efficient processes. An economic problem does arise however, if there is not international consensus on the matter. The implementation of climate-change policies in Australia and not in other countries will place some industries at a severe trade disadvantage. This points to the importance of continued international negotiation on climate change. However, there is a moral responsibility for Australia, as a developed nation that has benefited from the events that have led to the present situation, to be in the lead in not only negotiating but also in actually acting to mitigate the effects of climate change.

14. Australian Christians are responsible to God for the way their actions affect the world and the lives of other people both present and future. Individuals and churches need to examine the Biblical and ethical issues involved in climate change, as well as the social, scientific and economic ones. These principles should be allowed to affect individual, family and corporate lifestyle, consumption and behaviour in order to respond positively to the challenge of human-induced climate change. The responsibility to act in response to climate change is not

that of government alone but one which very appropriately belongs to Christians and church communities who serve the Creator and Redeemer of the world, and the Lord whose love extends to all people.

The Australian Evangelical Alliance Inc is a network of Christian organisations, churches and individuals. Its aim is to be a catalyst for Christian unity, cooperation and mission. AEA links people and networks; stimulates Biblical thinking in church and society; and gives voice to Christian concerns on matters of public significance. AEA is affiliated with the World Evangelical Alliance, an international fellowship with National Alliances in 127 countries embracing more than 420 million evangelical Christians. The Australian National Director is Mr Tom Slater. Queries and comments concerning this statement should be directed to Dr Brian Edgar, Director of Public Theology, P O Box 175, Box Hill 3128, (03) 98900633, brian@ea.org.au.

Resources

- The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, 'Third Assessment Report – Climate Change' (2001) available at <http://www.ipcc.ch/> The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change was established in 1988 by the World Meteorological Organisation and the United Nations Environmental Programme. It involves the work of thousands of scientists and synthesises the best scientific, technical and socio-economic data about climate change. It has produced three major assessment reports (in 1990, 1995 and 2001) and a fourth is scheduled for late 2007.
- CSIRO, 'Climate Change Impacts on Australia and the Benefits of Early Action to Reduce Global Greenhouse Gas Emissions' available at <http://www.businessroundtable.com.au/>
- Australian Business Roundtable on Climate Change, 'The Business Case for Early Action' available at <http://www.businessroundtable.com.au/> The Australian Business Roundtable on Climate Change is an independent entity established by six large businesses in Australia. Roundtable members are BP Australia, Insurance Australia Group, Origin Energy, Swiss Re, Visy Industries and Westpac with the Australian Conservation Foundation.
- The Allen Consulting Group, 'Deep Cuts in Greenhouse Gas Emissions - Economic, Social and Environmental Impacts for Australia' available at <http://www.businessroundtable.com.au/>
- The Climate Institute, see <http://www.climateinstitute.org.au/cia/home.html> Established in late 2005, The Climate Institute aims to raise public awareness and debate about the dangers to Australia of global warming and to motivate the country to take positive action. It works collaboratively with business, community, scientific, environment and other organisations concerned with climate change.
- Australian Government, Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 'Australia's Position', available at <http://www.dfat.gov.au/environment/climate/>
- The Evangelical Climate Initiative Statement, available at <http://www.christiansandclimate.org/> In February of this year, in the USA a group of Christians launched the Evangelical Climate Initiative. It began with strong statement of purpose and a call to national action on climate change. It took the political leadership of the country, who assumed that they understood the social concerns of evangelicals in that country, by surprise. It demonstrated that many people were further ahead in their thinking than had been given credit.
- Sir John Houghton, 'Global Warming: The Science, the Impacts & the Politics' (2001) available at Christians in Science (UK) <http://www.cis.org.uk/resources/articles/environment.shtml> Sir John, an evangelical Christian, was formerly the chairman of Scientific Assessment for the IPCC.
- Sir John Houghton, Climate Change / Global Warming Briefing (2005) Evangelical Environmental Network <http://www.creationcare.org/resources/climate/>

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