



AUSTRALIAN CENTRE FOR
CHRISTIANITY AND CULTURE

WISDOM FOR THE COMMON GOOD

About Climate Change and the Federal Election

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Today's report is that Australia's Climate change isolationism has driven a further fall in the global ranking of how nations are responding to global warming. Our nation, which should be a leader by virtue of our relative wealth and natural advantages, has fallen from 35 to 52 and is in a group called 'climate laggards' [The Age 20/4].

Relatedly and of deep concern, the urgency of action and the call for climate justice are, so far, missing from the election campaigning by the major parties.

In recent years, I have been a member of the Interfaith Liaison Committee [ILC] to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change [the UNFCCC]. Our work has particularly focused on the Conferences of the Parties - the UNCOP's such as COP26 late last year in Glasgow with its resultant Glasgow Climate Pact, of which Australia is a signatory.

Consistent with the purposes of the Paris Agreement, Australia now has obligations with a timeline.

You would not know this from current pre-election discourse.

The obligations are entirely sensible. There is no hiding place from the consequences of climate change. We must contain carbon emissions if we are to prevent global temperatures rising beyond the 1.5 degree target of the Paris Agreement.

Our politicians are not yet connected with this reality.

A role of our ILC is to give a voice to those less powerful. The latest Report by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change [IPCC] actually lifts up this justice aspect of climate change.

The Report notes in its Report Summary for Policy Makers [p.35] that the term 'climate justice' generally includes three principles:

- 'Distributive justice' which refers to the allocation of burdens and benefits among individuals, nations and generations;
- 'Procedural justice' which refers to who decides and participates in decision-making;
- 'Recognition', which entails basic respect and robust engagement with, and fair consideration, of diverse cultures and perspectives.

The justice issue is that those who have had least to do with causing climate change will continue to suffer the worst consequences.

That includes our own young people as well as our neighbours in the Pacific.

The current appeal to the electorate from the major parties fails to recognise this injustice as well as the urgency of our circumstances.

I look at our grandchildren and fear for their future. Friends in the Pacific are without the finance needed for adaptation and mitigation, as they experience loss and damage from the existing impacts of climate change. Just prior to the pandemic I was at a meeting of Pacific Church leaders in Suva. It was painful to hear their anguish at leaving forebears in graveyards that are now under water; their anxiety about a future of more extreme weather events more frequently. Even a full moon and high tide evokes anxiety in some places, as sea levels rise.

To gain the number of seats needed to form a next Government, The Age also reports this week that the Prime Minister 'will attempt to wedge Labor on taxes and support for the mining industry', promising no mining tax, no carbon tax and that 'Anthony Albanese has committed a federal Labor government to supporting new coal mines, matching the pro-mining stance of the Coalition.' [19 April].

The short term politics of this is unjust, as above, but also contrary to what we promised, just months ago, under the Glasgow Climate Pact.

The spirit of that Pact is that all nations would speed up the pace of climate action. The detail is in a strengthening of current emission targets to 2030.

This is needed in order to keep alive the possibility of the 1.5 degree target.

Because, as was said in Glasgow by the Prime Minister of Barbados on behalf of all small island states, 'two degrees is a death sentence'.

We are still in the early days of this election campaign. The politics around climate change must become more just and more internationally responsible.

Wilfully proceeding on a path that feeds global warming would be extraordinarily stupid as well as unjust.

More inspired leadership, in coming weeks, would give our young people and our Pacific neighbours the possibility of real optimism and hope for the future.

Wouldn't that be wonderful!



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