



AUSTRALIAN CENTRE FOR
CHRISTIANITY AND CULTURE

WISDOM FOR THE COMMON GOOD

Support for the Adani Coal Mine is Scientifically and Morally Unjustifiable

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Huge [marches](#) are happening this last weekend in April in Washington, D.C., and numerous cities across the United States, protesting the Trump administration's climate policies, with significant participation by faith communities.

The normally conservative Parliament of World Religions and the U.S. National Council of Churches are denouncing the administration's recent decisions regarding "[the biggest challenge facing our planet.](#)"

Here in Australia, faith communities have a less brash Prime Minister than the present U.S. incumbent but we are grappling with similarly destructive policies.

Federal government support for the Adani "mega coal mine" is the target of an [open letter released today](#), signed by prominent leaders from Australia's faith communities - including Uniting Church, Buddhists, Quakers and Catholic.

They describe the prospect of an almost \$1bn loan of public money for mine infrastructure as morally wrong, writing:

"Given the climate emergency that the world now faces, it is morally irresponsible for Australia to allow the building of any new coal mines, coal-fired power stations or other fossil fuel infrastructure. It is furthermore incorrect to promote 'clean coal'; no coal is clean."

The letter resonates with [recent pro-science marches](#), which highlighted the gap between policy makers and scientific evidence. The world's spiritual traditions place a high value on truthfulness, and the truth about climate change is no exception.

On the other hand, the current government's stance in relation to climate policy is based on a wilful blindness regarding the damage its policies have for the economy, people's lives and world around us. In the interests of an imagined short-term political and economic advantage, longer-term impacts are set aside. Truth is sacrificed in favour of ideology.

For example, from the outset, the government was informed that the blackouts in South Australia last year were primarily due to storm damage, yet their commentary attacked the "[intermittency of renewables](#)" at every opportunity.

Further, the government claims that Australia is "on track" to meet its international [emissions reduction commitments](#). Yet our national greenhouse gas emissions are rising, not falling.

The government justifies its pro-coal stance by arguing that India and other nations need coal to raise their people out of energy poverty. The truth is that the grid infrastructure needed for

centralised coal-fired power is too expensive for impoverished populations, when cleaner, cheaper, decentralised renewable options are available. India does not need more high polluting energy. People in India are already suffering air quality and health impacts similar to those which are driving China to escalate its shift to renewables.

For Australia to embark on a new and enormous coal project flies in the face of science which tells us we are in a climate emergency, and the world cannot afford any new coal projects. Moreover, the proposed Adani mine will be the largest coal mine ever seen in Australia. [Pollution from the coal produced](#) - 79 million tonnes of CO₂ - could exceed that of entire countries like Bangladesh with its 160 million people and entire cities like New York.

Similarly, federal and Queensland government claims concerning the Carmichael coal mine's job creation potential are misleading. There are [already more jobs](#) in the pipeline for renewable energy projects in Queensland than those predicted for the mine, at a fraction of the cost to the taxpayer. Additionally, given that Australia is the driest continent, it beggars belief that the Queensland government gave Adani [rights to groundwater](#) with few conditions or constraints, for a 50-year period.

It is the same scant regard for the truth with which the federal government seeks to alter the *Native Title Act* to make it more difficult for the Wangan and Jagalingou people to exercise their rights over lands that are traditionally theirs.

When evidence and truth are so poorly regarded, we cannot expect reasonable policy. One is reminded of [Dietrich Bonhoeffer's remark](#) made amid his struggles against Nazism:

"Against stupidity we are defenceless; reasons fall on deaf ears; facts that contradict one's prejudgement simply need not be believed - in such moments the stupid person even becomes critical - and when facts are irrefutable they are just pushed aside as inconsequential, as incidental."

In Australia, we are blessed with beautiful country and relative wealth. We have a responsibility to protect it and we must make a start by making a stand for the truth.

Dear Minister Frydenberg

As leaders in our diverse faith traditions, we feel compelled to challenge those responsible for Australia's current climate and energy policies. In particular, we declare the proposal to provide public money to fund mining infrastructure in the Galilee Basin to be morally wrong.

The reality of human-caused climate change is settled science. Now it is time for action. We believe that people of goodwill must work together to reduce greenhouse gas emissions as a matter of emergency, and to prepare for the inevitable consequences of the climate disruption already caused by earlier decisions.

Given the climate emergency that the world now faces, it is morally irresponsible for Australia to allow the building of any new coal mines, coal-fired power stations or other fossil fuel infrastructure. It is furthermore incorrect to promote 'clean coal'; no coal is clean.

We are particularly concerned about the proposed Carmichael coal mine in Queensland's Galilee Basin. If built this would be one of the largest coal mines in the world. It would lock us into 25 to 60 years of more coal mining. Not only is this bad economics it ignores the concerns of farming and tourism industries precisely at a time when Australia ought to be leading the way in investment in renewable energy.

The technology to generate energy from renewable sources is now sufficiently developed and cost competitive to progressively replace the burning of coal. Several independent research studies have shown that Australia can source 100% of its electricity from renewable sources.

We know coal mining uses huge volumes of scarce water. Along with addressing climate change, guarding against water shortages in Australia is critical to the viability of our ecological life-support systems. It is both irresponsible and baffling that our political leaders would put our climate and water supplies in jeopardy.

We call on those in Government to show strong, visionary leadership, for the sake of their fellow Australians, for the millions of vulnerable people on earth, for future generations who have no say of their own, and for all of creation.

Yours in peace

Signatories:

Ms Cecilia Mitra, President, Federation of Australian Buddhist Councils

Sr Elizabeth Delaney, SGS, General Secretary, National Council of Churches in Australia

Sr Ruth Durick, OSU, President, Catholic Religious Australia, Provincial of the Ursuline Sisters

Mr Stuart McMillan, President, Uniting Church in Australia

Ms Jo Jordan, Presiding Clerk, Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) in Australia

Rabbi Jonathan Keren-Black, Environmental Adviser, Rabbinical Council of Progressive Rabbis

Ven. Dharmachari Ayryadharma, Sydney Buddhist Centre

Ms Jacqui Remond, Director, Catholic Earthcare Australia

Rev. Dr Denis Edwards, Professor, Australian Catholic University

Prof. Neil Ormerod, Professor, Australian Catholic University

Right Rev. Prof. Stephen Pickard, Executive Director, Australia Centre for Christianity and Culture,
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