

Media release

## Faith leaders ‘moral imperative’ for cuts to pollution

**Wednesday 27<sup>th</sup> May 2015:** Prominent leaders from diverse religious traditions in Australia are joining calls for more ambitious post-2020 emissions reduction targets, ahead of separate debates on each side of the political divide. The heads of the Anglican and Uniting Churches and peak Hindu and Buddhist bodies, along with prominent leaders in the Catholic and Jewish communities, state there is a ‘moral imperative’ for considerably higher targets.

In letters to all Labor and Coalition parliamentary members, they write, “We propose 40% below 1990 levels by 2025, and 80% below by 2030, and to increase our offer to the UN Climate Fund.”

The current bipartisan target is 5 percent below 2000 pollution levels by 2020.

“We have a duty to this generation and the generations to come to protect the world around us. To do so, we need to cut pollution in line with the recommendation of scientific experts,” said Thea Ormerod, President of the Australian Religious Response to Climate Change (ARRCC), which co-ordinated the letters. “The current target fails to live up to our responsibilities as a nation. It is fundamentally immoral.”

“It is shameful for a relatively wealthy country,” said Ormerod, “to be putting forward targets below the offerings of other nations with comparable economies.”

“We challenge the major Parties to have the courage to act for our common home,” said spokesperson for the signatories, Jacqui Remond, Director of Catholic Earthcare Australia. “If we don’t rapidly shift from fossil fuel energy sources to clean energy, we’ll be part of perpetuating a problem which is already creating massive hardship for the world’s poor and future generations. All life on Earth requires humanity to protect our shared atmosphere and as a developed nation we have an even greater responsibility to act with integrity and care for humanity and the planet.”

The Coalition Government is expected to submit Australia’s targets to the United Nations mid-year, and Labor’s policy settings on the matter are set to be decided at the ALP National Conference in July.

The Prime Minister’s Department put out an issues paper in May which argued that Australia is performing well and already has reasonable targets. “Some of the reasons given in the issues paper for considering that Australia should not set higher targets are reasons we suggest should make our ambition higher. That coal and natural gas make up so much of our exports, that 95% of our energy consumption comes from fossil fuel sources when the OECD average is 81%, should spur us on to more rapidly decarbonise our economy.”

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