

Statement on climate change by the NSW Council of Churches

On 7 November 2006 the members of the NSW Council of Churches unanimously resolved that:

The Bible declares that God created all things and that God's creation is good. Humans are part of the creation, although humans alone are made in the image of God (Gen 1:1-2:2). While all things belong to God, God has entrusted the care of creation to humans (Ps 24:1; Gen 1:28-29; 2:15). The relationship between humans and the rest of creation is therefore one of interdependence and stewardship. As God's stewards we bear an ethical responsibility for the care of the Earth and the welfare of all living things.

The Bible further declares that God created all things through his Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, who will return to the Earth to redeem and renew the whole of creation (John 1:1-3; Col 1:19-20; Eph 1:10; Rom 8:21; 2 Cor 5:17; Rev 21). This hope in Christ encourages us to share with our Lord in his work of redemption and renewal of the natural environment and its ecosystems, as well as the redemption and renewal of people, as we are inspired and empowered by the Holy Spirit (2 Cor 3:6; 1 Cor 15:35-49).

We acknowledge that humans have often denied our interdependence with the creation and abrogated our stewardship of the creation. One significant outcome of this long pattern of sinful behaviour is the global environmental degradation and climate change we now face. Overwhelming scientific evidence shows that humans have caused much of the global warming occurring today.

We believe that climate change is a significant threat to our economic and social life, and to the wellbeing and survival of countless species of flora and fauna. Failure to respond effectively to climate change will result in unmanageable cost blow-outs, irreversible devastation to ecosystems and biodiversity, the suffering and death of millions of the world's poor, and the migration of millions more to less physically threatening regions. It is imperative that governments and corporations, as well as individuals and local communities, respond to the imminent global environmental crisis.

We affirm that godly stewardship of the creation includes respect for the creation and its ecosystems as gifts from God, wise allocation and use of the creation's finite natural resources, and a responsibility to address damage caused by human use and misuse of the creation.

We deny that the creation and its ecosystems are to be worshipped or venerated, and that humans have a right to exploit natural resources in permanently destructive ways, and that Christians should focus on "spiritual" or "heavenly" matters to the exclusion of godly stewardship and care of the creation.

We call on the Australian Government to take immediate action to mitigate the effects of global climate change by reducing to a sustainable level the human contribution to climate change, addressing the human suffering and loss resulting from climate change, and enabling our generation to pass on Earth's resources responsibly and faithfully to future generations. In particular, we call on our state and federal political leaders to implement policies to reduce global "greenhouse gas" emissions by 50 per cent by 2050, and to encourage wider use of renewable energy sources.

We call on all Australians to reduce their own "greenhouse gas" emissions by taking action such as:

using public transport or walking where possible, and purchasing smaller vehicles
reducing household energy consumption (especially air conditioners)
reducing household water consumption and installing rainwater tanks where possible
reusing and recycling household products.

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