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Issue Six

# Watermark

*Conference of Leaders of Religious Institutes (NSW)*

## Edition on: Personal Action for Ecological Justice

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### Engaging in Change

This edition of Watermark invites each of us to become more involved in bringing about change for ecological sustainability. Very laudable aim. What a good thing to do. And because it's about the environment, most of us, if not all of us can readily agree that someone needs to do something about making the situation better. So far so good. However, the type of change that this edition of Watermark is inviting us to is two fold: change in oneself and change in the structures and systems that promote disintegration rather than integration in creation.

But why does real change for the environment depend on integration and engagement? Simply, we believe that integration is that process whereby the person's words and deeds coalesce, where their spirituality and work mesh, where their passions and their spare-time as well as their work time inform each other, where growth and conversion are friendly companions. We all recognise people of integration the minute we're with them. Genuine change emanates from the person who is integrated. And the person who is integrated sees the need to work for deeper integration and interconnectedness in the planet.

Engagement is that word that we use these days to describe the way we do the things we do. Engagement signals something deeper than mere work; engagement suggests to us that the whole person is somehow caught up in this wonderful activity and in this life-giving work for refugees, for social justice, for teaching, for accompanying the marginalised, for working for ecological sustainability.

Putting integration and engagement together suggests that we want to invite each of you to reflect with us on what it is that the earth needs from us right now – and what it might need to from us in 5, 10, or 20 years time. The CLRI (NSW) Social Justice Committee is convinced that authentic engagement in the bigger issues which confront us, will lead to a deeper integration within the person. Genuine engagement for change will mean that we will recognise ever more clearly the profound interconnections between social justice and ecological justice. It will mean that we will see the value in the small changes we make within our own lives, but that we will also see that these small changes must be writ large and so we will be inspired to bring about deep change as we approach the ballot box on 9<sup>th</sup> October.

Integration and engagement bring about change. This edition of Watermark invites you to think, with us, about how we can bring about change, real, authentic change for the common good – the common good of water, the common good of ecological sustainability, the common good of ecological justice.

# Personal Action for Ecological Justice

This page contains different things you can do

## The 'Water Footprint'

There are difficulties enough convincing consumers in industrialised countries that our direct water use is causing a water crisis so getting us to think about the water used to produce goods and services especially those produced in other places presents a challenge. In response to this Arjen Hoekstra in 2002 introduced the concept of the 'water footprint'. The water footprint of an individual, business or nation is defined as the total volume of fresh water that is used to produce the goods and services consumed by the individual, business or nation.

The 'water footprint' concept has been taken up by UNESCO-IHE in order to alert consumers to the effect their rate of general consumption has on global water use. Locally produced items use domestic water resources but goods produced in other places use the water resources of those places. For example, only about 3% of the Chinese water footprint comes from water used outside China whereas for Japan it is 60%. As individuals we use more water as consumers of cotton, rice, paper etc than we use drinking, cooking and washing. Water studies have shown that on average it takes 900 litres water to produce 1 kg maize while it takes 22,000 litres water to produce 1 kg beef. Cars, computers, building materials all come to us thanks to water playing a part in the mining and production process.

As a community we are only just beginning to see the extent of our water consumption and have hardly begun to consider how to manage and prioritise it. Perhaps the 'water footprint' concept can help us to examine more clearly the changes we need to make to our lifestyles.

For further information go to [www.waterfootprint.org](http://www.waterfootprint.org) a website maintained by the research team at UNESCO-IHE

## Key principles of sustainable water use

Least cost planning for utilities is based on the principle that people do not need energy or water, they need the services that these provide.

People want showers, gardens and sanitation, rather than quantities of water and they want warm houses and hot showers, rather than kilowatthours of electricity.

This means that if we redefine the role of utilities as providers of these services, rather than as suppliers of a commodity, the options increase to include more efficient equipment, practices and supplies of different services.

From [http://www.isf.uts.edu.au/whatwedo/proj\\_water.html#principles](http://www.isf.uts.edu.au/whatwedo/proj_water.html#principles).

## Water Saving – For the Home

AAA Water Conservation Labelling Scheme provides consumers with independent product information about the efficiency of products. Wherever possible, always select a AAA labelled showerhead or mixer.

**WASTE WATER DIVERTER** This Australian made and designed product from quality UV PVC, will drastically reduce your water usage costs. It is easily installed and recommended for use on bath, shower and laundry outlets. It is designed to fit standard 50mm waste outlets, with a 25mm outlet to a hose. For hygiene reasons the water should be applied directly to the soil around trees and shrubs. Always use biodegradable, phosphate free detergents.

### KITCHEN TAP AERATOR

It fits all taps with an existing aerator by simply screwing on and reduces water use from around 21 litres per minute to 8 litres per minute.

**SHOWER HEAD:** This AAA pending flow regulator for your shower will reduce the water used from approx. 15 litres/minute to 8 litres/minute, a potential savings of up to 20,000 litres/person/year.

**TOILET FLUSH REGULATOR** – This simple device gives you total control over how much water you flush away. By simply hanging the Water Stop in the flush mechanism, the toilet will only flush whilst button is held down. Saves a family of 4 about 40,000 litres per year. Easily installed in minutes, no plumber or tools needed. Can be used in dual flush system

Information from <http://www.greenharvest.com.au/tools/water%20saving.html>

## The Murray-Darling Basin and the Federal Election '04

CLRI NSW Social Justice Committee has been interested in the health of the Murray-Darling Basin for some time. It is one of the greatest ecological challenges facing Australia and it ties in with our concern with the use of water.

As we think it is a significant issue we wrote to all the major political parties (Liberal Party, Australian Labor Party, Australian Greens, Australian Democrats) asking for a short summary of their Murray Darling Policies. ALP and the Greens responded and their responses are below. The Liberal Party and Democrats did not respond but we collected their policies from policy documents.

A re-elected **Coalition Government** will provide support to the Landcare and Waterwatch volunteer movements to undertake a Basin-wide monitoring program to identify where salt enters rivers and streams. This information will enable aerial salinity mapping – a technique similar to aerial mineral exploration surveys – to pinpoint those salt stores where intervention is necessary. Armed with this information the community-based regional groups established and funded under our National Action Plan will be able to implement the best solutions to local salinity threats – to the benefit of the Murray Darling Basin as a whole. A re-elected Coalition Government will commit \$20 million over two years to this program from the National Action Plan on Water Quality and Salinity. These commitments are in addition to the Coalition Government's commitment to a further \$2 billion Australian Water Fund, announced in our election policy *Securing Our Water Future*, to conserve our scarce water resources.

The **Australian Greens** are concerned that although the recent National Water Initiative delivered perpetual water rights to irrigators, it failed to establish clear pathways to restore health in vital rivers such as the Murray Darling. The best available science suggests that between 2, 000 and 4, 000 gigalitres of additional flows is required for the Murray Darling to have a reasonably good chance of restored health. The 500gl of extra annual flow negotiated as part of the National Water Initiative is far too small to achieve this. The Australian Greens commit to returning an extra annual flow of 3, 000 gigalitres to the Murray Darling. We will begin regular progress reviews to inform adaptive management, until river health is restored.

A Latham **Labor Government** will save Australia's greatest river by increasing environmental flows to restore the river's health and keep the Murray mouth open. Saving our rivers and restoring our land is a key priority of the Labor Party. A Latham Government will restore 450 gigalitres of environmental flows within its first term to keep the Murray mouth open; deliver 1500 gigalitres in environmental flow within 10 years to restore the health of the river; and immediately ratify the Kyoto Protocol as the first step to an effective global response to climate change.

Labor's \$150m Murray Darling Riverbank - a new Commonwealth Corporation - will be established with an initial capital injection of \$150m, to promote more efficient water use. This is in addition to the Commonwealth's \$200m share of the National Water Initiative, announced as part of the recent COAG Agreement, taking Labor's total spending on Saving the Murray to \$350m. Despite ongoing dredging efforts, the Murray mouth is still in danger of closing. There is barely a trickle reaching the sea. The Murray River is on life support. Australians should not have to choose between a healthy environment & a prosperous nation; with vision & leadership, we can have both. The Murray River is critical to our nation's future and unless urgent action is taken the river will die.

**Democrats Action Agenda:** An ongoing shared program for funding the reforms in the Intergovernmental Agreement on a National Water Initiative; Adjustment assistance to communities whose economies are affected by changes in water availability & water use patterns; rules to control the water market to prevent profiteering or speculation by non-users, including foreign interests, to the detriment of water users or the environment; Targets for the recovery of water for the environment in all over-allocated rivers including a minimum of 1500gl into the Murray by 2010, & a process for the identification and protection of ecologically and culturally significant estuarine areas; Coordinated initiatives to improve water efficiency in irrigation, channel maintenance, channel lining and piping of water; No further expansion of water intensive crops, including rice and cotton, in the Murray-Darling Basin.

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We are now on the  
Web!  
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You can read past  
issues of  
*Watermark*  
on our website.

## Greenfleet

Information taken from [www.greenfleet.com.au](http://www.greenfleet.com.au). See the website for details.

Climate change and global warming are among today's most pressing environmental issues, brought about by increased concentrations of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere. Transport is Australia's fastest growing source of greenhouse gas emissions.

Greenfleet is a not for profit organisation which provides a simple way to reduce your car's impact on the environment. For an annual fee of \$40 (tax deductible), Greenfleet plants and maintains 17 native trees each year on your behalf. As they grow, these trees will absorb the greenhouse gases that the average car produces in one year (based on 4.3 tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub>).

Science shows that 17 mixed species trees will not only absorb a car's greenhouse emissions, but will also help tackle salinity, improve water quality and provide essential habitat for native species.

So far, Greenfleet has planted over 1.7 million trees on behalf of Australian motorists and fleets. These native forests will not be harvested and will create an investment in rural Australia for future generations.

## Take Action!

In this last week of the Federal Election talk to your local candidates about their Murray-Darling Basin and more broadly their commitment to ecologically sustainable principles and policies.

More broadly, look at your own life and ask yourself questions about how you can reflect ecological justice in your own life. This means looking at how you use water, how you get around, how you dispose of waste and ways you can change your behaviour.

Beyond yourself as an individual it is important to look at your context: people you live and work with. Bringing ecological values into organisations and workplaces is a difficult thing because it involves behavioural change in other people as well. As difficult as it can be, it is only in trying to change our own behaviour and that of those around us that we start to make small changes that have an impact.

In taking action in these ways we can combine more broad systemic change with personal action.