

WATERMARK

CLRI
NSW



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HOW GREEN IS 2016?

This edition of Watermark will provide an insight into how action on climate change and other environmental issues is progressing in 2016.

1. COP21 CATCH UP: IS THE POLITICAL CLIMATE CHANGING?

Last December, some 195 governments met in Paris as part of the 21st session of the UNFCCC Conference of the Parties (COP21) to negotiate a climate treaty to replace the failed Kyoto Protocol. The Paris Agreement, as the new treaty has been named, sets on member states some legally enforceable requirements in an effort to prevent catastrophic climate change. The main articles of the Paris Agreement are summarised below.



Global temperatures to stay **within 2°C of pre-industrial levels** with an ideal target of keeping temperature rise within 1.5°C.

Trillions of dollars to be committed to **climate change mitigation and adaptation programs**, as well as developing renewable energy sources.

\$\$\$ One billion dollars to be given annually by developed economies to finance clean energy and climate change adaptation strategies in developing countries

Voluntary emission reduction targets to be established by each member state.



Compulsory five year review of mitigation and emission reduction strategies of member states.

We spoke to Jill Finnane, the coordinator of the Eco-justice Campaign at the Edmund Rice Centre and the co-convenor of the Pacific Calling Partnership, about her experiences at COP21.

Jill, thanks so much for speaking to us about your participation at COP21. Can you tell us a little bit about the role that you played there?

"I was part of a delegation from the Pacific Calling Partnership that consisted of representatives from Tuvalu, Kiribati and Australia. The main role of our delegation was to find opportunities for our Pacific Islander delegates to speak out and be heard by the international community while at the same time developing their experience and expertise as international climate justice ambassadors. We also aimed to cooperate with the Kiribati and the Tuvalu government delegations and help raise the profile of the Coalition of Atoll Nations (CANCC)."



Jill (second from the right) with other Australian COP21 representatives.

1. COP21 CATCH UP CONTINUED: IS THE POLITICAL CLIMATE CHANGING?

What events/activities did you participate in as a part of COP21?

Before we even arrived in Paris, we were asked to take part in several key Side Events, a television show, a film, and a number of media interviews. For example, one of our delegates Rai Bainteiti, from Kiribati, was asked by UNHCR to present, from a Pacific perspective, on a panel explaining climate change displacement. Rai also starred in a US produced film about climate change shot in Paris during COP21 - this will eventually be broadcast worldwide. I personally attended the Side Event, Acting for Life, with youth representative Tinaai Teaua, who spoke on the impact of the fears that young people in Kiribati have about climate change. After returning from COP21, I was interviewed by Radio National to comment on the Paris Agreement.

Do you think that the Paris climate deal is satisfactory enough to combat anthropogenic climate change?

I think that the agreement marks an important step in the climate change movement. Certainly, I think that there's a sense that countries like Australia need to step up far more than what we have, and this kind of agreement forces them to take action.

The feeling that I got from the people in the Pacific is that this global movement is now unstoppable and is moving forward. There is a feeling of hope, but also a feeling of determination to keep pushing things because they still do need to go a lot further.

"Our work here is done and now we can return home to implement this historical agreement. This is a pivotal moment" - Julie Bishop, December 2015, Paris

2. WHAT IS AUSTRALIA DOING POST-COP21?

Over 100 states will ratify the Paris Agreement on April 22, 2016, with Palau, The Marshall Islands, and Fiji, being amongst those who have already done so. Although Australian leaders including Malcolm Turnbull and Julie Bishop have spoken in favour of the Paris Agreement, there is little evidence to suggest that they are putting words into actions.



MORE THAN 100 JOBS at the CSIRO, the peak climate research body in Australia, have been cut since the start of 2016.

The Minerals Council of Australia, which wields significant influence over Australia's current Coalition government is still running "**COAL. IT'S AN AMAZING THING**" advertisements on commercial radio and television stations across the country.



\$15.4 MILLION OF FUNDING from the Australia Federal Government has been allocated to construct an **OIL, GAS AND ENERGY RESOURCES GROWTH IN WESTERN AUSTRALIA.**

At COP21, Malcolm Turnbull stated that Australia would "meet and beat our 2020 (Kyoto) emissions reduction targets". He neglected to mention how low the target is - **ONLY 5% ON 2000 LEVELS.** This figure has not since been revised.



BIPARTISAN SUPPORT CONTINUES for the go ahead for the Adani Carmichael Mine and the Queensland Government has recently approved mining leases for the project. If it goes ahead, it would be the largest coal mine in Australia.

The Coalition continues to encourage private investment in **COAL, OIL AND GAS.** Since the start of 2016, the "big four" banks in Australia have committed **\$5.5 BILLION** of investment to the fossil fuel industry.

3. INCLOSED LANDS, CRIMES AND LAW ENFORCEMENT AMENDMENT (INTERFERENCE) BILL 2016

On March 17, the above Act passed NSW Parliament with the support of the Shooters and Fishers Party and Christian Democrat Fred Nile. The Act **adds an aggravated form of offence of unlawful entry on enclosed lands** and also extends the definition of "mine" to include equipment, gas and petroleum sites and construction sites for mines. Additionally, it confers extended powers of search and seizure on police and removes limitations on their ability to give directions.

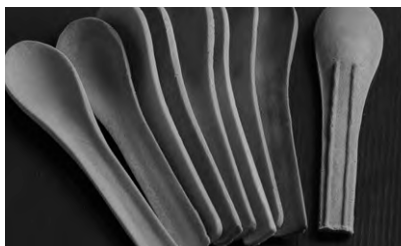


Groups such as the Knitting Nanas anti-coal seam gas (a member of whom is pictured above) regularly use lock-on devices as a form of peaceful protest. Under the new laws, members of this group could face **finest of up to \$5,500** for using these methods. Anti-mining group spokesperson Georgina Wood said that **the Act is aimed at furthering the interest of mining companies** and making it "easier for mining companies to get away with damaging water supplies and riding over the top of local communities." Certainly the Act undermines citizens' democratic rights to have a position different to the government and to protest accordingly.

Politicians are there to represent you, their constituents, in Parliament. If you want to see these laws revoked, then it is your right - and even your duty - to communicate to your MP.

4. FOOD FOR THOUGHT: EDIBLE CUTLERY AND CASH FOR CONTAINERS

The current political climate in Australia makes it easy to become disheartened on environmental issues. Here are a some positive stories about Australian and overseas organisations, businesses and individuals working together to help solve environmental problems.



THE FIRST EDIBLE CUTLERY COMPANY

Founded by groundwater researcher, Narayana Peesapathy, Indian company Bakeys is launching the **world's first edible cutlery line**. Typical plastic disposable cutlery contains cancerous chemicals and is non-biodegradable. An estimated **120 billion pieces** of cutlery is disposed every year. Concerned about these issues, Peesapathy invented a healthy alternative, edible cutlery made out of sorghum, wheat and rice flour. It sells, on average, 1.5 million pieces each year in India.



Of the energy it takes to produce 1 plastic spoon, Bakeys can produce 100 spoons



If the spoons are not consumed when used they can be eaten by other animals or will naturally degrade within 10 days



Sorghum, one of the crops used to produce spoons, can grow on 95% of the world's arable land and is neither water nor resource-intensive.

4. FOOD FOR THOUGHT: EDIBLE CUTLERY AND CASH FOR CONTAINERS (CONTINUED)

Every minute, 21,000 bottles and cans are littered or landfilled in Australia. For many years, the Total Environment Centre (TEC), as the National Convenor for the Boomerang Alliance of 30 environmental groups, has led the Cash for Containers campaign in Australia. This campaign aims to establish, in each state, a recycling system in which consumers return used bottles and cans in return for an incentive (usually money). South Australia is the only state to currently have such a scheme and, consequently, has had excellent recycling and significantly lower litter rates than other Australian states over the last 30 years.

Pressure from TEC and the Boomerang Alliance, in the form of media coverage, community events, environmental and economic reports, and viral social media campaigns, has resulted in NSW and Queensland State Governments announcing their intentions to establish Cash for Containers systems in 2017 and 2018, respectively. The campaign continues to pressure WA, Tasmania and Victoria to establish similar systems.

WHAT CAN YOU DO?

Follow the Social Justice Committee of CLRI on Twitter: www.twitter.com/clrinsw

Write to your local Federal MP to express your concerns that Australia is not meeting its commitments to the Paris Agreement

Encourage family and friends in Western Australia, Victoria and Tasmania to ask their State Governments to support Cash for Containers. They can do this through http://www.boomerangalliance.org.au/cash_for_containers

Make your voice heard! Sign a petition for an issue about which you are passionate - you can find some good ones at the GetUp website: <https://www.getup.org.au/campaigns/current-campaign-actions>

PRAYER FOR CLIMATE CHANGE

Our indifference changes the world;
Even mighty glaciers weep now.
Our disregard for our sisters and brothers
Threatens the very skies above us.
Our passivity begins to choke us, and
The excess of our lifestyles blot out the sun.

Call us to renewal, to stewardship;
Call us to solidarity to the earth and all its
creatures.
Give us new vision to see the fragile beauty
that remains to us;
Give us new spiritual energy to become
active
In loving the world through our daily life;
Give us new voices to speak out for environ-
mental solidarity.

Bless us again with the gift
Of being a joyful community;
Bless us with a love of your Creation
And we will glimpse your Eden once again.

- Jane Deren, 2009

Watermark is an occasional publication of the Conference of Leaders of Religious Institutions in NSW.