

CONFERENCE OF LEADERS OF RELIGIOUS INSTITUTES IN NEW SOUTH WALES

CLRI (NSW)

ABN: 52 476 362 010
Member of the Catholic Church Religious Group

Mr Bob Sercombe MP
Shadow Minister for Overseas Aid and Pacific Island Affairs
Parliament House
ACT 2600

9 February 2006

Dear Mr Sercombe,

I am writing on behalf of CLRI(NSW) Social Justice Committee, a group that represents more than 3,000 religious men and women in NSW. The Social Justice Committee works for justice for all in our society, especially those who are marginalised and unable to make themselves heard in the public domain.

I am writing to both you and Mr Albanese to commend you on your party's recent Policy Discussion Paper on Climate Change in the Pacific "Our Drowning Neighbours". In particular we commend the recognition of environmental refugees. An ethical response from Australia is required in regards to the pressing issue of global warming, particularly as Australia, is one of the world's highest emitters of greenhouse gases per person. We are very pleased that you have recognised and accepted that as we have contributed to global warming we must also be a part of the solution. Not only do we have a pressing responsibility to reduce our contribution to climate change, but we also need to "do [our] fair share to accept climate change refugees as part of our humanitarian immigration program," as your policy states.

We welcome your considered approach of focusing on the immediate effects of climate change as well as considering issues in the long-term. We particularly support the approach of facilitating local community consultations on the issues. We also welcome discussion at the UN level to ensure that environmental refugees are appropriately recognised in international conventions but raise our concerns that already existing refugee categories (Convention on Refugees) be protected. We are also encouraged by your support of the Kyoto Protocol.

We welcome your acknowledgement that environmental refugees (and indeed all refugees) can contribute both economically and culturally to their new home and that we should assist with training opportunities. We are also pleased to see the importance of the preservation of cultural heritage has been acknowledged and seek clarification on how you would envisage this would take place when environmental refugees are forced to evacuate their homes and seek refuge in Australia. We would also encourage the Labor Party to give some consideration about how we would cut greenhouse emissions and the inclusion of a carbon tax for greenhouse gas emitters. We also seek further clarification on what is meant by "appropriate insurance arrangements" in reference to the third possible action for the proposed Alliance.

Your climate change policy is a welcome contribution to the growing public debate about the human rights implications of global warming and we hope that it provokes much thought, discussion and action in seeking to address climate change. I look forward to your response.

Yours faithfully,

Liz Snell
For CLRI (NSW) Social Justice Committee

SOCIAL JUSTICE COMMITTEE

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