

BITS AND PIECES 66

(A SPECIAL ON THE PLENARY AND LAUDATO SI/CLIMATE CHANGE)

SUNDAY AUGUST 15th 2021.

MICHAEL GILL

Read as little or as much as you wish.

Contributions welcome

THE PLENARY

There is, in my opinion, no better face of Jesus Christ in our society than Vinnies. It is the Catholic Church at it's very best. It exists among and for God's people "binding their wounds" constantly. I doubt if, within the Catholic Church in Australia today (and for the future) there is or can be a more authentic version of Jesus Christ. We should listen to them

Vinnies National President to participate in Catholic Church's historic Plenary Council meeting

9 August 2021

Speaking just weeks before the first assembly of the historic 5th Plenary Council in Australia, National Council President and Plenary Council Member, Claire Victory, said she hoped the Plenary Council would lead to greater inclusion and an urgent

recasting of church leadership and governance at every level of the Church in Australia.

‘The Plenary Council process is one opportunity for urgently needed cultural and systemic change identified not just by the recent child sex abuse royal commission, but by faithful lay Catholics for decades.

‘As the largest lay-led Catholic organisation in Australia the St Vincent de Paul Society has a crucial role to play in the restoration of our church’s credibility’, Ms Victory said.

‘Our mission as church is not to fill buildings, but to reach people where they are, not where the church wants them to be. This is what Vincentians do when we offer care and support to people who are disadvantaged, voiceless and in need of a hand up.

‘This calls for a paradigm shift – from an authoritarian, hierarchical, patriarchal model to a communion of communities engaged in dialogue, discernment and decision making around both ecclesial and social concerns.

‘To transform itself, the Church must strive to be more representative of the entire community it seeks to serve. We want our Church to be known for its commitment to the poor, not as passive recipients of our benevolence but as people central to the Church’s life and mission.

‘The Society strongly advocates for a Church that condemns clericalism and promotes a more transparent and accountable model where hierarchical structures give way to shared leadership, where wisdom is sought through a process of genuine dialogue and inclusive vision.

‘We don’t know how successful the Plenary Council process will be in enabling the voice of lay people to be heard or what will come out of this historic opportunity, but we choose to remain optimistic about the potential for the genuine engagement of lay Catholics.

‘Do we want the smooth path to completion or are willing to engage in the radical and confronting work of transformation to make room for the new?’

‘As Vincentians, we hope that this Plenary Council (and the significant hard work that follows it) will lead to a Church that has a more deliberate, inclusive and intentional

focus on its fundamental mission of following Christ by serving the poor,' Ms Victory said.

A copy of the National Council's submission to the Plenary Council is available [here](#).

The St Vincent de Paul Society in Australia consists of 60,000 members and volunteers who operate on the ground through over 1,000 groups located in local communities across the country.



St Vincent de Paul Society
NATIONAL COUNCIL of AUSTRALIA Inc. *good works*

SUBMISSION TO THE PLENARY COUNCIL

23 JULY 2021

SUMMARY

This 5th Plenary Council in Australia comes at a crucial time in the Church's history. The sexual abuse crisis means the church as we have known it will never be the same again. The Plenary Council process is one opportunity for cultural and systemic change.

As the largest Catholic lay organisation in Australia the Society has a crucial role to play in the restoration of the church's credibility.

The St Vincent de Paul Society National Council consulted members as it prepared the original submission to the Plenary Council in July 2018. Key areas of concern were aligned under the following themes: renewed commitment to Christ-centred mission; inclusion; urgent review of leadership and governance

structures. These themes are similar to those identified in the recently released agenda for the Plenary Council, particularly creating a more missionary, Christ-centred Church; synodality and co-responsibility; and re-casting governance at every level of the Church in Australia.

This submission follows the Plenary Council themes.

Creating a more missionary, Christ-centred Church

As Vincentians, we draw our inspiration from Jesus, who went out to encounter people with compassion and deep reverence. With trust in God's help, we see our work as a continuation of Christ's own work. We live the Gospel values with our actions in our daily lives, bringing Christ to where the people are, reminding them that they are intrinsically loved by God, irrespective of the circumstances in which they find themselves.

Our mission as church is not to fill buildings, but to reach people. We must empower all people to be present to keep the presence of God alive where the people are, not where we want them to be. This calls for a paradigm shift – from an authoritarian, hierarchical, patriarchal model to a communion of communities engaged in dialogue, discernment and decision making around both ecclesial and social concerns.

Synodality and co-responsibility

True co-responsibility moves beyond tokenism and provides a variety of people with a voice, and decision-making authority. We need to go to where the people are, proclaiming the message of Christ which is that of inclusion and welcome of all people, not just those we are comfortable with. How do we consider the voice of people marginalised by the church? It is not enough to do good. We have to live the Gospel. To transform itself, the Church must strive to be more representative of the entire community it seeks to serve.

Re-casting governance at every level of the church in Australia

The Church in Australia needs strong leadership and transparent and accountable governance structures which must serve the mission of Christ, rather than man-made structures. The Society strongly advocates for a Church that addresses clericalism and instead promotes a more transparent and accountable model where hierarchical structures give way to shared leadership and where wisdom is sought through a process of genuine dialogue and inclusive vision.

Conclusion

We do not know how well the Plenary Council process will enable the voice of lay people to be heard or what will come out of this historic opportunity. But we choose to remain optimistic

about the potential for engagement of lay Catholics. Do we want the smooth path to completion or are willing to engage in the radical and confronting work of transformation – to make room for the new?

We pray the result of this Plenary Council will make us a Church that is of and with the poor. We desire a Church that is intent on following Christ by serving the poor and by standing in solidarity with them.

Faith in Action: Role of the St Vincent de Paul Society in the Australian Church

The St Vincent de Paul Society

The St Vincent de Paul Society was founded in Paris, France on 23 April 1833, by Blessed Antoine-Frederic Ozanam and his companions. They began by responding to the emerging needs of the poor at the time, with the support of Blessed Rosalie Rendu and the inspiration of Sts Vincent de Paul and Louise de

Marillac. Since 1833 the Society has spread and is now active in 155 countries consisting of 50,000 Conferences and 800,000 Members.

In Australia, we have over 60,000 members, volunteers and staff working in each diocese across the country in 1,520 conferences and 652 Vinnies shops as well as numerous other outreaches including crisis centres, disability care services, low-income housing provision and support for migrants and refugees. Collectively we have served over 1.8million people in the past twelve months. That equates to one in every 14 Australians.

A Crucial Moment for the Australian Church

The St Vincent de Paul Society in Australia is the largest Catholic lay organisation in the country. This 5th Plenary Council of Australia comes at a crucial time in the Church's history.

As we move towards the first session of the Plenary Council, we must face the reality that Australia is one of the epicentres of the sexual abuse crisis in the global Church. We need to question if we, as the Church in Australia, will allow ourselves to emerge from this time where our authenticity has been justifiably challenged to its very core, and see this moment as an invitation to embrace even more deeply the life and mission for which we exist.

We have the choice to be downcast and despondent as we reflect on the shameful track record of a small and yet significant percentage of people who have abused their power in terrible ways, or we can walk courageously through our moment of exile. Whatever we choose to do, the truth remains – that what we have known as the Church in Australia will never be the same again.

We can say that time heals. That time changes things. However, time can also serve as a scapegoat for capacity to

hide behind fear. Time changes nothing if people do not change. If our attitudes and the subsequent practices that we can hide behind do not look radically different because of where we have failed, then we have missed a precious opportunity.

The Plenary Council provides us an opportunity to take a long, loving look at the real. For the bend in the road will be the end of the road for the Australian Church if we are unwilling to accept the reality of our circumstances and respond courageously.

The Society has a significant role to play in the restoration of the Church's credibility through the quality of our presence much more than words, documents and strategic plans. We show who God is through our good works. We desire to see the Church develop a more deliberate, inclusive and intentional focus on its fundamental mission of following Christ by serving the poor. As Vincentians, the poor are front and centre in our lives and work. Our voices and actions can act as a thread that weaves together the People of God, people living with poverty, the community and wider society.

Not only is the Society focused on living our faith in action, but one third of the membership are under 40 years of age. As such, the Society has a significant presence, providing an experience of Church and mission for many Australian Catholics.

The Society believes that the engagement of lay people, with their wisdom, gifts and diversity, hold the key to the much-needed renewal of our Australian Church. The Plenary Council agenda provides us with a precious opportunity to develop concrete proposals and contextualise these at local levels through a lens of a Church that truly wants to revitalise our mission in our actions, not just with our words.

SVDPS Engagement with the Plenary Council Process

With the support and endorsement of our National Council, the Society consulted members. This process of active engagement and questioning the relevance and hope for the future of the Church has reaped many benefits.

Key areas of concern identified by members were aligned under the following themes:

- Renewed commitment to Christ-centred mission
- Inclusion
- Urgent review of leadership and governance structures.

These themes highlighted in reflective conversations by our members are very similar to those identified in the recently released agenda for the 5th Plenary Council of Australia. This further highlights the synergy between the lay people serving at the grassroots as part of the Society and the voice of the faithful who have spoken in the nation-wide listening and discernment phases as part of the Plenary Council process.

SVDPS Response to Key Themes of the Plenary Council Agenda

As a lay Catholic organisation, we highlight our views related to three specific areas of concern. Whilst being the fruit of the discernment of members, these headings are taken directly from elements of the Plenary Council Agenda.

1. Creating a more missionary, Christ-centred Church

The focus on renewal of mission is justifiably at the forefront of all levels of the Church at this time.

In *Evangelii Gaudium*, Pope Francis dreams of a “missionary impulse capable of transforming everything so that the Church’s customs, ways of doing things, times and schedules, language and structures can be suitably channelled for the evangelisation of today’s world rather than for her self-preservation” (EG #27).

If we move to our Australian context, the focus of the agenda for the forthcoming Plenary Council presents very clearly the task for members, “As children of God, disciples of Jesus Christ and guided by the Holy Spirit, the Members of the Fifth Plenary Council of Australia are called to develop concrete proposals to create a more missionary, Christ-centred Church in Australia at this time.”

We again find mission at the core of the message proclaimed in 2020 document, *The Light from the Southern Cross* where we are reminded: “The Church needs ‘real social and cultural transformation’ with tangible repercussions for the life of the faith if there is to be a restoration of trust and credibility in the human face that guides its mission.” (LSC, pg 3)

The Church in Australia is being provided an opportunity to learn from its mistakes, as it seeks to re-establish not only its credibility with the Australian public but, more importantly, a renewal of its mission at the service of the people of Australia. The focus on restoration of trust and credibility is paramount to our capacity to live mission, emphasising the need for no longer being satisfied with change. Instead, we take the good and the bad, the broken and the life-giving, and courageously walk on a journey of transformation.

Our mission as Church is not to fill buildings. Our mission is to reach people. And because our mission is to proclaim the Gospel in imitation of Jesus, then we need to drastically re-think the way we go about this. In order to be faithful to this mission, we need to empower all people to be capable of standing in the marketplace and keeping the presence of God alive where the people are, not where we want them to be. The Society serves as a model of practical engagement in standing with those in greatest need. The time has come for us as Catholics where we need to do more than go to Church. We need the courage of the first disciples, women and men who had an encounter with Christ, and who sought to live the fruits of that encounter in radical and meaningful ways. Women and

men who were not caught up in the comforts of ritual but rather courageously went out to proclaim the Gospel through the way they lived their lives, trusting the promise and providence of God and daring to do things differently.

As the Society, we draw our inspiration from Jesus, who went out to encounter people with compassion and deep reverence. With trust in God's help, we see our work as a continuation of Christ's own work. We live the Gospel values with our actions in our daily lives, bringing Christ to where the people are, reminding them that they are intrinsically loved by God, irrespective of the circumstances in which they find themselves.

Living faith in action is key to our spirituality. What we aspire to, we also wish for our Church. We want our Church to be known for its commitment to the poor, not as passive recipients of our benevolence but as people central to the Church's life and mission. This calls for a paradigm shift - from an authoritarian, hierarchical, patriarchal model to a communion of communities engaged in dialogue, discernment and decision making around both ecclesial and social concerns. It means a faith community focused on mission not maintenance.

2. Synodality and co-responsibility

The Light from the Southern Cross report reminds the Church in Australia that "The involvement of all of the People of God in mission enhances the notion of true co-responsibility. To take full advantage of the opportunities this provides there must be a proper appreciation of the concept of inclusivity... Women and men, religious, lay and clerical, working together will ensure the wisdom, talent and professional expertise and commitment to the Gospel needed to animate the mission of the Church in the 21st century." (LSC, pg 72-73)

This call to synodality and co-responsibility is not just about collaborating in a tokenistic fashion. It is more than just accepting diversity or fair treatment for all people. A truly synodal, co-responsible and inclusive Church is one that

provides a variety of people with a voice, and decision-making authority. An inclusive Church bears witness to the intrinsic value of all people, not just to be welcomed, but to be affirmed in the light of the greatest commandment of Jesus, love God, and love our neighbour, whoever they are.

No longer can we expect people to come flocking to the pews of a Church for their spiritual nourishment. We need to go to where the people are, proclaiming the message of Christ which is that of inclusion and welcome of all people, not just those we are comfortable with. We must be people passionately involved not just generous. We must be prophetic not passive. We must be inclusive people that welcome all, not one at the expense of the other. It's not about them and us, or clerics vs lay people. We must remember that we are what is left of the Gospel in this moment.

The Society invites the members of the Plenary Council to consider, how do we ensure we capture not only the voice of all the faithful in our discernment, but also consider the voice of those who are either on the margins of society or marginalised by the Church? Vincentian spirituality reaches out to those amongst us who are in any way suffering with a profound sense of respect for the dignity of each person always encouraging new possibilities for individuals to grow. There is no room for judgement or condemnation of people with diverse views to ours. As Pope Francis reminds us, "let the Church be a place of mercy and hope, where everyone is welcomed, loved and forgiven." If we look honestly at our Australian Church, it is evident that we need to move more in this direction if we are truly able to say that we are living in imitation of Jesus, who did not just condone the poor, but chose to dine with them.

It is not enough to do good. We have to do the Gospel. And just as Jesus sat with prostitutes and tax collectors, we need to ask the question, "who are the prostitutes and tax collectors of 21st century Australia?" and how do we make sure that in a

meaningful way they feel valued, welcomed and affirmed for who they are, as they are, not as we want them to be.

We need not be afraid nor conditioned by who we are or where we come from, similar to the experience of Elijah in the First Book of Kings where we learn that God often appears not in the fire, nor the earthquake, but in the still small voice. We need to question, who or what is the still small voice needed to lead our Church in this moment, and how can we at the same time empower them to have the courage to speak and give ourselves the courage to listen. In addition, how can we go a step further and actually advocate for those who are on the margins of society, conscious that this is exactly where Jesus, our servant- leader, found himself.

For it is only when our Church becomes spiritually more evangelical, theologically more consistent, and pastorally more open to diversity that we will be able to respond to the challenges of working for justice, peace, and the care of our common home, from a stance of genuine attention to the most vulnerable and the excluded of our age.

If we sincerely listen to what the Spirit is saying, then it is the hope of the Society that we will see a genuine shift from a sense of them and us, where those with roles in the Church

collaborate with lay people, to a paradigm where all are co-responsible for bringing about the mission of Jesus at every level of decision-making and mission, not just when it is convenient.

To transform itself, the Church must strive to be more representative of the entire community it seeks to serve.

3. Re-casting governance at every level of the Church in Australia

The Church in Australia needs strong leadership and transparent and accountable governance structures now more

than ever. We believe that this is particularly crucial at this time as we try to heal the wounds of the scandals of the past and the distance that has grown between the Church and the broader community.

Jesus serves as the perfect role model for strong leadership that the Church must aspire to in today's context. Jesus' way of living shows us the importance of acting humbly, seeking justice, speaking truth, offering healing and leading by service.

We must have structures of governance in place that provide opportunities for all people to have a voice and all wisdom to be heard. These governance structures must serve the mission of Christ, rather than the mission serving man-made governance structures. We must never forget that the goal of the Church is and always will be to live and proclaim the Gospel. Let us not forget, the Church is neither a building nor a set of guidelines. We are the Church, the body of Christ.

As a lay-led Catholic organisation, the Society cherishes its place within the Church and its relationship with Church leaders. The Society has traditionally drawn its members from parishes, with support from clergy and religious as spiritual advisors. As the Church adapts to a future with fewer priests and religious in Australia and where the laity will have a more prominent role, there is much to be drawn from the experience of the Society in Australia and how it has evolved. As an indisputably a lay organisation since our inception, the Society has relied on the lay women and men for direction, wisdom and leadership.

The Society strongly advocates for a Church that addresses the serious concerns that exist around clericalism and instead promotes a more transparent and accountable model where hierarchical structures give way to shared leadership and where wisdom is sought through a process of genuine dialogue and inclusive vision.

Conclusion

The concern of many Catholics across Australia, including members of the Society, is that the Plenary Council processes will not enable the voice of the lay people to be heard and that little will come out of this historic opportunity.

However, despite this concern, we choose to remain optimistic about the opportunities the Plenary Council provides for an even more active engagement of lay Catholics in giving voice to the direction of the Catholic Church in Australia, not just in the future, but also in this present moment. We believe that this is an opportunity for positive and significant change in the Catholic Church in Australia.

We emphasise the need for a change in mentality and attitude, as opposed to changing religious traditions. For we believe that if the Australian Church, guided by those serving in positions of clerical responsibility, is open to new possibilities of a Church that is courageous enough to own our need for improvement, then we can walk forward in hope. The question remains, are we ready as a Church in Australia to take the kind of bold actions necessary to bring about true and lasting transformation? We need to decide whether we want the smooth path to completion or whether we are willing to engage in the radical and confronting work of transformation, that is, to make room for the new.

As we move towards the celebration of the first session of the Plenary Council we are invited over and over again to listen to what the Spirit is saying. Whilst we need to be attentive to what the Spirit is saying, this is not enough. Grounded in our deep listening to the Spirit, we also need to learn how to speak.

We envision that the result of this Plenary Council, and the significant hard work that follows it, is a Church that has a more deliberate, inclusive and intentional focus on its fundamental mission of following Christ by serving the poor. We believe that this will be achieved through a renewed focus on Christ-centred mission, the call to inclusion and a drastically revised vision for

governance at all levels of the Church. The Plenary Council is an opportunity to lift up our eyes, conscious that we never ever want to go back where we have come from, but to focus our gaze on the opportunities for new wine in new wineskins.

As the Church discerns the way forward with the Plenary Council, we take to heart what Cardinal Claudio Hummes said to the newly elected Pope Francis: “Don’t forget about the poor”. We hope that the Plenary Council does not forget about the St Vincent de Paul Society and how through collaboration with Church leaders and lay people who serve the poor at the grassroots, we can truly build a more missionary and Christ-centred Australian Church.

We continue to pray that the Plenary Council might be a transformative experience for the Australian Church, whereby the teaching Church will hear what the believing Church believes and through dialogue and discernment the body of Christ will breathe together as one.

ACCCR (Australasian Catholic Coalition for Church Reform) RESPONSE TO THE PLENARY MEETING AGENDA

The meeting begins October 3, 2021. The Australian Bishops have issued the Agenda for the Plenary Council which consists of 16 Questions: [Plenary-Council-Agenda.pdf](#)

The ACCCR has issued a detailed response which can be read at:

<http://accr.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/The-Australian-Plenary-Council-An-Agenda-for-Reform.docx>.

This response is being published and widely distributed. Feel free please to share it with those who may be interested.

Plans are underway to offer a reasonably comprehensive briefing online each evening of the day's events at the Plenary Meeting. We will do our best to ensure that you have transparent and timely access to what is happening.

AN UPDATE FROM THE ACCCR AND THE CATHOLIC CHURCH REFORM INTERNATIONAL

1. I am forwarding below (##) for your interest the **Report of the Catholic Church Reform International (CCRI) Strategy Team Meeting, August 5, 2021.**

CCCRI continues to publicise our ACCCR Plenary Council initiatives (we need as many of our networks as possible spreading the word, especially re the second Convocation 7.30pm – 9.00pm AEST 26 August 2021):

A second of three convocations convened by ACCCR will be held on **August 26**. Under the title **"The Future of Catholicism in Australia,"** ACCCR supports the Plenary Council process. They are reaching out to all Catholics so that together we can reshape our Church as a life-enhancing community of the followers of Jesus. For details, click <https://www.garrattpublishing.com.au/blog/post/convocation-2-august-26/>.

2. Marion Gambin rsj has asked Kevin Liston to circulate this information on the **Mission: One Heart Many Voices Conference 1-3 September**. Attached is the brochure and Conference Rationale. The web site for registration is mohmv.com.au

3. For those who have not seen this informed and insightful analysis from **Prof. Mary Coloe pbvm on Plenary Council matters** <https://vimeo.com/manage/videos/573877111>. Mary observes that the themes, adopted earlier after the public submissions and used for the discernment groups, have been abandoned. Towards the end (2nd last slide), Mary states a key challenge for us all:

“The Agenda mentions women once. How might the People of God, lay and ordained, women and men, approach governance in the spirit of synodality and co-responsibility for more effective proclamation of the gospel?”

Best wishes

Peter Johnstone
Co-Convener
Australasian Catholic Coalition for Church Reform
accr.com.au

Report of our CCRI Strategy Team Meeting, August 5, 2021

Participants in today’s meeting: Fr. Joe (currently in Ireland), Charlie (U.S.), Virginia (India), Christina (New Zealand), Janet (U.S.), and Rene (U.S.)

Track Changes (or the lack thereof) in the Church

1. Federation of the Parvis Network: The word “Synod” means “walking the path together.” Let’s give back to the word “path” its dynamic sense. It is all about getting on the move and going somewhere else. To do so we must take the risk of setting out. The Spanish proverb – *We create the path by walking* – is important here.

2. Sister Nathalie Becquart’s 12-page interview published by German Catholic Podcast *Himmelklar*: “There is no synodality without

spirituality. Synodality is a spiritual process. We must listen to the Holy Spirit and try to understand what today's Catholic Church should be like. If the decision-making process is truly synodal, then the vote at the end will be more or less a formality. To put it quite simply, synodality means walking together along a common path and being an itinerant church in which all the baptized work together. That is what the church is learning at the moment, especially in the present ecclesial crisis that has made people so aware of clericalism. It is now imperative to find a way of collaborative leadership.”

Read more at: <https://international.la-croix.com/news/religion/nathalie-becquart-explains-synodality/14689>

3. Traditional model: USA Bishops themselves write documents like the present one on the Eucharist. New model: The Universal Church/a National Church writes documents synodally/in a synodal way. Cardinal Joseph Tobin, the archbishop of Newark who spoke last month against moving ahead with drafting a statement: “One thing I’ve learned in 43 years as a priest is that preaching has two essential dynamics. “One is what you say and second is what they hear. The perception around that document is that it is political in nature and is thus unlikely to achieve the goal of broadening understanding about the Eucharist.

4. Topics for both the Synod Questionnaire and later synod process discussion topics in dioceses and parishes:

a. Ranking moral issues (see USA Bishops dispute).

b. 2019 poll from the Pew Research Center found significant numbers of U.S. Catholics either disagree with or do not understand the church’s teaching that the Eucharist is the real body and blood of Christ.

5. Ask what is happening in the physical diocese where you live. Then read this: “In Viana Diocese, Angola, meetings have been underway for almost a month in parishes, groups, movements and Small

Christian Communities to provide everyone with training and information on the diocesan synodal assembly that will be held in mid-October, 2021, a step towards the Synod of Bishops in 2023. The aim is listening to and gathering the contributions of each person. Each parish is creating its own synodal animation unit. In the diocese there is a great wealth of lay faithful but, due to a lack of formation and orientation, there is sometimes little participation.”

6. Thomas O’Loughlin, professor emeritus of historical theology at Nottingham University in *The Tablet*: “Attempts to update the liturgy had been made “ham-fistedly” and the Catholic Church had stopped being able to speak to the urban population of Europe in the eighteenth century. So, either we go down the synodal route and build the church up as a community that has a different vision of how it will live – not individuals but a community made up of individuals – or we will become a historical sect. Will it work? I pray every day it will, because otherwise we are finished.”

7. The Secretaries General of nine countries in the Association of Member Episcopal Conferences in Eastern Africa (AMECEA) have brainstormed on how the region can move together towards a successful realization of the XVI Ordinary General Assembly of Bishops’ Synod slated for October, 2023. “Some conferences have moved a step further and appointed the focal persons at diocesan level and a coordinating team at national level who will be the key contact persons when the synodal journey begins,” the AMECEA Secretary General Father Anthony Makunde explained. The team of Secretaries General in collaboration with Departmental Coordinators of AMECEA Secretariat focused on how the synod coordinators from the region can be assisted “to have the required information on how to mobilize the baptized persons in the region to participate and share their ideas in preparation for the synod. We have begun contacting theologians within the region and beyond who can pool as a team either in the dioceses or at national level to assist

whenever there is need. This will help conferences meet the set time frame which is quite short.”

The conferences representatives discussed the need of coming up with a common approach that can be implemented by AMECEA member conferences in responding to the synodal journey which Fr. Makunde says, “will be adopted by conferences and dioceses according to their context. The approach taken for the realization of 2023 Synod of Bishops is unique compared to the other synods which have been conducted in the past. This time the idea of decentralization is key and it begins from the local churches. The focus is on all the baptized in their respective positions and status thus including the lay faithful, clergy, religious men and women and various groups and associations in the Church.”

[AMECEA: Secretaries General Brainstorms on How Region Can Contribute to 2023 Synod of Bishops on Synodality](#)

8. Phyllis Zagano: “The combination of pandemic lockdowns and Zoom have spawned a new way of being Catholic. Or, they have spawned a new way of seeming to be Catholic. We are moving toward a Catholic Metaverse (an alternative reality, a grandchild of the internet). What is upon us now is remote access to worship, spiritual direction, preaching, *Bible* study, after-church socials, just about anything the in-person parish might provide in terms of information and interaction. Remote access allows people to choose whom to listen to and with whom to interact. It is moving to the point where Catholic fact and Catholic fiction are in competition. Community is in a Catholic Metaverse created through social media in which you can participate anonymously. Or not. The question: Will there be a Rome-controlled Catholic Metaverse? Or will the various Catholic virtual communities continue to grow in their own directions? Then, there is the big what-if in all this: What happens to sacraments?”

9. "A Mission Focus to Guide Us" (From our recently completed 2021 General Chapter):

"We, Maryknoll Fathers and Brothers, are learning to be more faithful evangelizers under the inspiration of Pope Francis, who dreams of a "poor church for the poor" on the peripheries, where everyone is called to be missionary disciples of Jesus and where pastoral agents "smell like the sheep." His is a dream of a listening church attentive to the cry of the poor and of creation; a church turned "field hospital" joyfully healing the wounded; a merciful, inclusive church where Eucharist is "bread of sinners, and not the reward of saints." It's a dream of a synodal church where everyone is accountable to each other, has a place at the table and a voice not silenced; a prayerful, contemplative church fixing her "gaze in faith upon Jesus, quietly pondering his word and his saving mysteries." May this dream of a "church called to be missionary" guide us in our future plans and ministries."

Petition to promote engagement of the people in the diocesan synods worldwide

The petition is now posted and available in four languages: English, Spanish, German, and

French: <https://www.petitions.net/pope-francis-wants-to-hear-from-the-people>. Currently our associates in four other countries are in process of correcting the Google translations in Africa, Korea, Japan, and Brazil. As soon as these are completed, we'll be sending the petition out in all eight languages.

The Peoples Synod

Janet reported that they have two projects going:

1. A letter going out to the 67 U.S. bishops who stood up to U.S. Bishops Conference opposing the Eucharist document asking them to join with the Peoples Synod in holding synodal gatherings for the U.S.
2. Hold a three-part facilitated Listening Circle focused on the question, "What is your personal experience of the faithful,

particularly those you love, leaving the Church?" In session one, they will listen deeply to each other in order to gain a sense of the collective experience of the pain and loss suffered by the Body of Christ from people leaving the Church. The Listening Circle will be held virtually on Zoom, Saturday, Aug 28 and repeated on Sept. 4, from 9-11am Central U.S. time. They plan to hold a Learning Circle event in Oct 2021 (date TBD) to explore our experience of diminishing Church membership using Christian theology and wisdom. In the third session, they plan to hold an Empowerment Circle event in Nov 2021 (date TBD) to explore actions each can take individually and collectively to address the issue of our loved ones leaving the Church.

Funding for Young people's Zoom Search Communities

Charlie reported that a funding request is being submitted to Templeton, a funding source that, if granted, will fund for three years. Fr. Joe supported this indicating this is an excellent funding source. Deadline is August 20.

Plenary Council in Australia

This gathering begins October 3, 2021. The Australian Bishops have issued the Agenda for the Plenary Council which consists of 16

Questions: [Plenary-Council-Agenda.pdf](#)

The Australian Catholic Coalition for Church Reform (ACCCR) has issued a detailed response (See attached).

Additionally, a second of three convocations convened by ACCCR (Australasian Catholic Coalition for Church Reform) will be held on August 26. Under the title "The Future of Catholicism in Australia," ACCCR supports the Plenary Council process. They are reaching out to all Catholics so that together we can reshape our Church as a life-enhancing community of the followers of Jesus. For details,

click <https://www.garrattpublishing.com.au/blog/post/convocation-2-august-26/>.

Pink Shoes into the Vatican Campaign

Christina reported that the New Zealand executive committee of the Pink Shoes into the Vatican campaign to be held 19 September 2021 is ask that you promote this flyer [pink shoes flier for fb .pdf](#) through your networks (Catholic Church Reform International) suggesting people place their worn out shoes perhaps spray painted pink, with a tag saying what they like about their experience of service to the church and where they are being denied equality. Make a copy of the flyer [pink shoes flier for fb .pdf](#) and leave at the doors of their local church or cathedral.

Maybe this will go global. The date falls on suffrage day in New Zealand, the first country in the world to give women the vote, in 1893.

Catholic Women's Council

Virginia reported that the CWC <https://www.catholicwomenscouncil.org/> will be holding an online synod on women next year beginning in March and proceeding every month thereafter. By the fall, they plan to hold dual synods, i.e., both virtual and physical in Rome. At present, fifty organizations globally have joined CWC.

LAUDATO SI AND CLIMATE CHANGE

IPCC REPORT

CLIMATE CHANGE 2021

The Physical Science Basis

https://www.ipcc.ch/report/ar6/wg1/downloads/report/IPCC_AR6_WGI_SP_M.pdf

FROM THE AUSTRALIAN CLIMATE COUNCIL

Hundreds of scientists, years of research, a rigorous review process - and one message: **the need for deep, rapid cuts to emissions is more urgent than ever.**

Last night, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) released the first instalment of its landmark Sixth Assessment Report (1). **This is the most comprehensive and authoritative overview of the physical science of climate change to date.**

The threat now facing all of humanity due to inaction on climate change is more serious than ever, and every day of further delay puts us more at risk. But while the findings of this report will be confronting for many, we must all remember that **strong action today will make a profound difference to communities and ecosystems worldwide**, both in our lifetimes and well into the future.

There's so much packed into this report - so we've compiled some of its key conclusions into our latest article: [What does the IPCC's latest report mean?](#). **Here's what it all comes down to:**

1. **The scale and pace at which humans are altering the climate system has almost no precedent.** Human influence has warmed the climate at a rate that is unprecedented in at least the last two thousand years.
2. **Climate change and its impacts are accelerating, and more impacts are on the way.** Lack of action, despite decades of warnings, means we are now seeing these alarming changes unfold at a faster and faster rate. In other words, our climate is not merely changing, the rate of change is now accelerating.
3. **Every fraction of a degree matters.** Every additional increment of warming means more extreme weather, including increases in

the intensity and frequency of heatwaves, damaging rainfall, and droughts.

4. **Responding to climate change means doing everything possible to reduce emissions, while also adapting to the impacts that can no longer be avoided.** Past inaction means that more impacts from climate change are on the way but the right choices made today will be measured in lives, livelihoods, species and ecosystems saved.

The findings of this latest report are unmistakable: **only stronger action this decade can prevent climate catastrophe.**

What does this mean for Australia?

Climate change is already impacting Australians today. From longer fire seasons to more destructive storms, we are particularly vulnerable to the impacts of worsening extreme weather, caused by climate change. **But as the world ramps up its efforts, Australia is being left behind**, having refused to set a date to achieve net zero emissions, strengthen our weak 2030 emissions reduction target, or take advantage of the jobs and benefits that being a world leader in renewable energy would bring.

This report is the first of three working group reports contributing to the IPCC's Sixth Assessment Report, and **the only one to be released ahead of the UN Climate Change Conference, COP26, in Glasgow** in November - the most critical round of international climate negotiations for many years (2). Here, all countries are expected to strengthen their climate commitments. This report ensures governments have the latest and most authoritative science to inform their decisions.

What can we do?

In the lead up to COP26, it's up to us, together, to build intense media and public pressure on the Federal Government and push for Australia to ramp up its climate commitments in line with the urgency of the challenge we face.

The Climate Council has joined with 55 organisations across the Australian climate movement, representing millions of Australians, **incalling on the Federal Government to cut emissions by 75% by 2030, and reach net zero by 2035** (3). Now, more than ever, we need to demonstrate the sheer number of Australians that want to see strengthened emissions reduction targets.

Michael, if you haven't yet, **[can you sign and share this urgent call to action with your friends and family?](#)**

[Sign the Petition](#)

In the context of this latest science update, it is important to remember that there is still a path to avoiding climate catastrophe – and there is still so much we can and must fight to save. If you are struggling with this sobering news, please **[read our guide to managing stress in uncertain times](#)**, produced with Psychology for a Safe Climate (4).

Thank you for standing with us in our united push for action.

With hope,

Dr Simon Bradshaw

Acting Head of Research,

Climate Council

P.S. For more on this latest report, our Climate Councillors have been in the media making sure Australians understand the latest science and how Australia should respond:

- **Dr Joëlle Gergis** in The Conversation: [This is the most sobering report card yet on climate change and Earth's future. Here's what you need to know](#)
- **Prof. Lesley Hughes** on [10 News First](#), and in The New Daily: [IPCC climate report says world is warming faster than anticipated](#)
- **Prof. Will Steffen** in the Sydney Morning Herald: [IPCC report 2021: Climate change to force 1.5 degree rise by 2040](#)

References:

1. [AR6 Climate Change 2021: The Physical Science Basis](#), IPCC, August 2021
2. The IPCC's Sixth Assessment Report, due in September 2022, comprises three Working Group contributions: Working Group I (physical science basis), Working Group II (impacts, adaptation and vulnerability) and Working Group 3 (mitigation), and a Synthesis Report. [Find out more about the IPCC assessment process here.](#)
3. [Statement from civil society organisations: Australia must slash climate pollution this decade.](#) Climate Council, August 2021
4. [Psychology for a Safe Climate](#) has a range of resources and tools to support people facing the reality of the climate crisis. [Visit their website](#) to learn more about their important work and access their [resources on climate distress and eco anxiety](#)



THE CLIMATE APOCALYPSE IS REAL, AND IT IS COMING

Aug 11, 2021

by [Thomas Reese](#), [Religion News Service](#)



Earthrise is a photograph of the Earth and parts of the Moon's surface taken from lunar orbit by astronaut Bill Anders in 1968, during the Apollo 8 mission. (Bill Anders/NASA/Creative Commons)

Scientists are warning us that because of global warming, civilization is headed toward the worst catastrophe in human history. Unlike a war, a pandemic or a depression, this is not a disaster we can recover from in a few decades. This is a calamity that will take centuries, if not millennia, to recover from, if recovery is even possible.

Sadly, most people look upon scientists as Cassandras whose warnings can be ignored. "Sure, it is hotter; sure, forest fires are raging; sure, storms are bigger. But I have more immediate concerns to worry about" is the response of most people.

As a result, politicians are not willing to make the hard decisions that will save us from the coming apocalypse.

The [report of the U.N. Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change](#), released Aug. 9, makes clear global warming is no longer a theory — it is a proven reality.

Here are the facts: The world is 1.1 degree Celsius warmer than it was before the Industrial Revolution, and it is on an alarming trajectory to go up another half degree by the early 2030s. This is due to human use of coal, oil and gas.

These numbers may sound infinitesimally small, but if the world reaches 2 degrees above preindustrial levels, we will see cataclysmic changes in the environment. The Greenland ice sheet will slide into the sea and we will see a six-foot rise in sea levels, enough to swamp most coastal cities. Glaciers and snowpacks that provide water to cities and farms will disappear. Aquifers will be tapped out. Farmland will become deserts. Starvation will occur on a massive scale around the world.

Nor will we be able to look to the seas to save us. As the oceans get more acidic from carbon dioxide, coral cannot survive. Coral reefs and kelp beds, the nurseries of marine life, are already dying off. When they are gone, fish species will go extinct.

As Pope Francis has taught us in his 2015 encyclical *Laudato Si'*, this will take both [individual and systemic conversion](#) because it will require sacrifice on an enormous scale. Every person must reduce their carbon footprint, but economic systems must also change. Economists recommend carbon taxes to discourage carbon consumption, but regulations will also be needed to force businesses to do the right thing despite market forces.

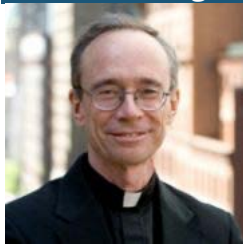
Currently, this seems politically impossible because there is no sense of urgency among the public. In the COVID crisis, it took thousands of deaths each month to convince America to take the pandemic seriously, and still some do not. If we cannot respond to a crisis we

can see right now, how will we respond to a crisis in the future that too many refuse to see?

My only consolation is that Catholicism, through the pope, is on the right side of history for once. Sadly, too few of our bishops are following him and doing anything about the crisis. When was the last time you heard your bishop speak out on climate change?

As Pope Francis said, concern for the environment can no longer be an optional or secondary aspect of Christianity. It must be central to who we are as Christians. We must care for God's creation; we must protect the Earth and all that lives on it. Otherwise, our children and grandchildren will experience the apocalypse.

Read this next: [*Earth's climate outlook grim but not hopeless, faith leaders say*](#)
Read this next: [*How Pope Francis and Vatican activists helped rein in Big Oil on climate change*](#)



Thomas Reese

Jesuit Fr. Thomas Reese's column for Religion News Service, "Signs of the Times," appears regularly at National Catholic Reporter.

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**CLIMATE CHANGE EVIDENCE
"UNEQUIVOCAL," SOME IMPACTS
IRREVERSIBLE, REPORT SAYS**

The sharp rise in temperatures and in carbon dioxide in the atmosphere since the Industrial Revolution is due to human activities



By Barbara Fraser, EarthBeat | United States
Thursday, Aug 12, 2021

A future of rising temperatures and extreme weather — stronger and more frequent storms and heat waves, combined with intense drought — is unavoidable in the coming decades, according to a new report by an international panel of scientists.

But the direst outlooks can still be averted, the experts said, if the world's countries stop burning fossil fuels and take other immediate steps to reduce greenhouse gas emissions from human activities. The report, released Aug. 9 by the United Nations Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, is the group's first review of climate science research since 2013. The IPCC provides periodic assessments on the science behind and risks related to climate change, as well as reports on possibilities for mitigation of and adaptation to impacts.

No region of the Earth has escaped the effects of climate change, and even if emissions were immediately reduced to no more than

the amount that the Earth's soil, plants and oceans could absorb naturally, some of the impacts already set in motion would be irreversible within centuries or millennia, the report says.

Although the scientists did not analyze the heat waves, flooding and wildfires that have struck the United States, Europe and Siberia in recent weeks, the events are consistent with their findings about Earth's warming climate. "The report clearly shows that we are living the consequences already of climate change everywhere, but furthermore, that we will experience further and concurrent and multiple changes" with each fraction of a degree of additional warming, Argentinian meteorologist Carolina Vera, one of the report's authors, said at the virtual press conference where the report was presented.

Coming less than three months before the next U.N. climate summit, COP26, to be held Nov. 1-12 in Glasgow, Scotland, the report adds even more urgency to the already critical international climate negotiations. "The grim and disturbing findings of the ... report only reinforce the message of Pope Francis' *Laudato si'* — we must do everything we can, and now, to protect and defend Our Common Home," Bishop John Arnold, chair of CAFOD, the Catholic Church's aid agency for England and Wales, said in a statement.

Neil Thorns, CAFOD advocacy director, added that the report "is clear it's an urgent fight to keep below 1.5 degree warming and avoid the destruction that entails, especially for those living in poverty."

He urged British Prime Minister Boris Johnson to lead nations at the climate summit to commit to radical actions to change the planet's course of warming.

In preparation for COP26, countries were given until July 30 to submit revised targets for greenhouse gas emissions, but only 110 of

the 197 countries that are parties to the U.N. Framework Convention on Climate Change met that deadline.

Several major emitters, such as China, Saudi Arabia and India, were among those that did not submit new targets, known as nationally determined contributions (NDCs).

Nevertheless, delegates from all countries signed off on the new IPCC report, indicating that they accept not only the dire warnings, but also the "unequivocal" conclusion that the sharp rise in temperatures and in carbon dioxide in the atmosphere since the Industrial Revolution is due to human activities."

It is indisputable that human activities have caused and are causing climate change," Chinese climate scientist Panmao Zhai, co-chair of the working group that prepared the scientific report, said at the press conference.

"What's new in this report is that we now have a much more advanced understanding of the connections between the emissions we release and the rise in global surface temperature, and the change to weather and the climate we are seeing around the world."

Nevertheless, he said, humans still have "a chance to stop the negative climate trend [by] the middle of the century," especially by curbing the use of fossil fuels and stopping deforestation, which is a major source of emissions in tropical countries. Episodes of extremely hot weather have become more frequent and intense since the 1950s, Zhai said.

Oceans are also warming, resulting in lower oxygen concentrations and increased acidity, which is already affecting fisheries in some parts of the world. And glaciers, Arctic Sea ice, and ice sheets like those blanketing Greenland are melting.

A CHANCE TO STOP THE NEGATIVE CLIMATE TREND

Read more at: <https://international.la-croix.com/news/environment/climate-change-evidence-unequivocal-some-impacts-irreversible-report-says/14766>

Barbara Fraser is NCR climate editor. Her email address is bfraser@ncronline.org. Follow her on Twitter at [@Barbara_Fraser](https://twitter.com/Barbara_Fraser)

PEARLS And IRRITATIONS

John Menadue's Public Policy Journal

CONTRIBUTE



THE NET ZERO EMISSION ILLUSION

By [Ian Dunlop](#)

Aug 8, 2021



Image by GreenTech Media

With Covid, the government has shown itself manifestly incapable of leading or managing its core responsibilities, beset by corruption and secrecy. The climate challenge is far greater than Covid, and there are no vaccinations or quarantine against climate impacts, which from now on will increase inexorably in the absence of decisive leadership.

As the need for serious action to prevent runaway global warming becomes critical, it is not surprising that efforts from the denialist lobby to prevent that action intensify, albeit in more subtle form than the blanket refusal of yesteryear to even accept that a climate problem existed.

Around the world, companies, investors, governments and other institutions are committing, with much self-congratulation, to reach net-zero emissions by 2050 (NZE2050), the point at which any remaining emissions can be counterbalanced by offsetting absorption in carbon sinks, using technologies that currently do not exist at scale.

Regulators and central banks, concerned that global warming might de-stabilise the world's financial system, are urging their regulated institutions to disclose the implications of climate change risk to their investors and to undertake stress testing against scenarios with up to 4°C of global mean warming relative to pre-industrial levels.

Missing from this debate is any understanding of the real risks posed by climate change. Recent events such as the unprecedented 2019/20 Australian and Californian bushfires, Chinese floods and Indian extreme temperatures, along with even greater extremes occurring this year in Western US, Canada, the Arctic, Siberia, Europe, China and the Amazon, should be a wake-up call that climate impacts are accelerating and close to moving beyond human influence.

But that is far from the case. Despite impassioned pleas from scientists and much lofty institutional rhetoric from global leaders on the need for emergency action, the emphasis on an NZE2050 pathway, is actually locking in extremely dangerous, and potentially catastrophic, climate outcomes by refusing to rapidly reduce carbon emissions, which is now necessary to stop runaway warming.

The 1.5°C global mean warming, the lower limit of the Paris Agreement, is inevitable by 2030 irrespective of any mitigation action in the interim. The upper 2°C limit is likely before 2050, with the possibility that irreversible, self-sustaining warming may be triggered by tipping points between 1.5 – 2°C. The current global trajectory is likely to result in catastrophic warming in excess of 3°C in the second half of this century, with little chance of changing that trajectory over the next two decades by mitigation alone. 4-5°C warming is possible before 2100. The dangerous impacts we are already experiencing are happening at only 1.2°C warming.

3°C warming would be catastrophic, perhaps leading to outright chaos in relations between nations, and 4°C is an existential threat to human civilisation, with many parts of the world becoming uninhabitable leading to mass migration and social conflict. Regional temperature increases on land will be considerably higher than these global means, increasingly beyond the limits within which human physiology can operate. These temperature increases cannot be adapted to, rendering financial system stress testing irrelevant.

The assumption behind the current enthusiasm for NZE2050 is that, with a bit of tweaking and gradual action, an orderly transition can ensue, leading to a perpetuation of the current economic system and its power structures.

That is no longer possible. The degree of change required to avoid catastrophic climate impacts, and the speed with which it must be implemented, means that emergency action, akin to a wartime level of mobilisation, is essential. A major discontinuity is inevitable; we must re-boot our societies onto genuinely sustainable pathways if human civilisation is to survive.

NZE2050 could result in mean temperature increases above 3°C if global tipping points trigger within the 1.5 – 2°C Paris range. As our latest Briefing Note, 'Net Zero 2050 – a dangerous illusion' indicates, net zero must be reached as soon as possible, ideally by 2030, if

catastrophic outcomes are to be avoided. This is a massive task far greater than anything yet contemplated officially.

Sensible risk management in these circumstances demands a precautionary approach quite different from conventional risk-management practice. It must ensure, to the extent possible, that temperature outcomes do not trigger these tipping points, and is capable of returning the climate system to the stable climate conditions under which human civilisation flourished. This means emergency action to keep the global temperature increase to a minimum, as close to 1.5°C as possible, coupled with a drawdown of current atmospheric carbon concentrations from the current level around 420ppm CO₂, to below 350ppm CO₂. The technology to achieve such drawdown in the limited time available is not yet fully available at scale, further adding to climate risk.

The Australian mainstream media, with a few exceptions, ignore these realities, consumed with the supposedly disastrous short-term economic implications of any climate action, oblivious to the infinitely greater cost of inaction. The *Australian Financial Review*, recently opined that “Coal, along with oil and gas, will continue to supply the world’s energy during the decades-long transition to net zero”, and that, “as the demonisation of coal and gas by Australian activists shows, extremism makes the politics of the energy transition more challenging”.

The real extremists are organisations like the *AFR*, the Murdoch press, ideologues and fossil fuel vested interests around the world whose denialist stance has succeeded in allowing carbon emissions to continue to rise at worst-case rates, placing humanity in grave danger with their insatiable greed and determination to hang on to the reins of power at all costs. If these views prevail, human civilisation as we know it will not survive.

Quite apart from the implications for humanity, directors of these organisations, even those who claim leadership on climate action like

Shell, BHP, Rio, Woodside and Santos, are now in clear breach of their fiduciary responsibilities to their shareholders, because in so doing, they are destroying their shareholder's, and their own, future. Ben van Beurden, Managing Director of Royal Dutch Shell conceded last year that: "Yeah, we knew. Everybody knew. And somehow we all ignored it." That is not good enough, particularly as they had access to the best available science and for years have known perfectly well the implications of their actions. A failure made even more egregious by their current refusal to cut emissions rapidly, or far worse, their determination to massively increase fossil fuel use with gas-led recoveries on the erroneous, self-serving grounds it will reduce carbon emissions globally.

But nowhere is this leadership failure, and the moral and ethical vacuum behind it, more evident than with the current Australian Federal government.

Australia is one of the regions most exposed to climate threats, as the community is only too well aware from our recent drought, bushfire and flood experience. Yet politically, it is as if this never happened. For example, none of the recommendations of the Bushfire Royal Commission has been implemented, and many communities remain without adequate recovery support.

Policy, to the extent it exists, is decided by political advisers, with little real-world experience, align with fossil-fuel interests, and is ideologically committed to the neoliberal unregulated market which has created the climate crisis and proved incapable of solving it. Scared of the future, they have no vision for Australia other than a perpetuation of its fossil fuel past. Not surprising, given that former fossil fuel executives dominate government appointments, from the Prime Minister's office down.

So reality is swept under the carpet as the government rushes headlong into its own gas-led recovery, quite deliberately designed

to maximise the use of fossil fuels before the shutters finally come down on the industry.

However, the government recognised rising community concern over climate, and the electoral danger that poses if those concerns are ignored, so something had to be done. Ergo, multiple initiatives are announced, with great fanfare, to demonstrate their climate bona fides; resilience, disaster management, Great Barrier Reef research etc, all of which address the symptoms of climate change, but ignore its fundamental cause, which is excessive atmospheric carbon concentrations and the failure to rapidly reduce emissions

The Minister for Emissions Reduction, Angus Taylor, even pours fuel on the fire by presiding over emission increases, reassuring us that any climate issues will be solved with “technology not taxes”. This ignores the fact that for these technologies to work at scale, and in the short time now available, taxes in the form of carbon pricing are essential otherwise the massive subsidy enjoyed by fossil fuels, by not accounting for the damage caused by their use, will continue, markedly slowing the transition to a low-carbon future.

The Minister for the Environment, Sussan Ley, passes any responsibility for climate change to the Minister for increasing emissions, despite the fact it is the greatest threat to our environment; decries any duty of care to protect Australia’s children from climate harm as a result of her deliberations on approving coal mines; then makes common cause with a motley crew of climate denialist countries to prevent the UNESCO World Heritage Committee placing the Great Barrier Reef on the “in danger” list, despite the fact that it is obvious to all but the most entrenched ideologues that the reef is now in terminal decline due to climate change.

Geopolitically, the government’s immaturity and ignorance of Asia has totally disrupted relations with our largest trading partner, China, with subsequent Australian sabre-rattling designed to divert

attention away from the far greater threat of climate change. After four years of Australian servility to the Trumpian cause and a long history of Western abuse, it is unsurprising that China is taking a more assertive stance in global affairs, whilst recognising that China has its own problems and wolf warrior diplomacy is not the mark of mature global leadership. But both sides sidestep the real threat of climate change, instead focussing on geopolitical point-scoring. Overcoming that threat will require unprecedented global co-operation, otherwise, everyone loses.

Part of which is to completely re-think the concept of defence. Vast amounts spent on ever-more sophisticated ways of killing one another are useless on a dead planet. Those resources are desperately needed to stave off the climate threat and implement genuinely sustainable, equitable, economic systems.

It is clear from its actions that the Federal government has absolutely no intention of taking climate change seriously. It has yet to commit to NZE2050, but may well do so finally at the November climate summit in Glasgow, attempting to present it, with yet more fanfare, as “Australian climate leadership”, much as John Howard did with the 1997 Kyoto Protocol “Australia Clause”, the greatest strategic mistake this country ever made which initiated three decades of climate denial.

The government has no appetite to address the big issues confronting this country and is quite happy to destroy the prosperity and future of Australian society, its children and their own, in the interests of retaining power in the short term.

The parallels with the Covid crisis are legion. With Covid, the government has shown itself manifestly incapable of leading or managing its core responsibilities, beset by corruption and secrecy. The climate challenge is far greater than Covid, and there are no vaccinations or quarantine against climate impacts, which from now on will increase inexorably absent decisive leadership.

The community must now seek that leadership elsewhere.

[Ian Dunlop](#)

Ian Dunlop was formerly an international oil, gas and coal industry executive, chair of the Australian Coal Association and CEO of the Australian Institute of Company Directors. He is a member of the Club of Rome and Chair, Advisory Board, Breakthrough National Centre for Climate Restoration

Climate urgency, Australia's selfishness

By [Stuart Rees](#)

Aug 12, 2021

In response to the UN International Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), Treasurer Josh Frydenberg rushed to Sky News to repeat the platitude that technology, not taxes would overcome threats from global warming. Before a Canberra press conference, a smirking Prime Minister claimed Australia would reach targets to limit greenhouse gas emissions because this country always achieves its goals.

The selfishness of the Australian government is as alarming as the conclusions of the IPCC Report.

Morrison and Frydenberg, aided by a swaggering Angus Taylor, were playing from a Fyodor Dostoyevsky and Julius Caesar playbook. The famous Russian novelist once explained, "I say let the world go to hell, but I should always have my tea." Shakespeare's Julius Caesar asked, "Why need we any spur but our own cause?"

Selfishness as a policy is the reverse of struggles for a common good for Australian citizens, animals and the environment, let alone for the survival, not just the well being, of planet earth. Irrespective of acknowledgement of the significance of renewable energy through

solar and wind power, the Australian government's assurances about technological fixes are the centrepiece of selfishness.

Negativity towards taxes is the government's response to the limited time left to address climate catastrophes. The policy – technology not taxes on carbon – says there's no need to change the ways we think and live.

Once Covid is suppressed: continue to burn coal, oil and gas, export such products, have your ute ready for the weekend, be excited about increasing house prices, don't bother too much about preserving water, privatise to promote corporate interests, destroy forests, mouth respect for agriculture but frack as much as you like.

To develop a robust economy we've always flogged and destroyed precious resources, so why stop now?

Even the climate disaster Report from scientists representing 195 countries does not dent the Prime Minister's boy in the playground response "It wasn't me sir, it was those others over there."

In his familiar egoism, 'Why should we act before other countries do,' the Prime Minister diverts attention from Australia's failings by his usual 'J'Accuse' about China polluting more than the rest of the OECD countries put together.

Professor Will Steffens, an inaugural Director of the ANU's Global Climate Change Institute warns, "Unless the world slashes climate emissions by 50% by 2030, it faces 'an impossible situation'". Nevertheless, the Australian government repeats their goal to cut greenhouse gas emissions by 26 to 28 per cent probably by 2050. They are more than satisfied with what they're doing. The party room says so.

Just as the Prime Minister boasts about athletes' gold medal successes in the Olympics, the country learns that in measures to assess greenhouse gas emissions and changes in energy use, a

Climate Change Performance Index places Australia 54th out of 60 countries. No worries mate, our swimmers did well in the pool.

On almost every conceivable issue affecting humanity, the Opposition leader offers no comfort, only fifty cents each way. When the world needs vision of a country altruistic in its own interests and enthusiastic in international partnerships to foster survival, Albanese searches for centrist policies. To offend the least number of voters, he searches for a middle ground.

In response to IPCC forecasts let alone the catastrophes currently ravaging Europe, North America and Siberia, there is no middle ground. A different way of living means collective human rights are synonymous with planet survival. Ecocide – wilful, long term damage to the environment – is a crime against humanity.

In Australia, a smidgeon of hope lies in evidence of a mismatch between public attitudes and heads in coal mines blindness of political leaders. The Australia Institute reports that only 12 per cent of Australians want economic recovery by gas compared to investment in renewables. 74 per cent want to transition from coal mining to other industries.

Journalists quizzing the Prime Minister could ask for a touch of humility to correct false claims about Australia's responses to climate change.

Crafting economically and socially just policies for people, animals and the planet is challenging but imperative.

Decades of living as though the planet's resources were infinite have guaranteed a cruel legacy to future generations. We should not need the IPCC Report to teach that destructive selfishness must end.

Stuart Rees

Stuart Rees OAM is Professor Emeritus, Univ. of Sydney, recipient of the Jerusalem (Al Quds) Peace Prize and author of the recent Policy Press book 'Cruelty or Humanity'.

FROM CHRISTINE STORRY OF THE ECOLOGY GROUP



Wednesday 25 August
6:00pm - 7:00pm (AEST)

Online webinar

2021 Allen Hope Southey Memorial Lecture: Climate Conscious Lawyering

Climate change is a multi-scalar problem with local and global dimensions. The interactions between these scales have elevated climate issues to the forefront of economic, corporate and public law.

No longer merely the purview of environmental law, climate change has implications for daily legal practice and lawyers are increasingly being recognised as climate change actors.

The Hon. Justice Brian J Preston FRSN SC will deliver this lecture on how climate change places a responsibility on lawyers to adopt a climate conscious rather than a climate blind approach in their daily legal practice.

[Find out more](#)