



CATHOLIC JUSTICE AND PEACE COMMISSION OF THE ARCHDIOCESE OF BRISBANE

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Media Statement

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Adani: Listen to the Cries of the People, Listen to the Cries of the Earth

As Queenslanders prepare to elect a new State Government, the Catholic Justice & Peace Commission of the Archdiocese of Brisbane calls on all political parties to put a halt to plans to develop the Carmichael coal mine in the Galilee Basin.

We further call on all parties to commit to developing an ambitious program of renewable energy projects. We also urge all parties to support work with affected communities in regional Queensland to assist them to transition to sustainable, low carbon economic options which will address high levels of unemployment and which will also overcome the boom and bust cycles associated with coal mining in Queensland.

The Commission urges all political parties and candidates to listen to the cries of the earth. It is already experiencing significant damage due to the effects of climate change and will face much worse unless we commit to urgently reducing carbon emissions so that the global temperature rise might be limited to less than 1.5 degrees.

The clearest example of this is the already serious decline in the Great Barrier Reef, one of the world's most precious natural treasures. Large tracts of the Reef's coral are already dead because of rising temperatures and, if they continue to rise, the very survival of the Reef is threatened.

We also urge all parties and candidates to listen to the cries of so many vulnerable people whose lives will be seriously affected if the Carmichael mine goes ahead.

We urge them to listen to the cries of the Wangan and Jagalingou people, the traditional owners and custodians of the land on which the mine will be developed. They have made it abundantly clear that development of the mine will destroy so much of their land and its sacred sites. Their country gives them meaning and identity. Going ahead with the mine will be akin to tearing out their hearts and destroying their souls.

We ask them to listen to the cries of the people of the Torres Strait Islands. Many islands are already under serious threat because of rising sea levels caused by climate change. Their island homes are important to their identity. Without significant and urgent action to halt the rise in carbon emissions, many fear their islands will go under the seas.

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We also ask our politicians to listen to the cries of our neighbours in the Pacific. Many Pacific countries such as Kiribati, Tuvalu and the Republic of the Marshall Islands are already in serious trouble as rising seas inundate their islands. Some Pacific Islanders have already been forced to leave their homes and this problem will only worsen unless we all commit to taking action to substantially reduce carbon emissions immediately. Our sisters and brothers in the Pacific Conference of Churches have spoken to us in stark terms about their plight and what they want us in Queensland to do:

“The Pacific Conference of Churches supports action by churches in Queensland and other parts of Australia to pressure their State and National Governments to take necessary, timely and nonviolent action to ensure that the Australian government keeps its commitments made in Paris at COP 21. We specifically urge the churches to continue to campaign to stop Adani. If this mine goes ahead it will imperil all of us. It is vital for us in the Pacific Ocean to keep the global temperature increase below 1.5 degrees. We welcome the solidarity of our sisters and brothers in those countries like Australia which have been principally responsible for the critical climate impacts with which we in many Pacific Ocean States are now dealing. At the same time we call on our brothers and sisters in Australia to support Pacific communities who have called for a moratorium on seabed and terrestrial mining and research. Any further global warming imperils hundreds of Pacific communities who are already feeling the impact of sea level rise and salt water intrusion. We must stand together or sink individually.”

People in other low-lying countries around the world make the same appeal to us. It is a matter of their survival.

As Christians, we believe that God has entrusted the earth to our care. It is our common home and all the people of this planet are one family of sisters and brothers. We need to protect the earth from further damage from climate change. We also need to help our sisters and brothers who face such serious problems due to climate change.

To keep the global temperature rise to under 1.5 degrees, we cannot keep burning coal and other fossil fuels. Despite the temptation to exploit these natural resources for economic benefit, we need to leave coal in the ground to care for our common home and our sisters and brothers here in Australia, in the Pacific and around the world.

Far from ignoring the cries of people in regional Queensland where unemployment is high and the economy is struggling, we encourage our politicians to respond to their legitimate needs for the dignity of work. We believe that the next Queensland Government, with all the resources available in the public service, in business, in academia and in the community, can find ways to develop a carbon-free future for their regional communities. The Adani coal mine cannot be the only way that our Government can guarantee a healthy economy for regional Queensland.

We want a future in which the social, economic and cultural needs of all Queenslanders, including Torres Strait Islanders and the Wangan and Jagalingou people, are met. We also want a future in which the survival and happiness of our Pacific sisters and brothers and, indeed all peoples of our earth are ensured. With all this in mind, we tell all Queensland political parties that the Adani coal mine must not go ahead.