

The Rally and UnitingCare NSW.ACT's Support

What is the Climate Emergency Rally?

The Climate Emergency Rally is a huge community demonstration protesting against the Rudd Government's lack of action on climate change. There will be concurrent demonstrations in most capital cities across Australia. The rally was initiated by the community climate network, a coalition of over 140 groups active on climate change.

How is the government's response to climate change inadequate?

Both UnitingJustice and UnitingCare NSW.ACT, following extensive information gathering and analysis, are of the view that far too little is, and has been done, to mitigate greenhouse gas emissions. Consistent with this is the Uniting Church NSW.ACT Synod Standing Committee Resolution of 21 Nov 08 which commits the Synod to:

Advocating to governments for rapid and just transitions to a post-carbon economy, with specific emissions cuts guided by the 2°C limit

To give the world a reasonable chance that global temperatures do not rise dangerously above 2°C it is necessary to make *at least* a 25% cut in greenhouse gas emissions. But few commentators believe that an emissions trading scheme of the kind being advocated by the Federal government, and its other renewable energy measures will achieve anywhere near this level of reductions. Writing recently in the Australian Financial Review, Betz and MacGill, joint directors of the Centre for Energy & Environmental Markets at the University of NSW said, concerning the government's emissions trading scheme:

. . . restructuring the industrial landscape to meet the new target [25% cut] cannot be achieved without phasing out polluting energy-generation processes and inefficient, energy-intensive production. But coal generators are getting free permits only if they stay in production.

How can a green, alternative-energy sector possibly emerge when it has to compete with cheap dirty coal? And how then, can Australia possibly meet its admirable 25% target?

*What we are seeing is a failure of leadership at all levels. The federal government is making compromises to the scheme that will lower its effectiveness, and industry leaders are investing in stalling tactics rather than being progressive and focusing on emissions reductions.
(AFR 25 May 09 p. 55)*

Why is this a social justice issue?

People across the world are already being affected by climate change, particularly the world's poorest who are least responsible for the problem. For example, Australia's per capita greenhouse gas emissions (the highest in the world) are 30 times those of Tuvalu (a Polynesian island nation in the Pacific Ocean) and Bangladesh, two of the countries most affected by climate change. This is a clear injustice which needs to be addressed through effective action. Furthermore, there is the matter of inter-generational injustice: the current generation enjoying the environment at the expense of future generations who will suffer most from climate change.

Rev Harry Herbert
Executive Director
UnitingCare NSW.ACT

Rev Rex Graham
Social Justice Consultant
UnitingCare NSW.ACT

3 Jun 09