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Uniting Church in Australia  
SYNOD OF VICTORIA AND TASMANIA

## **Submission to the Climate Change Authority Targets and Progress Review Draft Report**

Submitted by email: [submissions@climatechangeauthority.gov.au](mailto:submissions@climatechangeauthority.gov.au)

UnitingWorld and the Justice and International Mission Unit (JIM Unit), Synod of Victoria and Tasmania of the Uniting Church in Australia welcomes the opportunity to make a submission to the Climate Change Authority Targets and Progress Review Draft Report.

The Uniting Church views climate change as a major social, environmental and economic issue. We are concerned about the potential irreversible changes in natural environments around the world which will have devastating consequences for all of us but especially for those who already live in poverty.

We believe human 'progress' needs to be measured not in monetary terms but as human and ecological wellbeing including how well we achieve the building of just, peaceful and sustainable societies where individuals are secure in their lives, free from fear, violence and persecution, and able to participate in a meaningful way in their community and society.

In 2008, the Uniting Church in Australia, Synod of Victoria and Tasmania passed the following resolution:

*To call on the Australian Federal Government to take a leadership role in the development of a global solution to climate change to limit global warming to no more than 2°C above pre-industrial levels and in particular to:*

*Honour their commitment under Article 4.2(a) of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) which calls upon developed countries to take a lead in reducing greenhouse gas emissions and recognises the different capacities of various countries in their ability to achieve this outcome.*

*Commit to greenhouse gas reduction targets as part of the UNFCCC process that at least match those of developed countries that are already showing leadership in the levels of greenhouse gas emission reduction they are willing to commit to.*

### **Emission reduction goals**

In 2007 the Synod adopted a recommendation calling on the Australian Government to commit to binding greenhouse gas emissions reductions of 20% by 2020 and at least 60% by 2050 based on 1990 emission levels. In addition, the recommendation called on the Government to increase this reduction to 30% by 2020 if other developed countries agreed to make similar commitments. These targets were based on the best evidence available of what was possible and what was needed in order to reduce emissions to acceptable levels.

The failure to take significant action, both by Australia and other countries, means the required reductions in greenhouse gas emissions into the future are becoming larger with each passing year if dangerous levels of climate change are to be averted.

We support the Authority's Option 2 recommendation for a 25% emission reduction goal for 2020, a trajectory range to 2030 and a long term emissions budget to 2050 and that this be regularly reviewed with regard to the

- climate change science;

- what other countries are doing; and
- the likely costs of achieving different targets.

Whilst we welcome the fact that we have bipartisan support for a 5% reduction target by 2020, we support the Authority's analysis that this is inadequate.

Whilst we recognise it is in Australia's interest, it is also in the interests of our Pacific neighbours who are already experiencing the negative effects of climate change and have committed to take action.<sup>1</sup> We believe Australia will benefit from taking stronger action as it will give it more flexibility in the future to meet its international obligations. Taking a stronger target may positively influence other countries to increase their level of action and this would have flow on benefits.

The Authority's projections that Gross National Income (GNI) per person is projected to grow by an average of 0.80 per cent annually to 2020 with a 5 per cent target, 0.78 per cent with a 15 per cent target and 0.76 per cent with a 25 per cent target indicates the relatively small cost that would be incurred. Australia enjoys a relatively low level of debt and high economic prosperity and therefore could afford to accept a small reduction in GNI growth to contribute meaningfully to global efforts to reduce the extent of climate change.

### **International permits**

The Uniting Church acknowledges climate change is a global problem. It therefore requires a global solution of which international permits are a part. However, Australia also needs to start transitioning its own economy for a low carbon future. Delaying action simply makes it harder and potentially more costly later on. We would recommend a cap be kept on international permits to ensure Australia also transitions its own economy and does not miss out on low cost domestic opportunities. We are concerned that any international permits purchased are for credible emission reductions that have been independently verified.

### **Voluntary Action**

We support the authority's draft recommendation that voluntary actions continue to be counted as additional to Australia's obligations.

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<sup>1</sup> Pacific Island Forum, Majuro Declaration on Climate Leadership, [http://www.majurodeclaration.org/the\\_declaration](http://www.majurodeclaration.org/the_declaration)