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Dear Mark

## **Manningham Uniting Church Social Justice Action Group's Response to the JIM "Living in Harmony with Creation"**

Our Social Justice Action Group (SJAG) has reviewed the Consultation Paper and feedback from a Zoom forum of members of our congregation. Our response collates that feedback and the results of the SJAG deliberations focusing on the six core questions the report challenged us to consider.

### **Preamble**

We affirm this important initiative of the JIM Cluster and thank them for their insightful comprehensive report. We believe we are called to be engaged in God's world and we therefore need to be conversant with, and engaged in, its problems. Our overwhelming view is that there is no greater problem facing the World today than "Climate Change" (JIM Question1). We believe that unless the world addresses the problem all of life will be compromised, with the loss of many species, humankind included, and the ecosystem irreparably damaged; the problem is real and urgent.

### **Response to the specific JIM questions**

#### **1 How serious a threat do you think climate change is to global well-being?**

*On a scale of 1-10                      10            (Terminal)*

#### **2 Do you see climate change as an issue of Global justice, Stewardship or Eco theology?**

*We believe that it is all of these, in part because people will have different responses.*

**Global justice** *At present energy consumption is very high in wealthy developed countries compared with underdeveloped countries which are unable to afford energy costs. This results in huge inequity and continuation of poverty cycles. Poor countries are also less able to mitigate against the effects of climate change.*

**Stewardship** *As we believe that we need to work **with** the earth to the benefit of all - the concept of interconnectedness. An excellent example is Australia's First Peoples' stewardship of the land for thousands of years.*

**Eco Theology** *We believe the Gen 2:15 creation story more accurately portrays God's desired relationship between people and the earth, rather than the alternative anthropocentric version in Gen1:26, in which man was created "to use and have dominion over it".*

*We also believe that we must listen for the informed views of other faith and non-faith voices working for the same cause. We should not discount the contribution of others who will see accruing economic benefit by embracing solutions to the problem.*

### **3 Should the Synod call a 'climate emergency and what are the implications?**

*If Synod declared a "climate emergency" what would our response be? Without action the declaration would be hypocritical. It is suggested that "Climate Action - Now" or "Decade of Decisive Action" may be better alternative wording, as a pro-active wording calls us to respond.*

*Possible actions could include:*

- *Acknowledgement of Australia's First Peoples' care for the land*
- *Work towards awareness raising of all Uniting Church in Australia members. Appropriate targeted resources available to members would be of assistance e.g. use of carbon footprint tool which is readily available and not difficult to use, both for congregations and individuals.*
- *Awareness raising of the suffering of the earth. People respond well to what affects them personally and what they can see e.g. drought, bushfires, smoke, death of wildlife, extinction of species, pollution from coal, transport etc, obvious effects in polar regions of melting icecaps. These are all lasting changes to the "world as we know it".*
- *Emphasising the danger to our children's and grandchildren's quality of life. In the same vein, we need to pro-actively empower the emerging generations to express their concerns through church forums and elsewhere.*
- *Affirm the UCA funds policy to invest in renewables as much as possible.*

### **4 Do the actions of other governments have an impact on how much effort we should call on the Australian Government to take? If so, what do you believe that impact is?**

- *Other countries are taking greater actions, e.g. UK and EU have declared targets for zero emissions.*
- *Consciousness raising that Australia is second only to Saudi Arabia in per capita consumption and emissions. This is needed to counter the Government's continued use of the absolute percentage of Australia's CO<sub>2</sub> production of 1.3% on a global scale.*
- *There is a total lack of leadership and sense of urgency on all matters to do with Climate Change from recent Australian governments. We affirm those members of parliament who are voicing their concerns. In the final analysis, governments must be judged not on the rhetoric or the range of sustainability programs and initiatives, but rather on whether the trajectory of greenhouse gas reduction will meet science based internationally agreed targets. On current projections, scientists are in agreement that Australia is lagging badly.*
- *We need to encourage the Uniting Church in Australia to be a voice for action.*
- *We should be good global citizens. As one of the wealthiest countries per capita in the world, we have the resources to go beyond our fair share.*
- *Suggest the Uniting Church in Australia partner more actively with other groups focussed on action including Industry.*

### **5 Do you agree that the Synod should call for no new coal mines and no expansion of existing coal mines?**

- *There was agreement on this question although reservation was expressed that coking coal for steel making may need to be considered differently. It was agreed that vision and leadership are needed in Government programs to encourage new forms of economic opportunities in coal mining communities. This is particularly so in providing incentive packages to assist workers in the transition period away from coal.*

**6. Do you agree that the Synod should call for no Government support for new coal-fired power stations? Should this position be made stronger? If so, in what way?**

*Yes. There must be strong encouragement to Federal and State Governments to develop alternative energy sources and use our abundant natural resources of solar and wind. Investment in R&D is needed to drive investment and development in renewables. It was highlighted that the incident solar radiation on Australia's land mass is significantly greater than for most of the Developed World and so our solar generation advantage is greater.*

**7. Should the proposal to the Synod meeting say something about natural gas developments? If so, what should be said?**

*Yes with following comments:*

- *No fracking for natural gas.*
- *Natural gas from other sources could be used, but only as a transition out of fossil fuels.*

### **Concluding Remarks**

*We believe the JIM "Living in Harmony with Creation" goes to the heart of what God calls us to do in the world. We recognise that the Developed World is the main cause of climate change and the general ecological deterioration of God's Creation. In particular, we believe the Church needs to acknowledge that Australia, which is the second greatest generator of greenhouse gases per capita, is deeply implicated in causing this crisis and as a church and country we have a moral obligation to show leadership. Ironically, as one of the richest countries in the world we are well able to lead the world to make the transition to a zero carbon, sustainable economy.*

*We must also recognise and respond to upheaval in the lives of those likely to be most impacted by transition to a green economy and make sure that the cost of changes is borne equitably. We are all in this together.*

*We believe that the UCA must play a prophetic role in speaking truth to power and wealth and engage with other like-minded people. But we must also look inwardly; we must inform our Uniting Church in Australia of this crisis, the cause and the possible solutions, and call us and all humankind to live sustainably.*

*Sincerely*

*Tony McLachlan*

*Convenor of MUC Social Justice Action Group.*