



Uniting Church in Australia
Synod of Victoria and Tasmania

brunswick uniting church

ABN 88 977 271 107

214 Sydney Road
Brunswick

PO Box 293
Brunswick VIC 3056

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Justice and International Mission Cluster
c/o Mr Mark Zirnsak, Senior Social Justice Advocate
Centre for Theology and Ministry
29 College Crescent
PARKVILLE VIC 352
by email: mark.zirnsak@victas.uca.org.au

Dear Mark

Synod Climate Change Consultation Paper

Thank you for the excellent work in preparing the Living in harmony with creation-Consultation Paper.

The Church Council of Brunswick Uniting Church supports the thrust of the Resolution.

Additionally, we offer the following comments:

a) The Resolution should also focus on Victorian Government and recommend that Victoria should aim for at least 80% electricity generation from renewable sources by 2030.

Rationale: The Synod has oversight at a state level and therefore it has a close relationship with State matters. Tasmanian representatives could look at including wording which fits their context.

b) The Resolution should encourage individual congregations and agencies to declare a Climate Crisis (and explain the use of this term rather than the use of Emergency) and simultaneously develop a Climate Action Plan which includes goals and action plans for the following commitments.

- (i) the congregation will develop a theological understanding and a personal & collective discipleship as the people of God living in a time of climate crisis.
- (ii) the congregation will include specific targets for congregation property to become carbon neutral and encourage and empower households to do the same.

- (iii) the congregation will collectively and as individual members, engage with the wider church, as well as other faith communities, groups and people in our local communities, on the climate crisis.
- (iv) the congregation, both collectively and as individual members, will urge all levels of government, as well as business, to declare a climate crisis and commit to restoring a safe climate by immediately allocating the necessary resources across the economy, and by changing unsustainable business practices.
- (v) the congregation will commit resources to implement the Plan, consistent with the targets and timelines that it will spell out, noting the urgency in times of crisis.

Rationale: To declare a crisis is to publicly express that an organisation has come to a critical time in its history. The word “crisis” comes from the Greek “krisis” which relates to a turning point in a disease which could result in either recovery or death. There are echoes here of the gospel word repentance which implies a turning away from death and toward the light and life.

In declaring a Climate Crisis an organisation is publicly expressing that a point has been reached where future decisions will bring either recovery from extremes of climate or there will be increasing death and destruction. It should also be noted that the word “emergency” invokes unhelpful images for indigenous people where governments have used emergencies” to intervene in in their communities in unhelpful, patronising ways.

At the congregational level there is likely to be more ownership of actions to address climate change and a better understanding of where to use limited resources in the most effective way. The wording of the resolution is in the form of encouragement and invitation to turn around and go in a new life-giving direction, just as the whole biblical message is an invitation to choose life – “I have set before you life and death, blessings and curses. Now choose life, so that you and your children may live.” Deut 30:19.

c) The Resolution should ask Synod to mobilise all potential “volunteer” resources across the Synod to support congregations to declare a Climate Crisis and develop their own Climate Action Plan.

Rationale: there is a good probability that there are passionate and enthusiastic people across the Synod who would volunteer their time to help congregations with their Climate Crisis declarations and Climate Actions Plans. Assistance could be in the form of audits, renewable energy options, theology and worship, children’s activities, helping individual households.

The Synod (through JIM) could initially fund a low cost investigation what resources are available across the Synod to encourage individual congregations to declare a Climate Crisis and develop a Climate Action Plan.

If this investigation proves to be fruitful Synod could provide some additional financial resources to develop a small “secretariat” whose task would be to:

- create an inventory of skills of volunteers
- gather interested volunteers into a task group
- provide initial orientation
- develop a clear process for declaring a Climate Crisis/implementing a Climate Action Plan
- promote the concept of declaring a Climate Crisis/implementing a Climate Action Plan across the Synod and highlight the assistance that is available
- match congregations and volunteers to help at different phases of the process
- share good news stories of what congregations are doing
- provide on-going support for volunteers (eg: maintain a Network, pastoral care, minor expenses)

d) The Resolution should consider the impact of Natural Gas usage on achieving renewable energy targets. Note that the question of Natural Gas was posed by the JIM Unit and we support them doing further work to include a specific point on this matter in the Resolution.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide this feedback.

Yours faithfully

Brunswick Uniting Church

Church Council

per: Claire Foley CC Secretary

email: foleyclairep@icloud.com