



The Cook Islands and Climate Change – Resource to supplement the World Day of Prayer

February 2025

The [World Day of Prayer takes place on 7 March in 2025](https://www.worlddayofprayeraustralia.org/resources/). Each year, a different country is chosen to be prayed for. For 2025, the Cook Islands is the country selected. Resources for the day can be downloaded from <https://www.worlddayofprayeraustralia.org/resources/> The following sheet is intended to supplement the resources for the World Day of Prayer with a focus on the impact of climate change on the Cook Islands and other Pacific Island nations.

World Day of Prayer is an international, inter-church organisation led by women that enables us to hear the thoughts of those women from all parts of the world: their hopes, concerns, and prayers. The Day of Prayer is celebrated in over 146 countries.

God calls us to live in harmony with our natural environment and to seek justice and well-being for all creation.

The Synod resolves to acknowledge the need for immediate and substantial action by governments, businesses and communities, including the councils and institutions of the church in this Synod, to mitigate climate change caused by human activity and the threat it poses to God's good creation.

Synod of Victoria and Tasmania resolution from February 2021

Impact of Climate Change on the Cook Islands

[The August 2024 Pacific Economic Monitor: Building Resilience the Pacific Way](#) reported that the Cook Islands are highly vulnerable to the impacts of climate change. "Disasters include weather extremes such as cyclones and coastal flooding, excessive rainfall, landslides and droughts, all exacerbated by climate change and sea level rise", said the report.

In December 2024, the International Court of Justice heard from representatives from more than 100 countries, including the Cook Islands. The Vanuatu Government brought the case to the Court to seek clarification of governments' obligations regarding climate change.

Vaine Wichman, president of the Cook Islands National Council of Women, explained how Cook Island women make and sell handicrafts. She stated: "The effects of climate change has compromised handicrafts production. Today, sourcing natural fibres and materials from the land and sea is challenging. Warmer temperatures are wreaking havoc on both ecosystems, adversely affecting handicraft production."

Australia's role and response to Climate Change

Australia needs to contribute to global efforts to reduce greenhouse gas emissions for our collective well-being. Australia's greenhouse gas emissions in 2024 were 441 million tonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent. The current government seeks to reduce those emissions to 352 million tonnes in 2030.

However, Australia also contributes to greenhouse gas emissions by exporting fossil fuels. Australia remains the third most significant fossil fuel exporter on an energy basis, after Russia and the US. In December 2024, Minister Pliibersek approved another four coal mine extensions, three in Queensland and one in NSW. In late September, the government approved three new coal mines in NSW that will produce an estimated 1.4 billion tonnes of emissions, more than triple Australia's annual emissions. There are a further 36 coal mining projects and six gas projects awaiting a decision by Minister Pliibersek on whether they should proceed.



On the positive side, the Australian Government is providing \$100 million to the Pacific Resilience Facility, a Pacific-led solution to the region's climate finance access challenges. It provided \$266 million in assistance to Pacific Island nations to address climate change in 2022 – 2023.

The current Australian Government has contributed \$50 million to the Green Climate Fund (GCF). The GCF is the world's largest multilateral climate fund. It supports developing countries in reducing their greenhouse gas emissions and enhancing their ability to respond to climate change. The GCF was established in 2010 as an operating entity of the financial mechanism of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC).

What You Can Do

Write polite and respectful letters to:

The Hon. Chris Bowen MP

Minister for Climate Change and Energy
PO Box 6022
House of Representatives
Parliament House
Canberra, ACT, 2600

Salutation: Dear Minister

The Hon. Tanya Plibersek MP

Minister for Environment and Water
PO Box 6022
House of Representatives
Parliament House
Canberra, ACT, 2600

Salutation: Dear Minister

Points to make in your letters:

- Express deep concern that climate change is a global problem that Australia must play a leadership role in addressing by contributing to international efforts to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.
- Point out, consistent with warnings from the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change report, the Australian Government should not be approving new fossil fuel extraction projects as part of its contribution to limiting climate change to a 1.5°C average global temperature increase. For example, approval for the Woodside North West Shelf Gas Extension and the related Browse Project off the Kimberley coast should be rejected.

Also, write to:

Senator The Hon. Penny Wong MP

Minister for Foreign Affairs
PO Box 6100
The Sebaste
Parliament House
Canberra, ACT, 2600

Salutation: Dear Minister

The Hon. Pat Conroy MP

Minister for International Development and the Pacific
PO Box 6022
House of Representatives
Parliament House
Canberra, ACT, 2600

Salutation: Dear Minister

Points to make in your letter:

- Express deep concern that climate change is a global problem that Australia must play a leadership role in addressing by contributing to international efforts to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.
- Further, many Global South countries, including the Pacific Islands, have contributed next to nothing to create the problem of climate change but are disproportionately impacted by increased natural disasters. For example, Cyclone Winston, which devastated Fiji in 2016, had a recovery cost of \$2.2 billion.
- Thank the Australian Government for the financial contributions it has made so far to assist Pacific Island Governments with addressing the impacts of climate change.
- Request that the Australian Government commit to scale up its contribution to assist the people of the Global South to address climate change impacts to its fair share of \$4 billion annually.