

## **Aus Religious Leaders in Global Call on Climate Change**

**Eisha Gupta, Tuesday 19 April 2016**

<http://probonoaustralia.com.au/news/2016/04/aus-religious-leaders-global-call-climate-change/>

A group of senior Australian religious leaders and their international counterparts have signed a document calling on governments around the world to take decisive action on climate change.

The Interfaith Climate Change Statement urges countries to ratify the Paris Climate Change Agreement and reduce emissions to combat rising temperatures.

The document also calls for a phasing-out of fossil fuel subsidies and an increase in renewable energy investment to limit global temperature rise to 1.5 degrees celsius above industrial levels.

Twenty Australian religious leaders, including the presidents of the Australian Hindu and Imams councils, the Federation of Australian Buddhist Councils, and the National Council of Churches, joined the Dalai Lama and Archbishop Desmond Tutu as signatories to the statement.

President of the Australian Religious Response to Climate Change, Thea Ormerod, said that the world needed Australia to do its part in shifting to low-carbon technologies and helping vulnerable countries to build resilience.

“In many places across this fragile planet of ours, global warming is no longer just a theory. It is destroying lives and livelihoods. The first step would be to ratify the Paris Agreement,” Ormerod said.

The document was presented to the UN General Assembly’s president Mogens Lykketoft in New York on Tuesday.

Philippa Rowland from Catholic Earthcare Australia said it was “deeply encouraging” to see faiths from across the board calling for urgent action on climate change following empirical studies.

“The current global coral bleaching event affecting the Great Barrier Reef is just one example of Australia’s vulnerability to global warming and the impacts are far worse for our Pacific neighbours,” Rowland said.

Climate Council CEO Amanda McKenzie said it was very significant for these religious leaders to have made such a strong statement on climate change.

“It follows the Pope’s encyclical last year which urged decisive action on climate change. We need the moral leaders in the community to be talking about this issue because ultimately it’s a question of what kind of world we want to be living in and what kind of world we want to leave for our children,” she said.

“Our moral leaders, our scientists and the world’s countries are now all in agreement about what needs to be done – we need to rapidly transition away from fossil fuels towards renewable energy to limit global temperature rise to no more than 1.5C above industrial levels. Now all we need is for every country to do their part – and at the moment, Australia is not.”

Australian Environment Minister Greg Hunt will officially sign up to the Paris Climate Change Agreement on 22 April in New York.