



## **Responding to Climate Change in Partnership with our Pacific Island Neighbours**

**Patrons: Mrs Bonita Mabo and Most Rev Bishop Peter Ingham**

SUBMISSION TO SENATE ENVIRONMENT AND COMMUNICATION LEGISLATION COMMITTEE REGARDING 'Clean Energy Legislation(Carbon Tax Repeal) Bill 2013' and the following ten related Bills:

Ozone Protection and Synthetic Greenhouse Gas (Import Levy) Amendment (Carbon Tax Repeal) Bill 2013;

Ozone Protection and Synthetic Greenhouse Gas (Manufacture Levy) Amendment (Carbon Tax Repeal) Bill 2013;

True-up Shortfall Levy (General) (Carbon Tax Repeal) Bill 2013;

True-up Shortfall Levy (Excise) (Carbon Tax Repeal) Bill 2013

Ozone Protection and Synthetic Greenhouse Gas (Import Levy) (Transitional Provisions) Bill 2013;

Climate Change Authority (Abolition) Bill 2013;

Customs Tariff Amendment (Carbon Tax Repeal) Bill 2013;

Excise Tariff Amendment (Carbon Tax Repeal) Bill 2013;

Clean Energy (Income Tax Rates and Other Amendments) Bill 2013; and

Clean Energy Finance Corporation (Abolition) Bill 2013

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The Pacific Calling Partnership (PCP) is an initiative of the Edmund Rice Centre for Justice and Community Education. It consists of organisations and individuals that work in partnership with low lying Pacific Island countries to find a global solution towards a sustainable future in the face of climate change that is affecting their countries. As a non-funded entity that operates to bring to the Australian and global community the plight of Pacific nations such as Kiribati, Tuvalu, and the Republic of the Marshall Islands our organisation believes that by repealing the 'Clean Energy Legislation & the other 10 related Bills as listed above Australia is abnegating its responsibilities as a good Pacific neighbour.

The Pacific Calling Partnership does not agree as per Page 6 of the Explanatory Memorandum of the Clean Energy (Income Tax Rates and other Amendments ) Bill 2013 that the repeal of the Act is compatible with the Human Rights (Parliamentary Scrutiny Act) 2011. Human Rights are about the relationships that we establish and the consequences of our actions on others particularly those who are most vulnerable. The people of countries like Kiribati have contributed the least to climate change but will pay the highest price. PCP agrees with President Anote Tong of Kiribati when he says *".....we have to acknowledge the realities and the reality is that with the climate change impact, the projection is that the sea level rise will render our islands submerged and virtually uninhabitable and we have to face that reality and it's not a question of surrendering. ....it's a question of being practical in the face of choices, the limited choices we have!"*<sup>i</sup>.

On a recent PCP coordinated trip to Kiribati Judges Michael Finnane and John O'Meally were told by President Tong *"Our survival is on the line. The science says so. It is about moral justice. It is about how we treat each other. That has always been the issue facing humanity. What do the people of Australia think about that? Can you turn away from it? We will forever be judged by how we rise to this challenge. We are on the frontline. All islands are affected. Within 10-20 years, the frequency of sea water penetration will increase. We have to face the reality that the challenge will increase. Though it is minute at the minute the momentum is gathering."*

Our Pacific neighbours affected by climate change are not just resting on their laurels they are attempting to work towards a positive future for their cultures, communities and children. The Majuro Declaration of 2013<sup>ii</sup> demonstrates the Pacific Islands' dedication to combating climate change but they cannot act alone.

The Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting held recently in Colombo Sri Lanka wanted to really move forward and support action on the Green Climate Fund. As per Item 21 in the Communiqué<sup>iii</sup>  
*21. Heads recognized the importance attached to both the operationalization and the capitalization the Green Climate Fund. Heads looked forward to progress at COP19/CMP 9. Heads agreed to continue to take steps to help build national capacities for improved access to and use of climate financing, and to ensure the transparency of these flows.* However it is very disappointing to note that as per footnote 1 on Page 4 of the Communiqué  
*Australia and Canada had reservations about the language of paragraphs 18, m19, 20 and 21 and indicated that they could not support a Green Capital Fund at this time.*

The Pacific Calling Partnership agrees entirely with Item 17 in the Communiqué which begins:

*17. Heads recognised that climate change continues to be a major challenge for all countries, particularly for climate vulnerable developing countries, posing a grave threat to some countries.*

In any case the Pacific Calling Partnership

- PCP does not agree that the Repeal of the Carbon Tax would boost Australia's economic growth, increase jobs and enhance Australia's international competitiveness, because there is evidence there are many opportunities for growth and development in the renewable industry which would also increase employment
- PCP questions whether removal of the cost of living pressures on households in Australia has merit when the Pacific Island nations such as Kiribati are struggling to even maintain basic water supplies and sanitation
- PCP also questions that businesses face cost pressures as a result of the current Clean Energy Legislation that currently exists.
- PCP also believes that coming generations of Australians will bear unnecessary and burdensome costs in the future from the consequences to the environment of the removal of the Clean Energy Legislation.

Australia has the means, and should have the will to provide vulnerable developing nations with some certainty and hope that they so desperately need. This can be attained by putting in place climate change policies that are driven by compassion, morality, a sense of equity but most of all justice to those less fortunate that are already having their lives impacted by climate change.

The Pacific Calling Partnership at the Edmund Rice Centre for Justice and Community Education therefore asks the Senate Environment and Communication Legislation Committee to consider carefully all the above points and recommend that the 'Clean Energy Legislation(Carbon Tax Repeal) Bill 2013 & ten related Bills not be supported.

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<sup>i</sup> Radio Australia 2013

<sup>ii</sup> Majuro Declaration for Climate Leadership, Pacific Islands Forum, 6<sup>th</sup> Sept. 2103

<sup>iii</sup> [http://thecommonwealth.org/sites/default/files/news-items/documents/CHOGM%202013%20Communique\\_0.pdf](http://thecommonwealth.org/sites/default/files/news-items/documents/CHOGM%202013%20Communique_0.pdf)