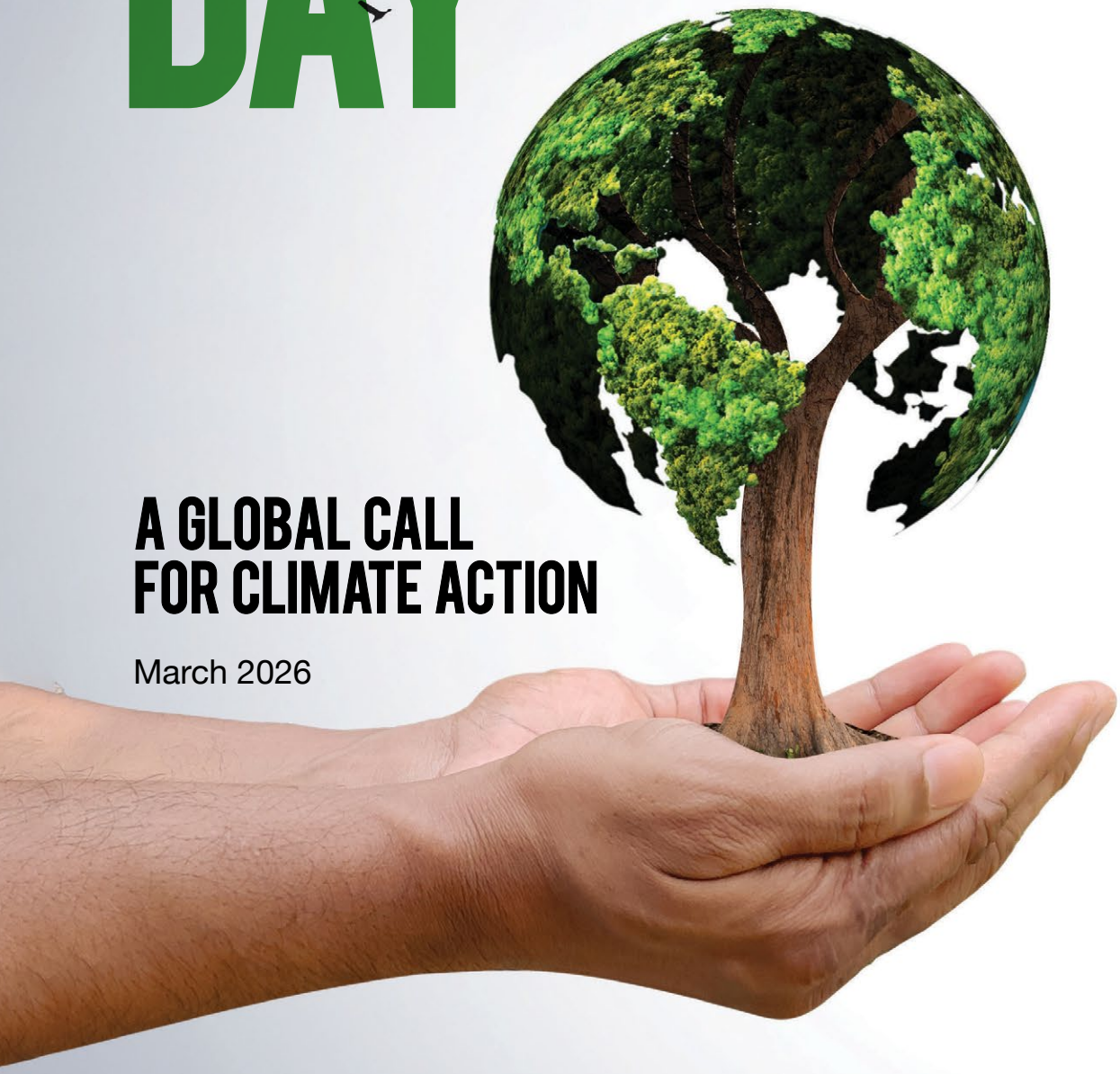
WORLD ENVIRONMENT DAY

FRIDAY 5 JUNE 2026



A GLOBAL CALL FOR CLIMATE ACTION

March 2026

Uniting Church in Australia
SYNOD OF VICTORIA AND TASMANIA

Uniting Church in Australia
Western Australia

The Uniting Church in Australia
QUEENSLAND SYNOD

UnitingWorld
connecting communities for life

WORLD ENVIRONMENT DAY – FRIDAY 5 JUNE 2026

A Global Call for Climate Action

The United Nations designated 5 June as World Environment Day to highlight that the protection and health of the environment are major issues that affect people's well-being and economic development worldwide. The celebration of this day provides us with an opportunity to broaden the basis for an enlightened opinion and responsible conduct by individuals, enterprises and communities in preserving and enhancing the environment.

The following resource is for congregations looking to acknowledge World Environment Day in services on Sunday 31 May or 7 June, or hold a special event to mark the day.

The year 1972 marked a turning point in the development of international environmental politics, with the first major conference on environmental issues, known as the Conference on the Human Environment, or the Stockholm Conference. Later that year, on 15 December, the General Assembly adopted a resolution (A/RES/2994 (XXVII)) designating June 5 as World Environment Day and urging "Governments and the organizations in the United Nations system to undertake on that day every year world-wide activities reaffirming their concern for the preservation and enhancement of the environment, with a view to deepening environmental awareness."

The theme for World Environment Day for 2026 is "A Global Call for Climate Action". The 2026 theme underscores that climate action is not just about reducing carbon emissions—it is about rethinking the systems that power our economies and repairing our relationship with the climate. By doing so, we can secure a safer, healthier, and more just future for all.

Prayers

Prayer of Confession

Rev Brian Polkinghorne

God our Creator, you have gifted us with a wondrous planet, endowed with such rich resources of beauty, harmony and fertility.

God, the greater forgiver, hear our deep lament that we are destroying your creation at an unprecedented rate, and forgive us.

God of love – love so wondrously expressed in Jesus, you have clearly displayed your sacrificial love, humility and care for all people and situations in Christ.

But God, the great expresser of compassion, we have not shown compassion or wisdom in what we are doing to each other, all aspects of life and the sacredness of you and your creation.

Forgive us, Lord. Clear our eyes of the dust of commercialism, greed and pride, and empower us to listen to your Spirit, act with grace and power, to live to your honour and deep respect for all that you have created.

In the name of Christ, we pray.

Amen

Prayers from the Pacific Conference of Churches

God of Creation,

We give you glory for the wonders of your creation that you have bestowed upon us.

We come before you with bowed spirits and weak bodies, seeking your liberation from the bondages of decay and the groans of labour pains.

Have mercy on us according to your steadfast love.

Renew us in spirit and body, that we may bear fruit from your Holy Spirit for the betterment of Creation.

May we be renewed in the hope that you have gifted us in Jesus Christ.

May the blood of Christ cleanse us of all worldly bondages and revive us to the gifts of the Spirit.

Amen.

Loving God,

You remember your promise to all living beings.

Teach us to be faithful and to live as loving carers of our home here on Earth.

Amen

Christ,

Reconciler of all things, teach us to repair the relationships we have broken — with each other, with Your creation, and with You.

Make us agents of reconciliation and peace.

Amen

Prayer from Russell Rollason, “Climate for Change” (2020), p. 20

Our faith calls us to much more than just believing in God, or praying or worshipping.

God calls us to work in this world, to be agents of the Divine.

In the midst of many choices, we need to discern God’s will, trusting that God gives us all that we need for this task.

And we need to act, for to do nothing is to refuse God’s invitation of cooperation.

Silence

Blessed are you, God of action.

You have placed us in this world, and we love to work with you.

We are the people called to put on Christ, to be Christ’s presence, to be light where there is darkness.

You have given us knowledge and skill, vision and creativity, the will and passion to work for a world in which your presence shines through all creation, and all can flourish.

May we live and act to the glory of Jesus Christ, in whose name we pray.

Amen

Harmony of Creation

Rev Dr Apwee Ting

In Rainbow Hill’s embrace,
God’s painted canvas, where wonders entwine.
A symphony of creation, an anthem in the air.
Balinese petals,
Sandat’s sweet perfume,
A fragrance of ancestors, a sacred bloom.
Interwoven lives, spirits dance and twine,
Echoes of hope through generations’ time.
Sandat, a symbol, a sign of grace,
Connecting us all in life’s eternal embrace.
Declaring hope beyond the earthly shore,
In every petal, Christ’s love forevermore.

Intergenerational Worship activities

Provided by Rev Sandy Brodine, Younger Generations - Education & Strategy Coordinator, Discipleship and Advocacy – eLM, Synod of Victoria and Tasmania

Creative Story Telling

Genesis 1:1-26

You will need: a plastic sheet, cheap shaving cream.

Before you start, get people to sit around a large plastic sheet on the ground. Spray a large dollop of shaving cream in front of each person. A safety warning about not putting shaving cream on other people, especially in their eyes or mouths, may be appropriate!

When you are ready, tell the story using the “Creation Shaving Cream story of Creation” below. This storytelling involves people creating the story with their hands in the shaving foam as they hear it read out. Provide silence and space after each part of the story for people to tell the story in their shaving foam, and then to ‘wipe the slate clean’ by running the side of their hand over their picture to create a new flat plane for drawing on, ready for the next part of the story.

Note: if you have people who find shaving foam “icky,” then you can provide a pile of environmental ‘found objects’, or if you are outside, you can scavenge for some and use these for people to create the story as they are listening instead.

Creative Shaving Cream Story of Creation

Before we begin:

Did you know that there are two creation stories at the start of Genesis?

Two different ways that the bible tries to help us understand who God is, and what God's role was in the beginning of the world.

Did you know that many, many ancient peoples from all over the world have creation stories that also try to make sense of how the earth was made?

One example is the story of the Rainbow Serpent, which Indigenous people in our country have passed down over many millennia.

These stories about how the world began from many cultures are not scientific; they are ways of helping people think about how the world came into being.

I'm going to invite you to listen as I tell you the first of the two creation stories from the beginning of the book of Genesis.

As you listen, I invite you to use the shaving cream to draw what you're hearing. At the end of each section, when I pause, you might want to wipe out that part of the story to get ready for the next part. (ie, at each line break)

When God began to create the heavens and the earth, the earth was complete chaos, and darkness covered the face of the deep, while a wind from God swept over the face of the waters.

Then God said, "Let there be light," and there was light. And God saw that the light was good, and God separated the light from the darkness. God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night. And there was evening, and there was morning, the first day.

And God said, "Let there be a dome in the midst of the waters, and let it separate the waters from the waters." So God made the dome and separated the waters that were under the dome from the waters that were above the dome. And it was so. God called the dome Sky. And there was evening, and there was morning, the second day.

And God said, "Let the waters under the sky be gathered together into one place, and let the dry land appear." And it was so. God called the dry land Earth, and the waters that were gathered together he called Seas. And God saw that it was good.

Then God said, "Let the earth put forth vegetation: plants yielding seed and fruit trees of every kind on earth that bear fruit with the seed in it." And it was so. The earth brought forth vegetation: plants yielding seed of every kind and trees of every kind bearing fruit with the seed in it. And God saw that it was good. And there was evening, and there was morning, the third day.

And God said, “Let there be lights in the dome of the sky to separate the day from the night, and let them be for signs and for seasons and for days and years, and let them be lights in the dome of the sky to give light upon the earth.” And it was so. God made the two great lights—the greater light to rule the day and the lesser light to rule the night—and the stars. God set them in the dome of the sky to give light upon the earth, to rule over the day and over the night, and to separate the light from the darkness. And God saw that it was good. And there was evening, and there was morning, the fourth day.

And God said, “Let the waters bring forth swarms of living creatures, and let birds fly above the earth across the dome of the sky.” So God created the great sea monsters and every living creature that moves, of every kind, with which the waters swarm and every winged bird of every kind. And God saw that it was good. God blessed them, saying, “Be fruitful and multiply and fill the waters in the seas, and let birds multiply on the earth.” And there was evening, and there was morning, the fifth day.

And God said, “Let the earth bring forth living creatures of every kind: cattle and creeping things and wild animals of the earth of every kind.” And it was so. God made the wild animals of the earth of every kind, the cattle of every kind, and everything that creeps upon the ground of every kind. And God saw that it was good.

Then God said, “Let us make humans in our image, according to our likeness, and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the air and over the cattle and over all the wild animals of the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth.”

So God created humans in his image,

In the image of God, he created them;

male and female, he created them.

God blessed them, and God said to them, “Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the air and over every living thing that moves upon the earth.” God said, “See, I have given you every plant yielding seed that is upon the face of all the earth and every tree with seed in its fruit; you shall have them for food. And to every beast of the earth and to every bird of the air and to everything that creeps on the earth, everything that has the breath of life, I have given every green plant for food.” And it was so. God saw everything that he had made, and indeed, it was very good. And there was evening, and there was morning, the sixth day.

Thus, the heavens and the earth were finished and all their multitude. On the sixth day God finished the work that he had done, and he rested on the seventh day from all the work that he had done. So God blessed the seventh day and hallowed it, because on it God rested from all the work that he had done in creation.

After you have told the story, invite the community to reflect on their experience of it, using the wondering questions below. You can also add your own questions.

Creation Wondering Questions:

- Now I wonder which one of these days you like best?
- I wonder which day is most important?
- I wonder which day you are in, or which day is especially about you?
- I wonder if we leave out any of these days, will we still have all the days we need?
- I wonder what YOU wonder about this story?

Found Objects Caring for the Environment Mural

You will need: A collection of "Found objects" from the local environment.

Description: Get your community to collect a whole lot of found pieces in parks, on beaches, beside creeks or brooks – clean them and bring them to Messy Church. Bring them and make them into a mural that reflects how they can care for the earth to hang in your worship space.

Talk about: The amount of rubbish that we see around our town, or city ….

- How can we help people better use or reuse materials instead of throwing them away?
- Do people know about or have been involved in street, creek, or beach 'Clean Up' days?
- How can our families take better responsibility for caring for the earth?

Climate Change Inequality

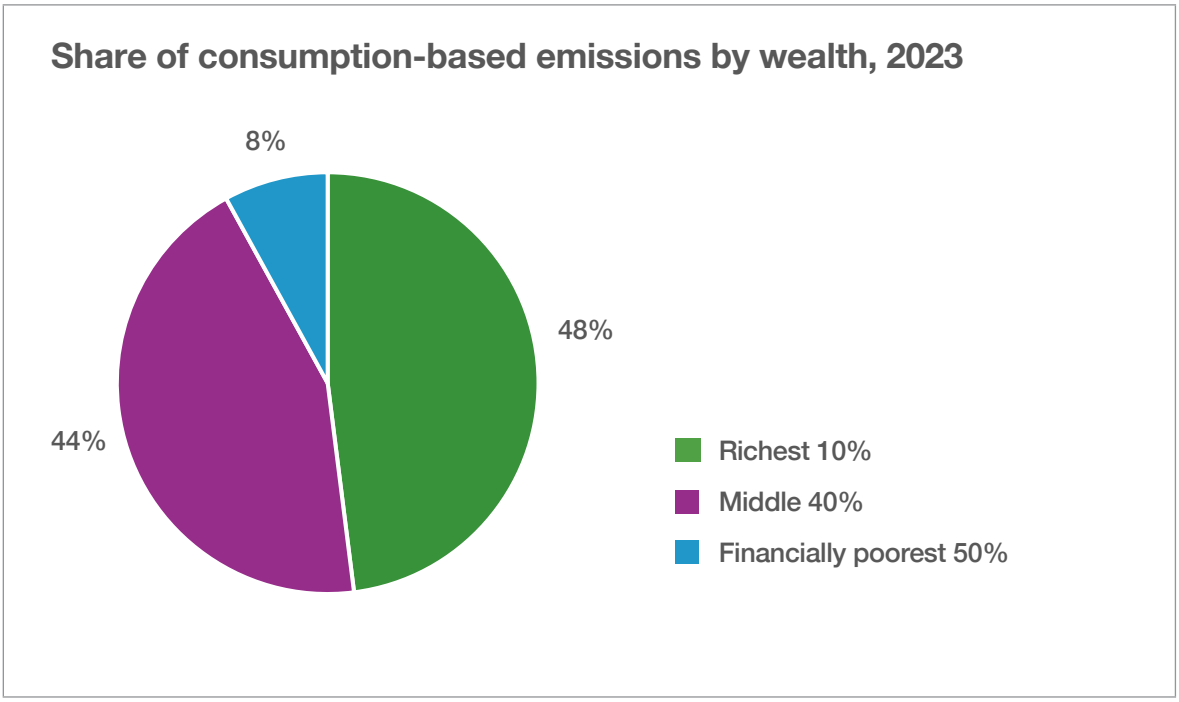
Unfortunately, in our world, financial inequality is growing. The wealth of the few also grants them disproportionate political power. The inequality also extends to global warming. Research released by Oxfam in January 2026 found that the average billionaire has an investment portfolio in corporations that will produce 1.9 million tonnes of $CO_{2(eq)}$ annually. The investment-related emissions of the 308 billionaires totalled 586 million tonnes of greenhouse gas emissions in 2024, more than the combined emissions of the 118 countries with the lowest emissions. If they were a country, the billionaires would rank as the 15th most polluting country in the world, ahead of South Africa.[1]

The per capita greenhouse gas emissions of the wealthiest 0.1% of people increased by 92 tonnes between 1990 and 2023, compared to just 0.1 tonne for the financially poorest half of humanity.[2] The wealthiest 1% of people's share of emissions during this time increased by 13%, while the share of the financially poorest 50% decreased by 3%.[3]

To stay within the agreed global warming limit of no more than 1.5°C above preindustrial levels set by the Paris agreement between governments in 2015, the richest 1% of the world's population would have to reduce their emissions by 97% by 2030.

Nearly 80% of the world's 1.1 billion people in financial poverty live in subnational regions exposed to at least one climate hazard, including extreme heat, drought, flooding or unsafe air pollution. Ending poverty and addressing climate change are inseparable goals that must be tackled together, simultaneously and in the same places.

Oxfam has provided the data in the chart below, showing how the wealthiest 10% of the global population are disproportionately responsible for greenhouse gas emissions.[4]



Even though those who are financially the poorest in the world make the least contribution to greenhouse gas emissions, the harms from global warming disproportionately impact them. In 2024, the Horn of Africa endured a relentless cycle of drought and flooding, displacing millions of people and pushing tens of millions into food insecurity. UNICEF reported that 35 million children in Bangladesh faced disrupted schooling due to heatwaves, cyclones and floods in 2024.[5]

1 Natkote Dabi, Alex Maitland and Astrid Nilsson Lewis, "Climate Plunder: How a powerful few are locking the world into disaster", Oxfam, October 2025, 6.
2 Ibid., 5.
3 Ibid., 5.
4 Ibid., 19.
5 Jan Kowalzig et. al., "Climate Finance Shadow Report 2025", CARE Climate Justice and Oxfam, 2025, 3.

According to the Independent High-Level Expert Group on Climate Finance, lower-income countries (excluding China) will require $1.4 trillion a year by 2030 to deal with the impact of global warming, which will increase to $1.9 trillion per annum by 2035.[6] However, governments at the 29th meeting of parties to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change at the end of 2024, only agreed to provide $425 billion per year by 2035. Wealthy countries also fail to live up to the pledges made to assist those in financial hardship. The assistance to the lower-income countries from wealthy countries in 2022 was just somewhere between $40 - $50 billion.[7] Furthermore, even the funding that is provided by wealthy countries is often taken out of existing aid and development budgets, meaning funding for other needs is being cut.[8]

While the Australian Government is on track to surpass its $3 billion target of funding to assist lower-income countries for the five years from 2020 to 2025, the target is well short of Australia's international fair share. The Australian Council for International Development has estimated that Australia's fair share of funding to assist lower-income countries with the impacts of global warming would be $14 billion a year by 2035.[9]

Global Action to address Global Warming

We need climate action that brings down the greenhouse gas pollution in the atmosphere to slow further global warming. We also need climate action that helps people, particularly the financially poor, survive the impacts of the global warming that has already happened. These two types of action are called mitigation and adaptation, and they are not alternatives – they are both necessary.

You can find out more about both kinds of actions from resources such as https://drawdown.org/ that focus on science-based responses to addressing the harm caused by global warming.

The 2015 Paris Agreement between governments has led to some action on climate change. As a result the expected global average temperature increase by 2100 has dropped from 3.6°C to 2.7°C. If all the commitments made by governments were met the global average temperature rise would be limited to an estimated 1.9°C. However, there remains a large gap between the pledges governments have made to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and the Paris Agreement target of 1.5°C.

Even small increases in global average temperatures have significant impacts. A global average temperature increase of 2°C over 1.5°C could lead to an additional 10 to 40 million people undernourished due to impacts on food systems.[10] Limiting warming to 1.5°C instead of 2°C by 2100 is likely to cut the proportion of people exposed to heatwaves by about two-thirds.[11]

As the planet warms, it risks crossing catastrophic tipping points: thresholds where Earth systems, such as ice sheets and rainforests, change irreversibly over human lifetimes. Small changes can push a system out of balance. Once past a threshold, the changes reinforce themselves, amplifying until the system transforms into something new. However, the scientific reality of tipping points is more complicated than crossing a temperature line. Instead, different elements of the climate system face tipping risks that increase with each fraction of a degree of warming.[12]

The 2025 Global Tipping Points Report assessed that polar ice sheets are approaching tipping points, committing the world to several metres of irreversible sea-level rise that will displace hundreds of millions of people. Together, global warming and deforestation are putting the Amazon

6 Ibid., 3.
7 Ibid., 4.
8 Ibid., 5.
9 Sophie Hardefeldt, Josie Lee, David Tran, Alex Edney-Browne and Si Qi Wen, "Financing Survival: Australia's new climate finance goal and the global just transition", Australian Council for International Development, Climate Action Network Australia, ActionAid, Oxfam Australia and Plan International, August 2025, 2.
10 Claudio Forner et. al., "What has the Paris Agreement done for us? 22 ways it is changing the 21st century for the better", Climate Analytics, November 2025, 26.
11 Ibid., 27.
12 Alexandra Phillips, "What are climate tipping points? They sound scary, especially for ice sheets and oceans, but there's still room for optimism", The Conversation, 13 October 2025, https://theconversation.com/what-are-climate-tipping-points-they-sound-scary-especially-for-ice-sheets-and-oceans-but-theres-still-room-for-optimism-265183

rainforest at risk of widespread dieback below 2°C global warming, threatening incalculable damage to biodiversity and impacting over 100 million people who depend on the forest.[13]

The Paris Agreement has helped drive the switch from fossil fuel investment that was dominant 10 years ago to the point that clean tech investment exceeds fossil fuel investments now. However, progress has not been fast enough.

In November 2025, the OECD released its annual Climate Action Monitor, which reported that only 17.7% of global emissions are covered by legally binding net-zero pledges.[14] The report said the momentum for emissions reduction had slowed significantly since 2021, and the world was well off track to meet its declared climate commitments by the end of the decade.

Unfortunately, fossil fuel interests continue to fight against actions to reduce emissions. Although governments agreed in 2023 to begin transitioning away from fossil fuels, governments of exporting countries like Australia still scramble to approve new oil and gas developments, which will undermine the world's ability to limit warming to 1.5°C. If left unchecked, these new fossil fuel developments will push the world towards at least 2.5°C warming.

However, non-government organisations and governments in almost every country are paying attention to how humanity can be supported to minimise the harm from global warming. These adaptation initiatives include:

- restoring nature based defences, such as replanting forests and restoring mangroves;
- developing climate resilient agriculture, such as modifying food crops to withstand higher temperatures and need less water;
- disaster preparation, which includes equipping local communities to plan for and recover from storms, floods and fires; and,
- investing in climate resilient infrastructure, such as green urban design so cities handle heat and water better and power and water systems designed to withstand temperature extremes.

In 2010, at COP16 meeting, the government parties to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change agreed to set up the Green Climate Fund. The wealthier nations were to contribute funds that could be accessed by lower income countries to adapt to global warming. While it is doing good work, it remains significantly underfunded. However, non-government organisations worldwide are working alongside local communities and governments to address adaptation. The Uniting Church's own international mission agency UnitingWorld is working with churches across the Asia Pacific region to support vulnerable communities build climate resilience. If you are able to contribute to their work, donations can be made to the projects outlined here https://unitingworld.org.au//what-we-do/our-projects/

13 Timothy Lenton et. al., "Global Tipping Points Report 2025: Summary", University of Exeter, 2025, 6.
14 Ryan Cropp, "Global climate action at a standstill: OECD", *The Australian Financial Review*, 8 November 2025.

Actions by the Commonwealth Government

The Commonwealth Government has taken some steps to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. For example, it has expanded the Safeguard Mechanism, a policy that constrains greenhouse gas emissions from big corporations in the industrial and transport sectors. The Safeguard Mechanism limits emissions from facilities emitting more than 100,000 tonnes of $CO_{2(eq)}$ annually. However, in practice, the Safeguards Mechanism does nothing to encourage emissions reduction in the electricity generation sector.[15]

Renewable power generation in Australia has grown from 11% in 2008 to 36% in 2024. Coal-fired power generation plants have been closing without power outages, and most of the remaining coal-fired power stations are scheduled to close in the next decade or so.[16]

Household electricity bills are on track to halve by 2050.[17]

In relation to assisting lower income countries with global warming adaptation, the Australian government has made financial contributions to the Green Climate Fund, the Loss and Damage Fund (a parallel fund to the Green Climate Fund that supports lower income countries address the economic impacts of global warming) and the Pacific Resilience Facility. However, these contributions are still well short of Australia's fair share, given our wealth and our contribution to greenhouse gas pollution.

What you can do

We need to continue to remind our governments at the national, state and local levels that ordinary Australians are concerned about the impacts of global warming in Australia and globally, to counter the voices of vested interests that place profiting from the status quo over the well-being of people and the planet.

Australian governments need to support all Australian homes to move to using only electricity. All-electric homes are cheaper to run and better for people's health. About five million households in Australia are on the gas network. There are many barriers to electrification, and all must be addressed. They include the initial costs of upgrading houses, apartments and rental properties from gas to all-electric.[18]

However, uncoordinated and widespread electrification risks creating a "death spiral" in which customers who can electrify do so, leaving those remaining on the gas network to bear an ever-increasing share of the network's costs. The challenge for governments is to manage the transition away from gas safely and equitably.[19]

There is a need to be able to fund measures to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and to reduce the harm from global warming. Currently, the Commonwealth Government gives away for free most of the gas extracted offshore by multinational corporations. Introducing a 25% levy on the sale of exported Liquified Natural Gas (LNG) would raise around $17 billion a year.

Further, funding to curb emissions and address the harmful impacts of global warming can be obtained by reducing the Commonwealth Government subsidies for the use of fossil fuels. Subsidies to fossil fuel producers and major users from all levels of Australian governments will total $16.3 billion in the 2025-2026 financial year, up 9.4% from $14.9 billion in the 2024-2025 financial year.[20] The largest component of the subsidies is the Commonwealth Government's Fuel Tax Credit Scheme, which gave away $10.8 billion in the 2025-2026 financial year to encourage the use of fossil fuels. That included a $1 billion handout to coal corporations. It is expected that the Scheme will help fund the use of fossil fuels at a cost of $13.1 billion by the 2028-2029 financial year.

15 Alison Reeve, Tony Wood, Dominic Jones and Ben Jefferson, "Bills down, emissions down: A practical path to net-zero electricity", Grattan Institute, October 2025, 10.
16 Ibid., 3.
17 Ibid., 3.
18 Ibid., 38.
19 Ibid., 39.
20 Matt Grudnoff and Rod Campbell, "Fossil Fuel subsidies in Australia 2026", The Australia Institute, March 2026, 1.

The Fuel Tax Credit Scheme allows businesses to claim a tax credit on certain fossil fuels used in machinery, vehicles over 4.5 tonnes, and vehicles not used on public roads. It is not available to businesses or individuals that use lighter vehicles, drive on public roads or use machinery and vehicles that run on different fuels. The money given away through the Scheme makes fossil fuel use cheaper for energy-intensive corporations such as coal mines.[21]

Write polite and respectful letters to:

The Hon Anthony Albanese MP
Prime Minister
PO Box 6022
House of Representatives
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600

Salutation: Dear Prime Minister

The Hon Jim Chalmers MP
Treasurer
PO Box 6022
House of Representatives
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600

Salutation: Dear Treasurer

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

Senator The Hon. Penny Wong
Minister for Foreign Affairs
PO Box 6100
Senate
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600

Salutation: Dear Minister

Points to make in your letters:

- Express your support for the Commonwealth Government to take action to reduce greenhouse gas emissions to curb the harm that will be caused by global warming.
- Urge the Commonwealth Government to take the following measures to reduce global warming:
  - Introduce a 25% levy on exported LNG;
  - Not approve any new fossil fuel extraction projects;
  - Assist households to move off gas usage in coordination with state governments, including paying for upgrades to social, community and First Peoples housing;
  - Phase out the sale of gas appliances, so that all new appliances will be electric;
  - End access to the Fuel Tax Credit Scheme for entities with revenues greater than $50 million annually, to stop subsidising multinational mining corporations for their use of fossil fuels;
  - Scale up support to lower-income countries in the Global South to assist with addressing the impacts of global warming, to reach $11 billion annually by 2030 as Australia's fair share of the $425 billion promised by governments at COP29. The funding should be additional to the existing levels of aid and development funding;
  - Ban fossil fuel corporations from participating in climate change negotiations; and,
  - Extend the Safeguard Mechanism into the electricity sector.

21 Ibid., 19.

Justice and International Mission Cluster

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March 2026