



Cli-mates join forces

Young Josephites respond to Labor's proposed Climate Justice policies

Members of the Josephite Action Group (JAG) and Josephite Activists for Climate (JAC) have joined together this week to endorse a strong stance on climate action. Both prior to, and following the election, members have shared ideas and initiatives for a safer future for us all.

Young Josephite leader, Joelle Sassine, has reflected on the diversity of experiences they've shared over the past year, and the way that this is shaping their direction.

“Our work with a diversity of faith traditions in the past twelve months has reinforced for us the reality that the ubiquitous and universal thread which ties each of our faiths and spiritual traditions together is **Care of Earth**. In a world rampant with division and debates about how creation came to be, unity still prevails about our common moral duty: to protect the sacredness of Earth. At this moment, then, it is essential that world religions join forces to preserve the sanctity of nature through dynamic environmental stewardship.”

In 2021, the group participated in Green Faith's ecumenical preparation for Cop 26, with follow up meetings to develop a range of responses. Then, early in 2022, prior to the federal election, members participated in the Faith Leaders Climate Summit organised by the Labor Party.

“We welcomed this opportunity”, said Joelle, “as it enabled us to add our voices to the development of an inclusive, sustainable and effective environmental policy strategy.”

In organising this summit, Labor recognised the importance of diverse religious voices in forming an inclusive, sustainable, and effective environmental policy strategy, and the ability of Australian faith leaders to mobilise their respective communities.

The priorities named at this meeting – to a committed emphasis on renewables, to safeguarding and mechanism models, to consideration of ‘Climate Refugee Visas and Schemes’, successfully modelled in New Zealand – were enthusiastically supported by the young Josephite leaders, led by Joelle and the environmental leaders from Penola Catholic College, Emu Plains.

“We recognised that strong leadership is desperately needed”, said Joelle. “The main consensus was that, while the rhetoric and Labor's plan are moving in the right direction, it does need to channel unambiguously a more clearly defined and ambitious climate adaption strategy.”

In a welcome move this week, Minister Bowen has confirmed the government's openness to working with Independents in the development of policies. Of major concern to our group, however, is his refusal to rule out a ban on future gas and coal projects

“We welcome Labor's latest acknowledgement that this is a foundation and not a ceiling,” added Emilia Nicholas. “And while our greatest concern at this stage is Labor's refusal to rule out new coal and gas mines, we hope that they will continue to negotiate with the whole of the Parliament, and come to a plan that will ensure a future for our planet, and for all of life.”

“We know”, said Joelle, “that our country and planet are facing nothing less than an environmental crisis. It seems to us that we must focus on new technology and storage rather than any mechanism that supports coal and gas. Who will act if we don't, to save our future?”

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