



**ERC MEDIA RELEASE
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AUSTRALIAN POLITICAL AND RELIGIOUS LEADERS SUPPORT PACIFIC OPEN LETTER TO PM SCOTT MORRISON

Political and religious leaders in Australia have come out in strong support of today's Open Letter from fifteen Pacific leaders to Prime Minister Scott Morrison, asking him to take urgent climate action ahead of the United Nations (UN) Climate Ambition Summit on 12 December 2020.

The Open Letter, signed by high profile Pacific political and religious figures, including His Excellency Anote Tong (former President of Kiribati), the Rt Hon. Enele Sopoaga (former Prime Minister of Tuvalu), Her Excellency Hilda Heine (former president of the Marshall Islands), Sir John Cardinal Ribat, Archbishop of Port Moresby and Most Rev Peter Chong, Archbishop of Suva, calls for Scott Morrison to double Australia's current Nationally Determined Contribution, cancel the controversial Kyoto credits and commit to net zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2050.

Hon. Kevin Rudd AC, former Prime Minister of Australia, said: "Climate change remains the greatest moral challenge of our generation and poses an existential risk to our Pacific Island family. Today's letter demonstrates just how much the Australian government's failure to act is a slap in the face to the Pacific, especially at a time when the government is trying to step-up its own engagement in the region. The government's failure to act also flies directly in the face of the commitments Australia made under the Paris Agreement. This includes to increase our 2030 emissions reduction target, to set a long-term vision to decarbonise our economy, and to mobilise additional climate finance for the region through the Green Climate Fund. No amount of crab walking by the government away from its insistence on using dodgy accounting tricks to meet its already lacklustre target will make up for this."

Dr John Hewson AM, former Liberal Opposition Leader and professor at the ANU Crawford School of Public Policy added: "Australia's foreign Ministers of all political persuasions often claim that *the first line of our foreign policy responsibilities is to our neighbours in Asia and the Pacific*. It is about time that they gave real substance to this rhetoric. There is no more important issue, especially to our Pacific neighbours, than an effective and urgent response to the challenge of climate change. It is time for the Australian Government to

recognise its responsibilities and commitments, and to provide the essential leadership on this issue. I strongly support this letter to Prime Minister Morrison.“

Archbishop Mark Coleridge of Brisbane said: “Climate change in the Pacific is a matter of life and death. That’s why it’s important for Australians, including our political leaders, to hear the voice of the Pacific peoples. As Pope Francis has said in his new Encyclical Letter, ‘We are all brothers and sisters’. The fate of the Pacific is our fate too.”

Rt Rev’d Professor Stephen Pickard, Executive Director of the Australian Centre for Christianity and Culture also supported the Open Letter: “The peoples of the Pacific are our neighbours whom we are called to love as ourselves. When they suffer from the rising tide of destruction due to climate change then eventually, we all suffer. It’s time for our political leaders to promote policies that show we really care for and hear the voices of the Pacific peoples.”

Bishop Philip Huggins, President National Council of Churches Australia, concluded: “Love God, love your neighbour”(Mt.22:36-40).We hear the call of our beautiful Saviour Jesus in this Open Letter of our Pacific neighbours. We appreciate the sincerity of our PM’s personal faith and his affection for the Pacific . A perfect Christmas gift is for our PM to now announce, in love of God and neighbour, Australia’s commitment to net zero emissions by 2050.”

A list of Australian political and religious figures supporting the Open Letter is provided below.

Media Enquiries:

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List of Australian Political and Religious Leaders supporting the Open Letter by Pacific Leaders to

Prime Minister Scott Morrison:

Hon. Kevin Rudd AC

Former Prime Minister of Australia

Dr John Hewson AM

Former Liberal Opposition Leader

Professor ANU Crawford School of Public Policy

The Most Reverend Mark Coleridge, Archbishop of Brisbane

The Very Rev'd Dr Peter Catt, Dean, St John's Cathedral, Brisbane

Rt Rev'd Professor Stephen Pickard, Executive Director, Australian Centre for Christianity and Culture and
Assistant Bishop Anglican Diocese of Canberra and Goulburn

Bishop Philip Huggins, President National Council of Churches Australia

Father Chris McPhee msc

Provincial of the Missionaries of the Sacred Heart

Father Peter O'Neil

Columban Leader Australia

Father Thomas McDonough, C.P.

Provincial Superior

Holy Spirit Province, Australia, Papua New Guinea, New Zealand, Vietnam

Sister Monica Cavanagh

Congregational Leader

Sisters of St Joseph

Sister Philipa Murphy

Provincial of the Daughters of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart, Australian Province

Brother Gerard Brady cfc

Provincial

Christian Brothers Oceania