

MAKE POVERTY HISTORY

Australians calling on our Government
to do our fair share for the world's poor
to achieve the Millennium Development Goals
(MDGs) by 2015
TO MAKE POVERTY HISTORY

Letter Writing Guide – September 2007 Climate Change

This letter-writing guide aims to give you the resources to write to your MP or a state Senator in support of the MDGs. An informed, personal letter from a constituent can have a powerful impact on politicians. Please use it to begin a relationship with your elected representatives, sharing your views and concerns with them.

Climate Change and Poverty

Millennium Development Goal 7 aims to ensure environmental sustainability in development. While there are a number of concerns covered by this goal, including deforestation, the loss of biodiversity, and the provision of safe drinking water and basic sanitation to more than a billion of the world's poorest people, the greatest current and emerging challenge for environmental sustainability is the impact of climate change on developing nations. Sir Nicholas Stern (former Chief Economist at the World Bank) in his *Report on the Economics of Climate Change* notes that,

The most vulnerable - the poorest countries and populations - will suffer earliest and most, even though they have contributed least to the causes of climate change.

The Inter-governmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) compiles and analyses all of the published and peer-reviewed science on climate change and its Fourth Assessment Report (2007) offers several insights into likely impacts on the poor.

- Temperatures are predicted to increase by between 1.1°C and 6.4°C by the end of the century, depending on how quickly effective action is taken to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.
- Sea levels could rise up to 59cm (or more if melting of Greenland and Polar ice shelves accelerates) by the end of the century, causing annual flooding for millions more people, and threatening water supplies and infrastructure in low-lying areas and small island nations.
- By 2020, an additional 75 to 220 million people in Africa are projected to face water stress because of declining rainfall in much of Sub-Saharan Africa.
- There are likely to be more frequent droughts and heatwaves in already water-stressed regions.
- Cyclones and heavy rains are likely to become more intense in tropical regions.
- The melting of glaciers and snow cover will lead to increased flooding for a time, and then reduced river flows and water scarcity for hundreds of millions of people (particularly in South Asia and parts of Latin America) who depend on these rivers.

The effects of global warming are already being felt. Bangladesh, for example has experienced an increase in temperatures of about 1°C in May and 0.5°C in November from 1985 to 1998. Sylvester Halder, Assistant Executive Director of HEED (Health, Education, Economic Development) Bangladesh says:

We are experiencing a major change in both weather and climate over the last ten to fifteen years. These changes, like almost all changes, affect the lives of the poor... Crop failures, loss of capital investment, failure to replenish the inputs essential for recovery not only increases food insecurity, but also loss of household assets. These events increase not only vulnerability but push more people into the vicious cycle of poverty.

What Should Australia Do?

Australia produces around 1.4% of global greenhouse gas emissions, but is one of the highest greenhouse polluters on a per capita basis. As a wealthy country with the resources to adjust to a lower-emissions economy, and taking account of our contribution to the problem of global warming, Australia has two key responsibilities.

We must take strong and effective action to reduce our greenhouse gas emissions. The science indicates that to keep global temperatures below 2°C (the level of dangerous climate change), developed countries like Australia must reduce their emissions by 80% on 1990 levels by 2050 and at least 20-30% by 2020.

Australia must also provide adequate support to assist poor countries in their efforts to achieve economic development and poverty reduction in an environmentally sustainable manner, and cope with the negative effects of climate change on health, food production, and water security.

Fast Facts (use some of these in your letter)

- Funding for rural development has fallen in recent aid budgets, and there were no new initiatives or funding for water and sanitation announced in 2007-08. Food security, rural livelihood and access to safe drinking water are all threatened by the effects of climate change.
- Although recent NGO research suggests that Australia's 'fair share' of meeting climate change adaptation costs in developing countries is around \$1.8 billion per year, Australia committed only \$60 million to this in 2007-08.
- The White Paper on Australia's aid program stated that increased priority would be given to projects that supported renewable energy in poor countries. However, there is currently almost no investment in this area. In 2004-05, only \$238,000 (in an aid budget that is now more than \$3 billion) went to such projects.

Write to your MP or a Senator in your state.

If writing to a Government MP or Senator:

- Ask him or her to contact the Prime Minister, Treasurer, and Foreign Minister, seeking an election-year commitment to increase aid to the internationally-agreed aid target of 0.7% GNI by 2015.
- Remind him or her that the poorest countries and communities will suffer earliest and most from the projected impacts of climate change. Ask him or her to contact the Foreign Minister, asking him to increase funding for rural development, food security, water and sanitation, environmental protection, and climate-related public health initiatives by at least \$500 million in the 2008-09 budget.
- Ask him to support setting binding targets to reduce Australia's greenhouse emissions by at least 20%-30% on 1990 levels by 2020, and to ratify the Kyoto Protocol in time for the Council of Parties meeting in Bali in December.

If writing to a Labor MP or Senator:

- Ask him to contact the Leader of the Opposition, Shadow Treasurer and Shadow Foreign Minister, thanking them for the commitment to increase aid to 0.5% of Gross National Income by 2015, and calling on them to announce a timetable to reach the internationally-agreed aid target of 0.7% of GNI.
- Thank him or her for the ALP commitment to spend \$150 million over 3 years to fund climate change adaptation in the Pacific and East Timor.
- Ask him or her to contact the Shadow Minister for International Development Assistance, calling for an increase in funding for rural development, food security, water and sanitation, environmental protection, and climate-related public health initiatives by at least \$500 million in the 2008-09 budget.
- Ask him or her to support setting targets to reduce Australia's greenhouse emissions by at least 20%-30% on 1990 levels by 2020.

If writing to an Independent, Greens, or Democrats MP or Senator:

- Ask him or her to speak in favour of increasing annual climate adaptation funding by least \$500 million in 2008-09.
- Ask him or her to support setting targets to reduce Australia's greenhouse emissions by at least 20%-30% on 1990 levels by 2020. Acknowledge that the Greens already have set targets of 30% by 2020 and 80% by 2050.
- Ask him or her to ask questions in Parliament about climate change and the aid program.

Some Tips for writing letters to Parliamentarians:

- Keep your letter brief – one page maximum.
- Handwritten letters have the most impact.
- Use the opening paragraph to introduce your key concern(s), then use clear, relevant and concise information to support your case.
- Use a concluding paragraph that calls for a specific action or asks one or two questions only.
- Sign the letter in your usual signature and print your name, address, fax number, work and home phone numbers.
- Let the recipient know that you are looking forward to their response and keep a copy of your letter.
- Address MPs as *Mr/Mrs/Ms Full Name, MP* and Senators as *Senator Surname* (unless a current or former minister – in which case: *The Hon. Full Name, MP or Senator, The Hon. Surname*)

To find the name and postal address of your MP or Senators call the Australian Electoral Commission on 13 23 26 or visit www.aec.gov.au and click on the "who represents you" section.

Please send us a copy if you get a response – both of your letter and the response. We will compare the various responses being given by different Parliamentarians.

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Make Poverty History Australia works in close cooperation with Micah Challenge – <www.micahchallenge.org.au> – a joint campaign of Australian church groups and Christian aid NGOs in support of the MDGs.

For more information visit www.makepovertyhistory.com.au call (02) 6285 1816