



MEDIA RELEASE

EMARGOED UNTIL 12AM, MONDAY MARCH 26, 2007

Welfare, climate and environment groups join forces to tackle climate change

Four national welfare, climate and environment organisations meet in Melbourne today to consider how Australia can ensure climate change and measures to counter global warming don't worsen social inequality.

The Equity in Response to Climate Change Roundtable brings together experts from Australia and Britain to put the spotlight on how low-income and disadvantaged people are on the front line of climate change impacts.

The partners in the roundtable – the Brotherhood of St Laurence, the Australian Conservation Foundation, the National Welfare Rights Network and The Climate Institute – formed the coalition to encourage knowledge and advocacy on the impact of climate change on disadvantaged people and on how social equity can be built into the urgent responses to global warming.

Tony Nicholson, Executive Director of the Brotherhood of St Laurence, said: "Low income households are most vulnerable to the impact of climate change. They will need special assistance to deal with the costs and opportunities that will be inherent in our responses to climate change."

Don Henry, Executive Director of the Australian Conservation Foundation, said: "It's very clear low income people and disadvantaged people are highly vulnerable to the extreme temperatures, water shortages and the increase in cyclones, floods and droughts that come with climate change. Governments must act now to reduce greenhouse pollution and avoid the worst impacts of climate change."

Michael Raper, President of the National Welfare Rights Network, said: "Using market forces to respond to climate change may be efficient and timely but we need to ensure that we both avoid harsh financial consequences and build positive opportunities for the 6.5 million Australians receiving social security as we move quickly to address climate change."

John Connor, Chief Executive of The Climate Institute, said: "We can choose a future in which we limit the most serious impacts of climate change and switch to clean energy. Like slavery and apartheid this is a human made crisis that can be fixed by humans to the advantage of all."

Issues to be discussed at the Melbourne roundtable include:

- The "business as usual" approach to climate change isn't working. Disadvantaged people will bear the brunt of the economic and social impacts that flow from inaction on climate change and this will only increase social inequality.
- The transition to a cleaner energy future must be informed by the principle of social equity to ensure existing inequalities are not worsened.

- Without good policy and assistance, disadvantaged people and people on low incomes are least able to protect themselves from climate change and possible responses to it, such as changes in energy prices.

SPEAKERS INCLUDE:

- Tony Nicholson, Executive Director, Brotherhood of St Laurence
- Don Henry, Executive Director, Australian Conservation Foundation
- David Thompson, Australian Council of Social Service Deputy President,
- Mark Wootton, Chair, The Climate Institute
- Peter Brain, Executive Director, National Institute of Economic and Industry Research
- Gill Owen, Warwick University Centre for Management Under Regulation, UK
- Catherine Smith, Chief Executive Officer, Victorian Council of Social Service
- Paul Gilding, CEO, Easy Being Green
- Tony Maher, President, CFMEU

The Equity in Response to Climate Change Roundtable is at The Green Building, 60 Leceister Street, Carlton, from 8.45am to 4.45pm today. The program is attached. The sessions up until lunch time are open to the media.

Media inquiries

Brotherhood of St Laurence – Jeannie Zakharov on 03 9483 1371 or 0413 948 535

Australian Conservation Foundation – James Norman on 03 9345 1145 or 0415 248 768

National Welfare Rights Network – Michael Raper on 0419 880 001

The Climate Institute – Sky Laris on 0410 963 047