

Friday 11 July 2008

EMBARGOED FOR 11.30AM, SUNDAY 13 JULY

## Australian refugee quota needed for 'climate change refugees': Make Poverty History

An Australian immigration program with a quota for 'climate change refugees' is amongst recommendations in a Make Poverty History report, to be launched this Sunday.

The report, *See the Bigger Picture: Australian Action on climate change: a guide for Garnaut and the Government*, also urges the Rudd Government to establish an international coalition to accept 'climate change refugees' when a country becomes uninhabitable because of rising sea levels, as outlined in Labor's 2007 National Platform.

As Australia waits for the government's green paper into climate change to see what actions may be taken in the future, the Make Poverty History report, launched in Melbourne with the participation of Pacific Islander communities, highlights the severe impacts climate change is having right now on our Pacific neighbours, and what Australia needs to do to ensure that more people are not forced to evacuate their homelands.

It also includes an analysis of Professor Garnaut's Draft Report and key recommendations on how Australia should act in areas including Australian leadership, emission reductions, helping our Pacific neighbours cope with climate change impacts, technology transfer to developing countries, and Australia's response to 'climate change refugees'.

Within the Pacific region, people living in low-lying islands and river deltas are already experiencing the negative results of climate change, including rising seas and salt water inundation. This contributes to crop losses, destruction of fresh water sources and flooding. The nation of Kiribati faces the prospect of disappearing completely, as do other low-lying islands in the Pacific, including those in Papua New Guinea, Tuvalu, and the Marshall Islands.

Make Poverty History acting co-chair James Ensor said Garnaut's Draft Report recognised global warming would cause substantial displacement of people, particularly in the Asia-Pacific.

"As a regional leader and as a country that is one of the highest per capita carbon emitters in the world, we have a responsibility to help those working families just outside our border who are struggling as well," Mr Ensor said.

"There are a number of things Australia can do, such as:

- Assist developing countries to access clean technologies;
- Provide new livelihoods programs targeting resilience in the agricultural sector and alternative livelihoods for small producers whose farming becomes untenable;
- Expand developing countries' disaster preparedness capabilities;
- Use revenues from the Emissions Trading Scheme to not only reduce Australia's own greenhouse emissions and assist low income households, but also to fund Australia's fair share of assisting developing countries which are struggling to cope with the ongoing impacts of climate change, and
- Set a strong target to reduce our emissions and encourage other developed countries to set similarly strict targets. Developed countries need to reduce their collective emissions by at least 25% - 40% of 1990 levels by the year 2020 to give the world a chance of avoiding dangerous climate change.

"Relocation of people is a last resort, but Australia needs to be better prepared for that eventuation and implementing a quota for 'climate change refugees' is a big part of that," Mr Ensor said.

Many Tuvaluans have already been forced to leave their country, and the people of the Carteret Islands are preparing to evacuate to Bougainville, Papua New Guinea.

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“Understandably, rising petrol prices and uncertainty about the economy threatens our sense of security and wellbeing,” Mr Ensor said. “However, I would urge us all to try and see beyond our borders to understand that there are families just beyond our shores whose homes, livelihoods and in some cases, entire countries are threatened.”

Emeretta Cross, born in Kiribati and raised on Tuvalu, said her family on Kiribati was importing tinned food because the community could no longer grow its own food due to salt waterlogged crops. She said children now walk up to four hours to reach the closest freshwater sources due to salt water inundation and flooding.

“We want our children to be able to grow up in their homeland, we do not want them to have to become ‘climate change refugees’,” Ms Cross said. “This is urgent – Australians must realise that actions taken here are affecting families just a short flight away.”

Pacific Islander communities will participate in the launch of the Make Poverty History report, on Sunday 13 July at University Square, Carlton (corner Leicester and Pelham Streets) at 11.30am.

Find out more at [www.makepovertyhistory.com.au](http://www.makepovertyhistory.com.au)

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## **CLIMATE CHANGE: FACTS & FIGURES**

- **Climate change may already be killing 150,000 people a year**  
World Health Organisation, Climate and Health Fact Sheet, August 2007
- **600,000 died worldwide as a result of weather-related natural disasters in the 1990s; some 95 percent of these were in poor countries**  
World Health Organisation, Climate and Health Fact Sheet, August 2007
- **More than half of the world's population now lives within 60km of the sea**  
Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, Fourth Assessment Report, 2007
- **The number of people at risk of hunger is projected to increase due to climate change by 50 million by 2050**  
Martin Parry from The Hadley Center of the British Meteorological Office, at a 2005 British Association science conference, from The No-Nonsense Guide to Climate Change, third edition 2006, Dinyar Godrej, p. 60
- **By the end the century a third of the globe's land will be subject to extreme drought—a sevenfold increase**  
The British Meteorological Office, from The No-Nonsense Guide to Climate Change, third edition 2006, Dinyar Godrej, p. 62
- **Greenhouse pollution grew around 80 per cent between 1970 and 2004**  
Summary for Policymakers of the Synthesis Report of the IPCC Fourth Assessment Report, p.4
- **A one-metre rise in sea level will wipe out a third of the world's croplands**  
The No-Nonsense Guide to Climate Change, third edition 2006, Dinyar Godrej, p. 61