

## RELIGIOUS LEADERS MEET WITH PENNY WONG

A single prophetic stance unified leaders from six different religious traditions when they met with Penny Wong on October 27<sup>th</sup>. With the negotiations in Copenhagen around the corner, they advocated that Australia adopt courageous, ambitious targets for the sake of the world's poor and for future generations.

"We share the moral values of justice, compassion and mutual responsibility for humanity and for the life that sustains us on this planet and the planet itself," said Rabbi Jeffrey Kamins, Chairman of the Council of Progressive Rabbis. "We also share a belief that human contribution to climate change requires urgent and immediate attention."

Among the "asks" were that Australia should set a target of emissions reductions of 40% from 1990 levels by the year 2020; and contribute in the range of \$1-4 billion dollars annually to those affected by climate change in developing countries and who need assistance to adapt.

The religious leaders, all from different traditions, were amazingly unified on this position. "Truth is one. The wise speak of it in many ways," said Mr Kanti Jinna, Vice Chairman of the Hindu Council of Australia.

Sr Geraldine Kearney, representing Australian Catholic Religious, spoke from her first-hand experience of the islands of Kiribati. She said people there are trying to build sea walls as best they can but are fearful for the next generation. She reiterated President Anote Tong's plea to Australia for continued partnership, sacrifice and compassion especially in support of adaptation, skills training and if necessary future relocation.

Rev. Professor James Haire, Director of the Australian Centre for Christianity and Culture, expressed concern for people in sub-Saharan Africa: "Even a small rise in global temperatures would have the effect of compounding their water shortages and devastating their populations."

Each of the leaders wanted to impress on Senator Wong the growing concern about climate change among their constituencies. This is demonstrated by many communities switching to Green Power and conducting energy audits.

The delegation's visit attracted media coverage and also included Br. Ikebal Patel, President of Australian Federation of Islamic Councils and Bhante Sujato of the Federation of Australian Buddhist Councils. Other people visited were Shadow Ministers, the Hon. Tony Abbott and Hon. Greg Hunt, and Clare

Penrose from the Prime Minister's office. Members of the delegation all belong to the Australian Religious Response to Climate Change ([www.arrcc.org.au](http://www.arrcc.org.au)), which organised the meetings.

ARRCC's website has a letter-writing guide for people wishing to write to their local MP about these issues before Copenhagen.