

An update from the Pacific Calling Partnership.

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**Responding to climate change in partnership with
our Pacific Island neighbours**

*PCP patrons, His eminence Cardinal John Ribat (MSC),
Dr Richard A O'Brien and Hon Dr Meredith Burgmann*

JANUARY NEWSLETTER 2020

A Note from the Coordinator



Dear PCP Supporters,

This being our first newsletter in 2020, "Happy New Year" is in order but it's hard to say so without a heavy heart.

In recent weeks, unprecedented bushfires have devastated the Australian landscape, leading to at least 27 deaths, thousands of homes destroyed and an estimated billion animals killed. And it's not over yet.

While we have always been concerned about the impacts climate change is having on our Pacific neighbours, it is now clear that Australians are also on the front line and cannot afford to ignore the issue any longer.

Our hearts and prayers go out to all those affected - the impacts of these bushfires will be felt for years to come.

For those of us already keenly aware of climate change and climate inaction,

this moment is particularly poignant and reminds us of the importance of addressing the root causes driving this tragedy.

Now more than ever, it is up to every one of us to take action. As a start to 2020, we encourage you to write to your local MP and express your views about what the Australian Government could be doing to address climate change.

Thank you to the Australian Religious Response to Climate Change who have developed a [letter](#) that you can edit and send to your local MP. The aim of this letter is to ask your local MP to represent your views to Prime Minister Scott Morrison about the need for strong climate policies. The letter hopefully offers helpful words but we recommend you personalise and sign it.

On a lighter and more joyous note, I would like to take this opportunity to introduce two wonderful new volunteers who started with the PCP at the end of last year. Monique and Johanna have been wonderful additions to the PCP team and you can scroll below to read more about them. With a very busy year ahead, we are certainly lucky and very grateful to have them on board.

Here's hoping that 2020 brings the political shift and the climate action we so desperately need.

Stay safe, stay strong.

Corinne

Corinne Fisher
Coordinator Pacific Calling Partnership
Edmund Rice Centre

King Tides in Kiribati

While Australia experiences extreme bush fires, our neighboring Pacific

Islands are experiencing king high tides and storm surges. It has been dramatic and frightening for the people of Kiribati who have been subject to seawater flooding inland and ravaging food crops and homes. Many people are deeply concerned as they are having to crowd in with relatives.

Niunibeia Tab'aeko, 17 years of age, has told us that her family at Eita village could not sleep during the storm surge because their house was flooded by seawater as well as from the heavy rain. They had to stay awake the whole night trying to save their belongings and also helping their neighbours.

She said that the good thing in Kiribati is that everyone helps one another. Niunibeia said, 'I am very scared and my cousins were also scared. Our uncle and aunt told us that this is getting worse each year and that they will need to make sure that the family's house is strong and safe for future impacts from storm surges and king tides.'

Below are two photographs of Niunibeia's family trying to save their belongings from the floods.





King Tides in Tuvalu

Tuvalu has also been hit by high tides and storm surges. A Tuvalu resident TC Tino described the situations as "the worst over-topping storm surge I have ever seen."

Nanumaga has experienced significant damage from the storm surge. The force of the current was still strong right in the middle of the island. It was a frightening scenario for all people of Nanumaga .

Teresa Lifuka-Drecala, Director of the Tuvalu Association of Non-Government Organisations (TANGO) from Funafuti in Tuvalu also reported that the high tides and storm surges were causing much damage in Funafuti: "We have been receiving rain and strong winds due to tropical cyclones affecting other nearby Pacific Island Countries."

This is a [link to a video](#) of the recent flooding that Teresa sent us.

Maria Tiimon Chi-Fang

Pacific Outreach Officer

Welcome to our new volunteers!



Hi, I'm Monique and I work at PCP on Monday and Thursday.

I was inspired to volunteer because I have family in Tonga and have witnessed the effects of climate change while traveling there. I have listened to stories of Islanders losing family graves into the ocean and seeing their ancestor's bones floating to the shore, fearing for their lives and their children's lives during extreme cyclones, and having to repair/rebuild homes every year following cyclone season.

I see climate change as the issue of our time and wanted to be more involved. I have a background in community services and adult education and I'm happy to be putting them to use at PCP. I enjoy the diversity of work from writing letters to politicians, participating in protest events and attending talks. I'm also very excited to be part of the team traveling to Kiribati in March.



My name is Johanna, I volunteer with PCP on Mondays and provide secretariat support to the Inter-Congregational Voice on Climate Change.

I am a fifth-year law student studying at the ANU with a major in Pacific Studies. When I saw that PCP was looking for new volunteers, I immediately realised that this was a special position where I could really make a difference in the broader climate movement. I am privileged to be part of a team that is so committed to working in partnership with the Pacific and empowering Pacific Islander voices to pursue climate justice.

The ERC's commitment to human rights and equitable development is often absent from many mainstream Australian discourses regarding the Pacific. Working with the Inter-Congregational Voice on Climate Change has been extremely eye-opening, and helped me to realise the critical role that religious groups can play in building strong community responses to the climate emergency. Volunteering with PCP has been an incredible experience and I look forward to continuing to work with the team!