Is 'green' religion the solution to the ecological crisis?

A case study of mainstream religion in Australia

by

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Candidate's Declaration

This thesis contains no material that has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma in any university. To the best of the author's knowledge, it contains no material previously published or written by another person, except where due reference is made in the text.

Steven Murray Douglas Date:

Acknowledgements

"All actions take place in time by the interweaving of the forces of nature; but the man lost in selfish delusion thinks he himself is the actor." (Bhagavad Gita 3:27).

'Religion' remains a somewhat taboo subject in Australia. When combined with environmentalism, notions of spirituality, the practice of criticality, and the concept of self-actualisation, it becomes even harder to 'pigeonhole' as a topic, and does not fit comfortably into the realms of academia. In addition to the numerous personal challenges faced during the preparation of this thesis, its very nature challenged the academic environment in which it took place.

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“Two roads diverged in a wood, and I –
I took the one less travelled by,
And that has made all the difference.”

(Robert Frost, cited in Gunderson & Holling, 2002 ‘Panarchy’ p 419)

Abstract

A significant and growing number of authors and commentators have proposed that ecologically enlightened ('greened') religion is the solution or at least a major part of the solution to the global ecological crisis. These include Birch, 1965 p90; Brindle, 2000; Callicott, 1994; Gardner, 2002, 2003, 2006; Gore Jr., 1992; Gottlieb, 2006, 2007; Hallman, 2000; Hamilton, 2006b, a, 2007b; Hessel & Ruether, 2000b; Hitchcock, 1999; King, 2002; Lerner, 2006a; McDonagh, 1987; McFague, 2001; McKenzie, 2005; Nasr, 1996; Oelschlaeger, 1994; Palmer, 1992; Randers, 1972; Tucker & Grim, 2000; and White Jr., 1967. Proponents offer a variety of reasons for this view, including that the majority of the world's and many nations' people identify themselves as religious, and that there is a large amount of land and infrastructure controlled by religious organisations worldwide. However, the most important reason is that 'religion' is said to have one or more exceptional qualities that can drive and sustain dramatic personal and societal change. The underlying or sometimes overt suggestion is that as the ecological crisis is ultimately a moral crisis, religion is best placed to address the problem at its root.

Proponents of the above views are often religious, though there are many who are not. Many proponents are from the USA and write in the context of the powerful role of religion in that country. Others write in a global context. Very few write from or about the Australian context where the role of religion in society is variously argued to be virtually non-existent, soon to be non-existent, or profound but covert.

This thesis tests the proposition that religion is the solution to the ecological crisis. It does this using a case study of mainstream religion in Australia, represented by the Catholic, Anglican, and Uniting Churches. The Churches' ecological policies and practices are analysed to determine the extent to which these denominations are fulfilling, or might be able to fulfil, the proposition. The primary research method is an Internet-based search for policy and praxis material. The methodology is Critical Human Ecology.

The research finds that: the 'greening' of these denominations is evident; it is a recent phenomenon in the older Churches; there is a growing wealth of environmentalist sentiment and ecological policy being produced; but little institutional praxis has occurred. Despite the often-strong rhetoric, there is no evidence to suggest that ecological concerns, even linked to broader social concerns (termed 'ecojustice') are 'core business' for the Churches as institutions. Conventional institutional and anthropocentric welfare concerns remain dominant.

Overall, the three Churches struggle with organisational, demographic, and cultural problems that impede their ability to convert their official ecological concerns into institutional praxis. Despite these problems, there are some outstanding examples of ecological policy and praxis in institutional and non-institutional forms that at least match those seen in mainstream secular society.

I conclude that in Australia, mainstream religion *is* a limited *part* of the solution to the ecological crisis. It is not *the* solution to the crisis, at least not in its present institutional form. Institutional Christianity is in decline in Australia and is being replaced by non-institutional Christianity, other religions and non-religious spiritualities (Tacey, 2000, 2003; Bouma, 2006; Tacey, 2007). The ecological crisis *is* a moral crisis, but in Australia, morality is increasingly outside the domain of institutional religion. The growth of the non-institutional religious and the 'spiritual but not religious' demographic may, if ecologically informed, offer more of a contribution to addressing the ecological crisis in future. This may occur in combination with some of the more progressive movements seen at the periphery of institutional Christianity such as the 'eco-ministry' of Rev. Dr. Jason John in Adelaide, and the 'Creation Spirituality' taught, advocated and practiced by the Mercy Sisters' Earth Link project in Queensland.

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Glossary of key terms and concepts

I have arranged most of the following terms and concepts alphabetically, but some are otherwise-grouped because they are best understood together.

Anthropocentric - I use 'anthropocentric' to refer to an ideology or policy in which humans are placed at the centre of moral considerability, i.e. concerns for humans are prioritised over concerns for other beings or non-beings. I also use the term 'anthropoexclusive'. This is an extreme form of anthropocentrism in which *only* humans are considered.

'Anthropocentric' should not be conflated with 'anthropogenic'. The latter term means 'created by a human or humans'. Something that is anthropogenic need not be anthropocentric. Rush, 2004 p33, points out that 'anthropocentric' and 'anthropogenic' are regularly confused in ecophilosophical literature. Citing Plumwood, 2002, p134, Rush says that "Although it is clearly impossible to abandon a human epistemological location, and therefore, human attitudes will always be anthropogenic,… anthropocentrism is far from necessary: 'it is no more necessary for humans to be human-centred than it is for males to be male-centred, or for whites to be Eurocentric or racist in their outlook. Human-centredness is no more inescapable than any other form of centrism'."

Biocentric - I use 'biocentric' to refer to an ideology of policy in which the life of an individual, a population, or a species, is given moral considerability on an equal footing to that of humans. It is an ecologically naïve orientation that does not give weight to ecosystem functions. For example, it can prioritise the protection of an introduced animal species 'because it has a right to life' over the impact that this species has on other species, populations, communities, and ecosystems. It perceives individuals or individual species outside their ecosystemic context. Biocentrism is often seen in the animal rights movement and can be contrasted with the more systemic, though not necessarily ecocentric view of the broader environmental movement.

Ecocentric - I use 'ecocentrism' to refer to an ideology or policy that prioritises the moral considerability of the ecosphere or ecosystems over the interests or perceived interests of individuals, populations or species. It a holistic and systemic perspective and in my usage of the term, includes but does not specifically favour humans, rather than being inherently hostile to humans as it is sometimes argued to be. I do not use 'ecocentrism' as defined by Hay, 2002 p8, i.e. "Nature as a vast community of equals". For me, ecocentrism is not necessarily egalitarian.

Theocentric - I use this term to mean an ideology that places 'God' at the top of what is usually a hierarchy of more considerability. For example, in normative Western Christianity, 'God' is given primacy, followed by humans (being made in the image of God), followed by the rest of Nature. Strict theocentrism rarely exists, if at all, because God is not afforded moral primacy without any reference to humans (God being at least interpreted in human terms). Therefore, I sometimes use hybrid terms such as 'theoanthropocentric'. This particular term means that 'God' has ultimate primacy but humans are at the centre of the ideology – being viewed as essentially deputies, stewards, or children of 'God'. Other hybrid terms include 'theobiocentric' which is biocentrism subsumed by theocentrism. 'Theoecocentrism' is where 'God' has ultimate primacy but ecosystems or the ecosphere is the central focus.

Often these concepts run into each other and they can be best understood as a spectrum moving from anthropoexclusivism through to ecocentrism but with theocentrism being an optional overarching orientation (see Figure 0.1 below).

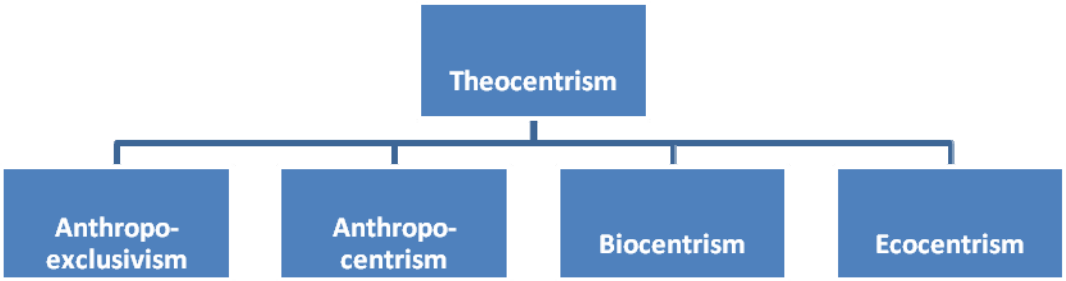

Figure 0.1 Relationship of philosophical orientations

Agrarian/ism - 'Agrarianism' has several recognised meanings1. I use it to mean 'pro-farmer', 'pro-farming' and 'pro-agricultural productivism'. Historically, agrarianism was contrasted with industrialism (see for example Quinn, 1940). Today, industrial agriculture may see no direct contact between the farmer and the soil, let alone with natural systems (meaning those not converted primarily or solely to serve human productive purposes). Modern agriculture is often simply industrialism of land and food production such that any contrast between farming and industrialism is marginal at best, though much less so in broad acre grazing (as opposed to feedlots). As such, the Church's agrarianism, which sees farming as an activity that brings one closer to God, is now largely an outdated romanticism.

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[1] See for example http://encarta.msn.com/dictionary_/agrarian.html, and for a more substantial explanation http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Agrarianism.

I raise the problem of Christian agrarianism because in its present form, it amounts to the Church endorsing farming irrespective of its ecological impact, and indeed its social impact in many colonial nations.

Contextual theology - "As a theological method, *contextualism* may be said to be that way of doing theology which seeks to explore and exhibit the dialectical relation between the *content* and the *setting* of theology. When Schleiermacher suggested that Christian doctrines are to be understood as accounts of Christian religious affections set forth in speech, and that they are limited to a particular time, he was emphasizing the dialectical relation between content and setting in the doing of theology, with special stress upon *contemporaneity*" (Lehmann, 1972 p3-4).

Ecojustice - This term, also spelt 'eco-justice' in some of the literature, relates to the recognition that the previously notionally separate and potentially antithetical fields of social and ecological justice are linked to varying degrees depending on the extent to which one philosophically separates humans from the rest of the ecosystem. Social justice has conventionally focussed on human welfare with little or no regard to or at least understanding of ecosystemic factors. For example, social justice campaigners may argue that it is appropriate for Amazonian peoples to clear rainforest for grazing because the associated economic benefits are seen as essential to those people's well-being. Environmentalists may have sought to stop the deforestation and been totally or largely unconcerned for the economic well-being of local people. More recently, it was recognised that trying to fuel economic development with ecologically devastating practices often had all sorts of negative consequences, on various time scales, for the people it was supposed to be benefitting. From such a realisation emerged ecojustice – the linkage of social and ecological justice.

Ecospirituality - Refer to the definition of 'religion & spirituality' given later in this section. I use 'ecospirituality' to mean a metaphysic in which there is no fundamental division between humans and non-human Nature, and in which Nature (therefore inclusive of humans) is sacred. It can be deemed sacred because it is, at least in part, divine, or because it is the product of the Divine. It could even be sacred simply because it came into being irrespective of any divine input, i.e. an atheist ecospirituality (somewhat like Buddhism).

Ecumenism (ecumenical) – literally means 'one house' (Gk) and refers to the coming together of the Christian denominations in any collaborative effort.

Pantheism - "Pantheism says that God is embodied, necessarily and totally; traditional theism claims that God is disembodied, necessarily and totally (McFague, 1993).

Panentheism - "Panentheism suggests that God is embodied but not necessarily or totally" (McFague, 1993).

Policy - This term is used here to mean a statement of intent or orientation. It can relate to actions that have been taken, or are intended to be taken. It can also state a general position rather than being operational in the sense of directing particular works or practices.

Policies can be formal and can be named as a policy by their author or publisher, for example, 'The Catholic Church policy on climate change', or the 'Diocesan Policy on Environmental Building Standards'. Policies can also be less formal such as published letters, for example, 'An open letter to the Prime Minister in regards to climate change'. Policies can also be symbolic or operational or a mix of these.

Symbolic policy - is that which is not directly functional or operational but which is essentially intended to indicate a particular stance, rather than converting that stance to action. For example, the Catholic Church in Australia has a policy relating to the stewardship of the Murray-Darling River Basin, yet the Church is not in a position to directly influence the Basin's management. In contrast, a parish may have a policy that states that all church buildings will switch to 'green power' electricity within a given time.

Praxis - Essentially means the same as 'practise', 'implementation', or more specifically, the process of putting theoretical knowledge into action. Whilst 'praxis' is not a term in common usage, it is the term used in ecotheology and related literature, being of ancient Greek origin.

Process philosophy – I use the definition provided by (Rescher, 2002):

> "The philosophy of process is a venture in metaphysics, the general theory of reality. Its concern is with what exists in the world and with the terms of reference in which this reality is to be understood and explained. The task of metaphysics is, after all, to provide a cogent and plausible account of the nature of reality at the broadest, most synoptic and comprehensive level. And it is to this mission of enabling us to characterise, describe, clarify and explain the most general features of the real that process philosophy addresses itself in its own characteristic way. The guiding idea of its approach is that natural existence consists in and is best understood in terms of *processes* rather than *things* -- of modes of change rather than fixed stabilities. For processists, change of every sort – physical, organic, psychological – is the pervasive and predominant feature of the real".

Religion and spirituality - The concepts 'religion' and 'spirituality' are highly contested (see for example, Hamilton, 2000; Rose, 2001). I do not attempt to resolve the debate about their meaning and the use of these terms. I generally use 'religion' to mean an institutionalised belief system that addresses the relationship between the self, +/- the physical universe, and the numinous (after C.G. Jung) or divine. This is broadly within the scope of the definition of religion as a "relationship between the human self and some non-human entity, the Sacred, the Supernatural, the Self Existent, the absolute, or simply 'God'" (Bouquet, 1967 cited by Thompson, 2002). I also accept the definition of religion used by Milton, 2002 p9: that which is "concerned with ultimate meanings as a basis for moral rules, rules which are often, though not always, believed to be sanctioned by a sacred authority in the form of a divine being or beings."

I use 'spirituality' to mean much the same as 'religion' but without the institutional dimension. Thus, I hold that one can have religion that incorporates spirituality (which I believe it must do in order to be authentic as a religion) and religion that lacks spirituality (where it is primarily about beliefs, values and practices that reinforce the institution itself and where reflexivity and contemplation are absent or suppressed, being replaced by dogma). Tacey, 2003 p8, writes, "Spirituality is by no means incompatible with religion, but it is existential rather than creedal. It grows out of the individual person from an inward source, is intensely intimate and transformative, and is not imposed upon the person from an outside authority or force."

I use the term 'religio-spirituality' to convey both the abovementioned concept of religion and the broader concept of spirituality.

Secular - I discuss the meaning of the term 'secular' in detail in Chapter 4, section 2.1

Stewardship and custodianship - 'Stewardship' is a term used extensively in Christian ecotheology. It is essentially a Christian (though not specifically Christian) version of the 'wise use' paradigm of the secular 'natural resource management' field. It is an ethic in which Earth is seen to have been made for and given to humans by God for their use but subject to the proviso that they do not abuse this gift by ruining it, i.e. 'use it but don't lose it'. Stewardship is variously anthropoexclusive to anthropocentric and operates in a theocentric context with humans seen, in effect or actually, as God's stewards of His (sic) Creation.

Stewardship is gradually being replaced in more progressive ecotheology by the concept of custodianship. This latter notion attempts to address the problematic anthropocentrism and blatant utilitarianism of the stewardship model by adopting a bio- or ecocentric basis on which humans are permitted to make use of Creation but not beyond their reasonable needs and not at an unreasonable cost to the rest of Creation.

The custodianship model sometimes purports to draw on the perspectives of indigenous people. It tends to view all of Creation as good and worthy of moral considerability. Some versions still place human needs above those of other beings, whilst others resemble forms of Deep Ecology by placing the needs of all beings on an equal footing. The latter is a much less common view and pushes the boundaries of even relatively progressive Christian belief.

Goosen, 2000, discusses three forms of 'stewardship': deep ecology (panentheistic); deep stewardship ("human being as the stewards of the non-human cosmos and fulfilling that stewardship in conformity to God's own will for the earth. Benedict of Nursia is a good example of this view"); and shallow stewardship ("stewardship of the non-human but from a fairly pragmatic point of view, that is, if the stewardship is not exercised we all will perish"). He claims that "In ecotheology the question of how stewardship is understood is the vital point" (Goosen, 2000 p209). The approach of John Paul II is to "affirm the interdependence of humans and the rest of creation without using the word 'solidarity' which might suggest monism" (which Goosen holds to be beyond Christianity) (Goosen, 2000 p209-10).

Sustainability - the long-term viability of society in terms of the 'triple bottom line' of ecological, social, and economic parameters. I generally use the term 'sustainable' with an adjective such as 'more' or 'less' because I consider sustainability to be a relative variable that is best viewed as a trajectory rather than as an endpoint, see for example, Land & Water Australia, 2001.

Chapter 1: Introduction

This thesis tests the proposition that (ecologically informed) religion is the solution or a major contributor to the solution of the ecological crisis. The proposition has been made by many authors and in many forms, but it is primarily made from a global, North American or European perspective. I test the proposition in an Australian context by examining the ecological policies and practices of the three largest denominations: the Catholic, Anglican and Uniting Churches.

1.1 Outline of the chapters

Chapter 2 details the proposition tested by the thesis. It looks at the nature of the proposition, those who propose it (religious and not), an example of those who oppose it, and my own perspective on what the proposition entails.

Chapter 3 explains the methodology used in the thesis – Critical Human Ecology. This is an orientation that is at least transdisciplinary and which accepts but moves beyond conventional science. Its central tenet is criticality and the linked application of reflexivity. The methodology informs the nature of the methods employed.

Chapter 4 discusses one of two key 'boundary judgements' that are linked to the methodology but which are also within the scope of the conventional literature review section of a thesis. Chapter 4 describes why I chose to confine the scope of the thesis to Australia, despite the views of some who claim that there is little or no 'religion' in Australia to study. I address this controversy and the key terms of 'secular' and 'religious' in this context. In doing so, I deal with different notions and measures of religiosity, as well as some general trends in Australia's religious demographics. I conclude that Australia is not 'secular' in the sense of having no religion, and that the majority of its population still identify as Christian, even though a far smaller and rapidly declining portion attend Church frequently or regularly. Furthermore, religion in Australia is increasingly deinstitutionalised and is instead more personalised. Religion in Australia is typically expressed in a much quieter and less social manner than in the USA. Australia is barely mentioned in the literature that deals with the 'greening' of religion. This thesis seeks to fill some of that gap.

Chapter 5 discusses the second major ‘boundary’ judgement. It addresses the reasons for my focus on mainstream Christianity in Australia including the basis for including some groups and excluding others. I raise the key issue of diversity between and within the subject denominations, and the difference between the institutional Church and individual Christians. The latter is a particularly significant boundary judgement because this thesis focuses on the denominations as institutions, rather than on Christianity as a religion, or on Christians as believers. This approach is in contrast to most of the related literature, which deals primarily with ecotheology or, to a much lesser extent, with the views and actions of Christians on the fringe of the Church.

Chapter 6 details the methods used to conduct the case study involving the three subject denominations. I used the Internet as a primary, but by no means the sole research tool to gather and to test information.

Chapter 7 provides important information about the organisational structure of the three subject denominations ranging from the international to the local scale. It then addresses the national and state-scale bodies that deal with ecological policy-making within the Churches. This chapter serves as an introduction to the following three denominational chapters.

Chapters 8 and 9 present and analyse the ecological policies and praxis of the Catholic and Anglican Churches of Australia respectively. National matters are addressed first and most comprehensively. A summary of the regional (diocese) scale is addressed next, including a small number of local-scale examples of policy and praxis. A case study of diocesan policy and praxis is provided in the Anglican context.

Chapter 10 describes and analyses the ecological policies and praxis of the Uniting Church in Australia (UCA). This Church has a structure different to that of its older and larger counterparts, and it has a far longer and more voluminous history of ecological policy-making. Consequently, this chapter is larger and structured differently to those dealing with the Anglican and Catholic Churches. It includes a tabular summary of the evaluation of Uniting Church ecological policy from 1977 to 2003 based on the work of John, 2005. Policies from 2004 to 2007 are then analysed at a national and state level.

Chapter 11 summarises and synthesises the results of the research into and analysis of the Churches’ ecological policies and praxis. It then returns to the case study-based testing of the proposition that ‘green’ religion is the/a solution to the ecological crisis.

Appendix 1 addresses ecumenical and multifaith ecological policies and policy-making structures at the national and state level. This information is provided as background material for the focus on the three subject denominations.

1.2 Preliminaries

This section is intended to clarify some aspects of my approach to the thesis.

1.2.1 What does 'God' have to do with it?

Because this thesis deals with mainstream religion in Australia, i.e. Western Christianity, I tend to use the term 'God' in the common manner of the Christianised West. It does not mean that I adopt the normative Western Christian conception of the Divine as "our father, who art in Heaven". The concept of 'God' in normative Western Christianity is far too anthropomorphised, patriarchal, triumphalist, and otherworldly to be compatible with my own worldview or spirituality. Some similarly oriented readers may find my use of the word 'God' problematic but I use it only when referring to the Christian concept of the Divine. I adopt the same approach with the Christian term 'Creation' in relation to Nature.

1.2.2 'Nature' not 'nature'

I capitalise 'Nature' where I refer to 'the natural world' because I see the word as a proper noun when used in this context. Christian writers tend not to capitalise 'Nature' even when they are clearly using it as a proper noun. They rarely use the term 'Nature', capitalised or not and instead use the term 'creation'. They very rarely capitalise 'creation', again, even when using it as a proper noun. I use both 'Nature' and 'Creation' but the latter is primarily reserved for where I am referring to the Christian concept of a divinely created universe.

The generalised non-capitalisation of 'Nature' and 'Creation' by Christian writers is apparently a consequence of a long-standing theology and related tradition that views such capitalisation as an inappropriate, indeed heretical, elevation of the status of the natural world or cosmos to a level equivalent to God. The underlying theology is deliberately anti-pagan and anti-pantheist. Even in its most progressive variant it holds that God can be accepted as manifest in the world (as opposed to being restricted to Heaven), but God must not be equated with the world, nor the world with God, other than to the extent that God made the world – hence 'creation' (see for example Gnanakan, 1999).

Even some of the most progressive Christian ecotheologians do not capitalise 'Nature' or 'Creation'. Thomas Berry, 1992, is a notable exception. Most apparently fail to see that in addition to being arguably grammatically incorrect, they are at least unconsciously maintaining the trappings of one of the key theological problems that some of them seek to correct, i.e. the separation and ultimate subordination of Nature/Creation (including humans) from God.

1.2.3 "It's the ecology, stupid"[2]

I accept the existence of a global ecological crisis but I do not epistemologically separate it from the various human social and personal problems that we face worldwide. I see the so-called 'environmental crisis' as an ecological crisis in which humans are part of, not apart from Nature. For this reason, I use the term 'ecological crisis' or abbreviate it to 'ecocrisis', rather than using 'environmental crisis'. I try to avoid using the common phrase 'the environment', instead using the terms 'Nature' or 'Creation'. This is consistent with the usage of the term 'ecology' by Harvard University's Forum On Religion and Ecology (FORE)[3] program (note that the acronym uses 'Ecology', not 'Environment', at least because the latter can be ambiguous).

The common usage of the phrase 'the environment' can serve to uphold the philosophical and theological separation of humans from Nature, and the notion of the natural world as something of a separate stage or backdrop (an environment) on which human lives are played out.

My philosophical approach in this respect is consistent with the concept of ecojustice in which ecological and social justice matters are not only interrelated or interconnected, but also interdependent. It is also consistent with some Vedic[4] theologies such as the Mahayana Buddhist notion of interdependence (*pratityasamutpada*) as explained through the metaphor of Indra's Web, and in the term 'interbeing'[5] used by Vietnamese Buddhist Master and ecotheologian, Thich Nhat Hanh. A modern Christian equivalent is the concept of 'the integrity of Creation'.

Under the heading "Creation is the unity of Nature in God", Birch, 1965 p112-3, illustrates this concept of interconnectedness with a poem by Francis Thompson[6]:

"All things by immortal power
Near and far
Hiddenly
To each other linkèd are,
That thou canst not stir a flower
Without troubling of a star"

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[2] The phrase is a pointed corruption (by me) of its original form, "It's the economy, stupid" (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/It%27s_the_economy_stupid)
[3] FORE is discussed further in Chapter 3
[4] 'Vedic' refers to the belief systems based on or influenced by the Vedas – a series of ancient texts of India. Vedic belief systems include Buddhism, Hinduism, Yoga, and Jainism.
[5] http://www.interbeing.org.uk/
[6] The Mistress of Vision XXII

In opting to use the above terms as described, I use ‘environmental’, ‘environmentalism’ and ‘environmentalist’ to refer to the related amalgam of social change/political movements that seek to positively address the ecological crisis. In this thesis, I generally don’t divide my understanding or use of ‘environmentalism’ into the various forms recognised by some authors such as Dryzek, 1997. Whilst I don’t adopt the two primary forms of environmentalism perceived by Milton, 2002, i.e. ‘nature conservation’ and ‘nature protection’, I recognise the basis of her distinction between anthropocentric and eco/biocentric orientations.

There are some established terms, such as ‘environmental scientist’, that I have retained as commonly used. In some circumstances, my use of ‘ecological’ could be understood to refer strictly to the science of ecology rather than to what is commonly understood to have broader ‘environmental’ meaning. I have attempted to clarify the meaning of each use directly or through their context.

Chapter 2: The proposition: ‘religion is the answer’

In 1965 when modern environmentalism was just beginning, the influential Australian Christian ecophilosopher and ecotheologian, Charles Birch, recognised the potential power of religion as an agent of ecosocial change. In his seminal work, Nature and God, he wrote:

> “The doctrine of creation stands for the sacredness of all things. If we could recapture its inner meaning, the effect could be profound. A world bent on obliterating and exploiting nature for its pleasures might come again to a sense of deep concern wherever the opposite influence of destruction and devaluation holds sway” (Birch, 1965 p90).

Soon after, in 1967, the highly controversial and influential historian, Lynn White Jr. gave a speech, later published (White Jr., 1967), that was widely misinterpreted as blaming Western Christianity for the ecological crisis. White, himself a Christian, was not condemning the faith or religion in general, but was scathingly critical of the damage wrought by the dominant interpretation of the tradition. In stark contrast to the claims of his many critics, White Jr. was actually advocating a crucial role for religion in resolving the ecological crisis, concluding that:

> “…since the roots [of the ecological crisis] are so largely religious, the remedy must also be essentially religious, whether we call it that or not.” (White Jr., 1967).

In 1972, Jørgen Randers’ conclusion when he finished work on the significant publication, ‘Limits to growth’, was that: “Probably only religion has the moral force to bring about (the necessary) change” needed to address the ecological crisis (Randers, 1972 cited in Rasmussen, 1993).

Whilst focusing on Western secular views as the major cause of the ecocrisis, Muslim scholar, Seyyed Hossein Nasr also argued that religion must have a pivotal role in the solution:

> “Only religion can discipline the soul to live more ascetically, to accept the virtue of simple living and frugality as ornaments of the soul, and to see such sins as greed for exactly what they are. And only religion, or traditional philosophies drawn from spiritual, metaphysical, and religious sources, can reveal the relativity of man in light of the Divine Principle…” (Nasr, 1996 p272).

Similarly concerned with the impact of post-Enlightenment secular, scientistic and religious rationality, Quaker author Susannah Kay Brindle wrote:

> "Although weakened by centuries of separation from Earth reality, it is, nevertheless, religion that now must ask 'who are we humans?' and 'what is our place in Nature?' These are questions (that) our a-spiritual, scientific and materialistic world cannot frame on its own" (Brindle, 2000 p57).

A growing number of contemporary authors share the views, in various forms, of the above-mentioned authors, for example Callicott, 1994; Gardner, 2002, 2003, 2006; Gore Jr., 1992; Gottlieb, 2006, 2007; Hallman, 2000; Hessel & Ruether, 2000b; Hitchcock, 1999; King, 2002; Lerner, 2006a; McDonagh, 1987; McFague, 2001; McKenzie, 2005; Oelschlaeger, 1994; Palmer, 1992; Tucker & Grim, 2000. Some use the term 'religion' more broadly than do others. For example, it is used to refer to institutionalised spiritual belief systems, such as Christianity, but it can also refer to spirituality outside religions, and it can include reference to speculative future religions.

The view expressed by such authors is in essence, that religion in some form or forms is at least a significant part of the solution to the ecocrisis, if not the whole or the basis of the solution. This view can be summarised as 'religion is the answer', and is herein referred to as 'the proposition'.

The basis of the proposition is explained in Chapter 3 of 'Inspiring progress: Religions' contributions to sustainable development' (Gardner, 2006). Note that like most authors in this field, Gardner is writing about religion in an international sense, but he is also North American and arguably has a view influenced by the very powerful and overt role of Western Christianity in his society. He sees religion as having five key assets that potentially empower it to be a major factor, perhaps *the* major factor in driving and sustaining global personal and social change to address the ecological crisis:

Meaning – "having purpose and meaning is necessary for an individual's emotional and psychological health, and can spell the difference between tackling a set of goals each day and remaining disengaged from them." Meaning is traditionally conveyed by religions through powerful stories. "Stories in general are a profoundly meaningful form of human communication. When coupled with the authority that religious teaching holds for many people, stories have the potential to change lives or societies" (Gardner, 2006 p43).

Moral capital – "While hardly omnipotent in imposing their views, religious leaders often have the ear of their congregations, and major leaders such as the Dalai Lama, the Archbishop of Canterbury, the Ecumenical Patriarch, or the Pope often get broad media coverage…" (Gardner, 2006 p47). This has clear political ramifications.

Numbers of adherents – "…roughly 85 percent of the people on the planet belong to one of 10,000 or so religions, and 150 or so of these faith traditions have at least a million followers each. Adherents of the three largest traditions – Christianity, Islam, and Hinduism – account for about two-thirds of the global population today… Degrees of adherence among the billions of religious people vary greatly, of course, as does the readiness of adherents to translate their faith into political action or lifestyle choices… But the raw numbers are so impressive that mobilising even a fraction of adherents to the cause of building a just and environmentally healthy society could advance the sustainability agenda dramatically… Adding non-religious but spiritually oriented people to the total boosts the potential for influence even more" (Gardner, 2006 p49-50).

Land and other physical assets – "…religions own up to 7 percent of the land area of many countries" (Gardner, 2006 p51; see also Finlay & Palmer, 2003) "… and buildings abound… in the United States alone, member agencies of Catholic Charities spent more than $2.5 billion in 2000 to serve over nine million people" (Gardner, 2006 p51-52). He also notes the large amount influence brought to bear on the corporate world by bodies such as the Interfaith Centre on Corporate Responsibility. Religions can also have very large holdings of invested funds such as superannuation (see for example the work of the international and interfaith religious ethical investment body, 3iG[7]).

Social capital – "…religion has a particular capacity to generate social capital – the bonds of trust, communication, cooperation, and information dissemination that create strong communities… The willingness to work for social betterment, not just for the particular interests of a religious group, holds potential for the movement to build a sustainable world because environmental health is an issue of common concern for the planet and future generations that transcends religious and national differences" (Gardner, 2006 p52-53). In this context, Gottlieb, 2007 p81, also argues that 'religious environmentalism' is "good for environmentalism, good for religion, and good for the earth community." This suggests that another aspect of the potential contribution of 'greened' religions is through their collaboration with the broader environmentalist movement.

[7] http://www.3ignet.org/

2.1 The nature of the proponents

The number of authors who see religion in some form as either the solution or an important part of the solution to the ecological crisis is now extensive. There is a noticeable surge in the prevalence of works of this nature from the mid-1980s[8], with further growth post-2000, and the volume of work and the number of authors is continuing to grow significantly.

There are also early and mid-20th century authors who advocated the same view, though in relation to philosophical, ecological and related social problems that preceded the existence or at least general awareness of a *global* ecological crisis. Examples include the above-mentioned L.C. Birch (1965; 1976; 1984), along with P. Teilhard de Chardin (1959), C. Hartshorne (1948; 1967; 1978), P. Tillich (1949; 1955), and A.N. Whitehead (1926; 1929).

Both the older literature and more recent works on this theme can be intertwined with the broader philosophical argument that in the West, 'science' and 'religion' (and spirituality) have been wrongly considered and addressed as completely separate and incommensurate knowledge systems (see for example Hitchcock, 1999; McGrath, 2003). However, some of the literature goes much further and addresses what Gore Jr., 1992 p12, refers to as "the collection of values and assumptions that determine our basic understanding of how we fit into the universe".

2.1.1 Religious proponents

The increasing 'greening' of global religions[9] is associated with growth in the number of authors who perceive a central role for religion in addressing the ecological crisis and who are themselves from religious backgrounds. Examples include the Christian authors: Batten, 2005; Binde, 2001; Breuilly & Palmer, 1992; Chew, 1999; Cobb, 2000; Collins, 1995; Deane-Drummond, 2004; Finlay & Palmer, 2003; Gnanakan, 1999; Habel *et al.*, 2004; John, 2005; King, 2002; Leal, 2004a; McFague, 2001; McGrath, 2003; Monbiot, 2003; Shelby-Spong, 2001; Tacey, 2000; Wallis, 2005; and Wansbrough, 1997. Taylor, 2004 p 992, notes that many works in the field of religion and ecology have been "written either by devotees of the traditions they were exploring, or by scholars devoted to the study of specific traditions who, generally

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[8] Rasmussen, 1993 p174-5 attributes growth in this field to the deepening of the ecocrisis and an associated increasingly urgent need to invent or reinvent an ecologically workable worldview.

[9] There is inadequate scope in the thesis format for me to discuss in detail the process and extent of the global 'greening' of religions. Readers are directed to the many publications of the Forum on Religion & Ecology, the international interfaith group, The Alliance of Religions & Conservation, The Encyclopaedia of Religion & Nature Taylor, 2005, and the journal Ecotheology, and its replacement, Journal for the Study of Religion, Nature and Culture. Numerous other publications relevant to this field are cited in the References section of this thesis.

speaking, usually had some personal affinity with them, as well as a desire to help them 'turn green'".

The growth in religious writers entering the realm of environmental ethics and ecotheology suggests that the call for religion to engage with 'the environment' is being increasingly accepted and internalised by religion. Earlier writings appeared to come from what was then the theological fringe (or what Nasr, 1996 p5 terms the "occultist margin"), but more recently, the literature can be shown to have moved towards the theological mainstream. We now see world Christian denominational leaders such as the late Pope John Paul II (1990); the Archbishop of Canterbury, Rowan Williams (2005); and the Orthodox Patriarch Bartholomew (2002; 2003) advocating strong pro-ecological policies and actions. All three have stated, directly or indirectly, that deliberate harm of 'the environment' is a sin.

Despite the increasing acceptance of environmentalism in Christian literature, Goosen, 2000 p220, and Leal, 2004a, point out that in ecotheological works, there is a tendency for authors to be either theologians (the majority) or (Christian) scientists, with very few bringing these paradigms together effectively. I also noted this strong division and the associated difficulty that many theologians have in addressing ecology. Goosen, 2000 p220, praises Melbourne-based ecotheologian, Wendy Chew, and Charles Birch as rare examples of an approach that effectively combines science and theology. Chew has called for theologians to be trained in ecology as a means of bridging this divide[10] (ABC Religion and Ethics Unit, 2000).

This situation is perhaps indicative of problematic boundaries between academic disciplines but goes beyond this to mirror the post-Enlightenment philosophical separation of the sacred (religion) from the profane (Nature), (see for example Birch, 1965[11]; Merchant, 1980; Midgley, 1992; Sherrard, 2003). Such academic divisions made it very difficult for me to locate a place within a university where I could undertake my research. In my Internet-based search, I found that religion is mainly studied in denominational theology and/or ministry centres attached to secular universities or within the Australian Catholic University, or else in secular rationalist philosophy departments. Ecology is mainly taught in schools of biology or 'the environment'. There is virtually no overlap, especially when it comes to studying Western

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[10] There are no full-time courses and very few part-time courses in ecotheology available in Australia, even within Christian tertiary institutions (Leal, 2004ap73). I identified only two part-time and irregularly offered tertiary courses in Christian ecotheology. Even allowing for demographic and cultural differences, this is a starkly different situation from that in the USA where there are some institutions that only teach Christian ecotheology.

[11] Birch, 1965 p80 states: "The purpose of nature and the nature of nature are what the concept of 'creation' is all about. It is to see the universe in a certain way, with a certain sort of unity. If we cut nature up into sections, one labelled 'science' and another labelled 'religion', we should remember that it is we who are doing the cutting up. The robe of nature is a seamless one… There is no part of the world which is secular and another sacred."

Christianity and especially so in Australia. The situation internationally is not so extreme, as the large body of material classified as 'Human ecology: religious aspects: Christianity' reveals. However, almost none of that literature addresses Australia in any way.

2.1.2 Non-religious proponents

A notable feature of authors who see a role for religio-spirituality in addressing the ecological crisis is their increasingly diverse backgrounds. Rasmussen, 1993 p176, notes "many who now make their religious appeal public are not religiously-observant themselves", or at least do not necessarily identify themselves as such, nor do they necessarily write as theologians. Nasr, 1996 p5, comments similarly, "Even champions of secularism now speak of how significant the role of religion can be in averting a major global environmental catastrophe resulting in the loss of many human lives." Some of those calling for ecology and philosophy to engage with theology and spirituality are nominally secular scientists (in the broadest sense) for example Rifkin, 1992 and Suzuki & McConnell, 1999, or 'environmental philosophers' such as Callicott, 1994 and Oelschlaeger, 1994 (see Chidester, 1987 and Taylor, 2004 p993-995). They argue that the ecological crisis is a moral crisis and that religions and spirituality are therefore (or ought to be) involved, not least because "the vast majority of the human species, whether participating directly or indirectly in the havoc wreaked upon the natural environment, still lives within a worldview dominated by religion" (Nasr, 1996 p3).

In terms of the contribution to this movement from secular scientists, one of the most notable is the statement by 34 internationally renowned scientists led by Carl Sagan (1990) and Hans Bethe, entitled 'An open letter to the religious community'[12]. It is an appeal to religious leaders and devotees to "commit, in word and deed, and as boldly as required, to preserve the environment of the Earth". Having described the problems and the solutions to the ecocrisis, the letter states that:

> "Problems of such magnitude, and solutions demanding so broad a perspective must be recognised from the outset as having a religious as well as a scientific dimension…The historical record makes clear that religious teaching, example, and leadership are powerfully able to influence personal conduct and commitment. ....We (the scientific community) understand that what is regarded as sacred is more likely to be treated with care and respect. Our planetary home should be so regarded" (Sagan, 1990).

[12] In addition to being published in the American Journal of Physics (Sagan, 1990), numerous websites display the letter. One is http://earthrenewal.org/Open_letter_to_the_religious_.htm. It also lists the religious leaders who signed the letter at the subsequent Global Forum of Spiritual and Parliamentary Leaders Conference. The Earth Charter is a later development along similar lines.

2.2 The moral dimension of the ecocrisis and of environmentalism

The moral dimension of religious (Christian) ecological concern is a particular focus in some earlier works such as that of Dubos, 1972. It is also a strong aspect in the writing of former Vice President of the United States (Al Gore Jr., 1992), who with the release of his feature film 'An Inconvenient Truth' in 2006, became a high profile global campaigner for action on climate change. The 'moral turn' of the environmental movement in general has become particularly evident in relation to climate change. It has also seen increased collaboration between religions and nominally secular environmentalist groups. A recent and rare Australian example is 'Common belief'[13], a multifaith and multidenominational statement on climate change that was facilitated by The Climate Institute. Similar collaborations occurred earlier in the USA and the UK. The moral aspect is often anthropocentric, and for the Churches in particular, tends to focus on the inequitable impacts of climate change on developing nations and on future generations (of humans).

Following from an acknowledgement that the ecocrisis is a moral crisis, is an argument that secular rationalist environmentalism[14] will fail to achieve its goals unless it re-orients itself to fully address the moral dimension. The moral dimension includes the overtly religious and the inherently nebulous spiritual aspects:

> "You're not going to get success in the environmental struggle without getting people to agree to cut back their level of consumption and reorder the planet in a way that is ecologically rational. That means there's going to have to be a profound reorientation, challenging the notion of what progress is, so that people don't believe they're standing in the way of progress if they decide they don't need a new version of a car every year, or newer and faster computers every year. There has to be a change in people's sense of what is to be valued.... If you want an ecological movement to be successful, it must be a spiritual movement. It must build an understanding that most people would love to live in a world of kindness and generosity. It has to be based on this new bottom line" (Lerner, 2006b).

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[13] I discuss this document in Appendix 1.

[14] Environmentalism is not inherently secular or rationalist. It can be religious and/or spiritual. Some self-interested lobby groups have dismissed nominally secular environmentalism as irrational and 'a religion' because it can include values such as the sanctity of wilderness, threatened species, or Nature in general – a proposition which is outside the scope of nominally rationalist science (see for e.g. Milton, 2002).

I agree with Rabbi Lerner's view. This thesis is in part a response to my acknowledgement that the ecocrisis is a moral/spiritual crisis and that as such, it requires a response beyond the technological, regulatory, and institutional approaches that have been commonly advocated by the mainstream environmental movement of which I have been a part (for more see Lerner, 2006a). Then President of the Australian Conservation Foundation, and now Federal Shadow Minister for Environment, Peter Garrett MP expressed a similar view at the inauguration of Catholic Earthcare Australia:

> "Environmental groups can provide the scientific expertise and lobby for change, but you have a role in giving heart and spiritual meaning to the environmental movement" (Garrett, 2002).

Accepting that the ecological crisis is in part or perhaps ultimately, a moral/spiritual crisis does not make an incontrovertible link to the role of religion in addressing the crisis. Some authors dismiss some or all existing major world religions as inappropriate for this task, advocating one or more new belief systems, or an ecologically informed secular rationality. Some writers conclude that religion (as commonly understood) has no positive role to play in addressing the ecological crisis. I discuss this in the following section.

2.3 A contrary proposition – 'religion' is irrelevant

Human Ecologist and 'biohistorian', Stephen Boyden, includes religion and spirituality within 'culture', though unlike Sagan, 1990, he does not argue for their role as effective drivers of change in addressing the ecological crisis. In this regard, his position is similar to that of Diamond, 1992; 1997; 2005, a high profile international scientist and author on culture and ecology. Where religio-spirituality is mentioned at all, the work of both authors deals primarily with the negative aspects of religion in the form of dogmas and doctrines that have worked and continue to work against ecological concerns. In the following section, I address the views of Boyden, noting that they are essentially the same as those of Diamond in this regard.

Consistent with his secular and arguably modernist rationality, Boyden apparently views religio-spirituality as something redundant that will inevitably decline and fade away, being replaced with 'reason'. This is supported by the closing paragraph of his 2004 publication, where he states:

> "We often hear the comment that, with the decline of religion, Western society now seems to lack a strong, shared ethical system at its core. Perhaps biounderstanding will help to fill this void - by providing the foundation for a new life-based ethic that can be shared by human populations all over the world, leading to gentler and more caring treatment of the natural environment and of each other" (Boyden, 2004 p168).

Boyden makes specific reference to the way that "religious doctrines have been embraced by so many cultures, past and present, affecting people's priorities, policies and conduct" when he argues for a similarly powerful influence to come from what he terms 'biounderstanding'. He also argues that:

> "The rapid and enlightened action that is necessary to protect the ecosystems of the biosphere from further damage caused by human activities, and to hasten their recovery from damage already done, will demand a radical rethinking of many of the most **sacrosanct** assumptions of the dominant culture of the Western world, and it will involve sweeping changes in cultural arrangements" (Boyden, 2004 p157) – "a veritable cultural renaissance" (Boyden, 2004 p159). (My emphasis)

Boyden clearly sees religion as influential. He also sees that at the core of the cultural dimension of the ecological crisis, are substantive issues of belief – in his words "sacrosanct assumptions". He argues for the replacement of the dominant and ecologically problematic beliefs with his notion of 'biounderstanding'. He defines this as the profound understanding that we are "living beings, a product of biological evolution and totally dependent on the processes of life, both within our bodies and in the environment", (and the resultant worldview that this understanding supposedly generates[15]) (Boyden, 2004 p159). As a rationalist, he sees the basis for 'biounderstanding' as a matter of definitive ecological fact that he hopes will create an ecologically respectful set of values (morals?) and behaviours within the scope of what he terms 'biosensitivity'.

Despite aspects of his own argument, Boyden does not contemplate the possibility that 'biounderstanding' based on but not limited to his narrow interpretation of these 'facts' can be incorporated into religio-spirituality. Were that conceivable for him, he would not need to invent 'biounderstanding' as a new form of rationalist atheist 'religion'[16]. He could have acknowledged that existing religions, were they to accommodate but not necessarily be restricted to the ecological 'facts'[17] on which his case rests, might be more powerful and better able to respond in time than might any new 'religion' of secular ecology.

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[15] Scharper, 1997 p189-90, raises this and concludes that although what amounts to Boyden's biounderstanding may generate "awe and reverence" that incline us towards an "anthro-harmonic" approach (akin to Boyden's biosensitivity) they "do not in and of themselves lead to sustainable integration between humans and nonhumans." He concludes that one needs to connect the equivalent notions of 'biounderstanding' and 'biosensitivity' to an ethic of justice, solidarity, and societal transformation as "they help root the human-nonhuman relationship within a specific moral universe."
[16] I use 'religion' in inverted commas to indicate a usage that is not in accordance with my definition.
[17] As an ecologist, I do not dispute the biological facts of human existence. However, in common with most if not all religions, I do not agree that these are the exclusive or whole truth.

Boyden does not explain how ‘biounderstanding’ would fill the void left by what he sees as the apparently worldwide decline of religion, itself a highly questionable and Western-centric assertion. He apparently assumes that the decline of institutional religion in the West will continue its late 20th century trend to a state of oblivion and that this is or will be a global phenomenon. In making his argument, he may also have assumed that, consistent with his modern rationalist orientation, religion, at least in the West, is already functionally dead. In arriving at either of those conclusions, he has apparently conflated the well-documented decline of institutional religion in much of the West, with a decline in religion *per se*. The work of, for example Bouma, 2006, and Tacey, 2003, in the Australian context, shows that such a conflation cannot be supported.

Boyden does not consider the literature which shows that whilst conventional expressions of institutional Christianity are declining in the West (to varying degrees), they are largely being replaced by other religions, by personalised hybrid religions and by spirituality outside religion (see for example Tacey, 1995; Nasr, 1996; Tacey, 2000, 2003; Bouma, 2006; ABS, 2007). Such belief systems are increasingly linked to understandings of ecology, though sometimes muddled with aspects of older religious belief and the highly commercialised New Age movement (see for example, Tacey, 2000, 2003).

‘Biounderstanding’ is a commendable concept. However, by failing to understand the multidimensional role and nature of religion and spirituality, as well as their current and likely trajectory in the West, Boyden has created a culturally disconnected idea with no effective vehicle for its widespread uptake or its maintenance as what amounts to a surrogate secular rationalist ‘religion’. As a rationalist, he sees that (ecologically grounded) reason is powerful enough – it does not need a cultural vehicle to be integrated into society.

Diamond’s position is similar: that the power of reason/rationalist science and associated law and policy should be enough to address the ecocrisis.

Along with the many aforementioned proponents of the view that religion is at least a major part of the solution to the ecocrisis, I believe that the depth, rapidity and extent of change that is required to successfully address the crisis is beyond the reach of secular rationality, even if such rationality is ecologically informed. In short, the ecological facts (‘biounderstanding’) that are not in dispute here, do not automatically translate to the values or morality (‘biosensitivity’), let alone the behaviours that Boyden seeks. This is where an ecologically informed and powerfully transformative religion or religions can have a role to play.

2.4 The potential role of 'green' religion

Unlike both Diamond and Boyden, but consistent with Callicott, 1994; Oelschlaeger, 1994; and Gardner, 2002, 2003, 2006, amongst others, I believe that the cultural power of religio-spirituality can operate consistent with something akin to Boyden's 'biounderstanding'. I believe that it can promote the radical shift needed to achieve 'biosensitive' societies or 'sustainability'. Both Boyden and Diamond fail to address the growing body of literature that demonstrates that this is indeed occurring in various ways. Most importantly from my perspective, religio-spirituality also offers the potential for the transpersonal development needed to address what I and numerous other authors suggest in various forms are the underlying causes of the ecological crisis, namely:

- the misperception of humanity as separate from Nature, with humanity elevated to a controlling position, i.e. anthropocentrism or anthropoexclusivism, e.g. Nash, 1990;
- the underlying Platonic divisions between body, mind and spirit, e.g. Birch, 1965;
- the 'disenchantment' or 'desacralisation' of the physical realm, e.g. Tacey, 2000; McGrath, 2003;
- the related historical tendency for (at least Western) religions to adopt an otherworldliness based on a transcendent theology that sees Nature as largely or completely irrelevant, e.g. Santmire, 1985; Palmer, 1992; Gnanakan, 1999; and
- the related rise of ego-centric, individualistic materialism/consumerism at the expense of community and ecosystems, e.g. Metzner, 1993; Plumwood, 2002.

In adopting this view, my position is that 'biosensitive' religio-spirituality could contribute significantly to the resolution of the ecological crisis, and that for it to maximise its contribution, it would need to be diverse. Boyden, 2004, concurs on the issue of diversity in relation to his notion of 'biosensitive'[18] societies: (it is likely) "that there will in fact be many different biosensitive societies, with different cultures, different cultural arrangements, and different patterns of human activity, just as there has been great diversity among hunter-gatherer, early farming, early urban, and techno-industrial societies" (Boyden, 2004 p147).

[18] Boyden finds the term 'ecologically sustainable society' inadequate and instead uses his term, 'biosensitive', arguing that what is needed is "something much more agreeable than mere sustainability" (Boyden, 2004 p146). This is somewhat similar to debate about the appropriate use of the term 'tolerance' e.g., in race relations, as it can infer something less than a fundamental shift in values – a begrudging and marginal acceptance.

Diversity is required because no single religio-spirituality, even if it incorporates a common ecological understanding, will be culturally appropriate for a world with numerous long-established faith traditions. This is consistent with the view of authors such as Oelschlaeger, 1994; Tacey, 1995; Nasr, 1996; Tacey, 2000 p170-1; Tucker & Grim, 2000; Wilber, 2000b; Law, 2001; Wilber, 2001; Finlay & Palmer, 2003; Tacey, 2003. For example, despite its sometimes being proclaimed as a 'greener' worldview, I do not suggest that a Buddhist eco-spirituality would be appropriate for the majority of Westerners, (see for example Berry, 1992 p54-55; Law, 2001).

Irrespective of the quantum or other significance of its contribution to addressing the ecological crisis, it is clearly evident from the amount and growth of related literature, that religions are now joining the broader environmental movement, (see for example Hessel & Ruether, 2000b; Gardner, 2002; Taylor, 2005; Geason, 2006). This is in itself worthy of study because it represents the entry of a new 'player' into the movement and, using the metaphor developed by Rasmussen, 1993 p174-175, "it is as though ecocrisis consciousness and religious consciousness are, in our time, like vast rivers, which though they arose in different terrain, now converging with one another in common channels."

Furthermore, in the case of Western Christianity, the phenomenon of religious environmentalism represents a substantial policy shift in what is in one form or another, one of the oldest institutions of Western culture. This is of additional significance at a time when the political leaders of the USA, the UK[19] and Australia are all self-proclaimed Christians, and there is much discussion in Australia and the USA about the political influence of the 'Religious Right', (see for example in the Australian context: ABC Religion and Ethics Unit, 2005a, b; Maddox, 2005a, b; Lohrey, 2006). There is also more recent evidence of a countermovement that could be called the 'Religious Left' or what Lerner, 2006a, terms 'the Left Hand of God' (see also ABC Religion and Ethics Unit, 2005b).

[19] During most of the period in which this thesis was researched and written, Britain's Prime Minister was Tony Blair, a self-proclaimed Christian. In June 2007, Blair was replaced by Gordon Brown, another self-proclaimed Christian (see http://blog.beliefnet.com/godspolitics/2007/06/jim-wallis-someone-you-should.html).

2.5 Summary

There are a substantial and growing number of authors from a variety of backgrounds who argue that religions have a significant role to play in addressing the ecological crisis. Not all such authors are themselves religious – some simply see that most of the world's population identifies as religious, and that religion can be a powerful vehicle for instilling and changing people's values, attitudes and behaviours. Whilst religions have been at least implicated in the values, attitudes and behaviours that have caused the ecocrisis (after White Jr., 1967, 1973 and the subsequent body of literature), the global 'greening' of religion suggests that they could equally be involved in enacting solutions to the ecocrisis.

Chapter 3: Critical Human Ecology

This chapter addresses the research methodology, with methods addressed in a separate chapter. Many authors use the terms 'methodology' and 'method' interchangeably, with 'methodology' being used simply as a more formal term for 'method' (Midgley, 2000). This tends to mean that "the theoretical and political assumptions made in the constructions of methods is placed beyond critique" (Midgley, 2000), a view shared by Connole *et al.*, 1993. In this thesis, 'methodology' is understood to mean "the set of theoretical ideas that justifies the use of a particular method or methods", and 'method' is "a set of techniques operated in a sequence (or sometimes iteratively) to achieve a given purpose", (after Midgley, 2000). In this context, my methodology could also be termed a framework or paradigm.

My methodology is founded on an ontological stance of critical realism, with an epistemological stance of interpretivism as defined by Ritchie & Lewis, 2004 p16-17. I do not specifically explore these stances in my research, though some aspects of them are discussed in the development of particular components of the methodology.

I adopt a methodology termed Critical Human Ecology. This takes the field of Human Ecology[20] as a base, adopts 'extended transdisciplinarity' which includes but moves beyond conventional natural and social science, adds criticality inclusive of reflexivity, and uses a transpersonal research context in which the focus is on the researcher as well as the research participants and the research. I develop this latter aspect by employing a semi-autobiographical style: a technique chosen in part because, in the interpretivist tradition, I recognise that as the researcher, I affect and am affected by the research. This aspect is also a factor in my use of a form of 'grounded theory' after Glaser & Strauss, 1967, through which the 'theory' manifesting as the methodology and methods are informed and developed by critical reflection.

3.1 Criticality and transpersonal research

In undertaking this thesis, and in particular, developing the methodology, I do not pretend to be an objective commentator, nor do I purport to be able to reveal a monolithic truth by means of notional objectivity, (after Flyvbjerg, 2001 p139). In accordance with Minichiello *et al.*, 1995, I believe that, "Objectivity is an aim or goal which is not really an achievable one", and more importantly that, as per Wadsworth, 1984 & Fay, 1980, it is not necessarily desirable.

[20] The term 'Human Ecology', is capitalised to differentiate reference to the field of study with this name, from reference to the ecology of humans in general.

This does not mean that I completely reject the concept of objectivity or its methodological value. I discuss this later in this section.

I concur with Minichiello *et al.*, 1995, that, "The researcher should be critical and espouse particular values in an explicit fashion." By 'critical', and thus 'criticality' or 'critical thinking', I refer to an approach that entails "interpretation, analysis, evaluation, inference, explanation, and self-regulation" (after Facione, 1990). Whilst the term 'judgement' is sometimes used in this context, for example by Anshen, 1971 p.xiii, consistent with Facione, 1990, I prefer to use the term 'discernment' as I do not use 'criticality' to mean that one should be critical in the sense of being derogatory or condemnatory.

Criticality equates to the "rigors of full disclosure" advocated by Braud & Anderson, 1998 p.xxviii, or asking 'what's really going on?' – looking below the surface to the depths of an issue. My understanding of the Critical approach is broadly consistent with how it is defined by Connole *et al.*, 1993 p12, namely that knowledge is subjective, problematic, capable of systemic distortion, never value-free and always represents the interests of some group within society, thus having the potential to be oppressive or emancipatory (though I reject the extremes of this dichotomy). This view is also consistent with the notion of humanism advocated by Anshen, 1971 p.xiii. Connole *et al.*, 1993 p12, adds that the Critical approach sees "social action to improve the quality of human life as the desirable outcome of research", a view advocated by the 'participatory philosophy' of Skolimowski, 1994 p.xv-xvi. I embrace Connole *et al.*'s notion of improvement but reject the anthropoexclusive aspect.

Connole *et al.*, 1993 p12, also hold that the researcher and the researched are indivisible. I reject this simplistic amalgam, seeing instead that researcher and researched *are* interconnected but not necessarily indivisible, as per the discussion of the paradoxical nature of reality provided by Hitchcock, 1999.

In his work on critical systemic intervention, Midgley, 2000, encourages researchers to interrogate and document their assumptions in choosing a particular methodology. These include their values and small 'p' politics. Criticality is not just something that one applies as an external tool to use in analysing data. To be authentic, one must also apply it internally, i.e. to both the research *and* to the researcher. Midgley, 2000, suggests that doing so is a necessary response to acknowledging that we cannot achieve intellectual purity in our research. Such bidirectional criticality includes the concept of 'self-regulation' (after Facione, 1990), 'self-reflexivity' (after Maturana & Varela, 1992), or simply, 'reflexivity'. Reflexivity has been defined by Douglas & Johnson, 1977, as the mutual interdependence of observer or knower to

that which is seen or known. Varela, 1990, explains the concept of reflexivity as hinging on acknowledgement that "the knower and the known are co-implicated"[21]. Thus, authentic criticality or critical thinking encompasses the practice of reflexivity.

This thesis adopts the criticality advocated by Midgley, 2000, and the transpersonal methodology of Braud & Anderson, 1998, situated in the 'transpersonal ecology' of Fox, 1990. The Oxford English Dictionary defines 'transpersonal' as "designating a form of psychology or psychotherapy which seeks to combine elements from many esoteric and religious traditions with modern ideas and techniques". Prominent examples include the work of Abraham Maslow (e.g. 1964) and Carl Gustav Jung (e.g. that compiled by Sabini, 2002) and more recently the 'integral psychology' of Ken Wilber (2000a; 2000b; 2001). The approach is also evident in the publication entitled 'Values for sustainability: the necessity of transcendence and sacred realms' by Peter Cock, 1991. 'I also use 'transpersonal' to mean 'beyond the self' or '*ecstasis*'. My approach includes Midgely's and Braud & Anderson's notions of improvement of the researcher (self-improvement/personal development); improvement in the conditions of the research participant(s) (where relevant); and improvement of broader society.

In doing so, I am deliberately moving beyond the "assumptions and practice of conventional approaches to research" critiqued by Braud & Anderson, 1998 p5-6, namely:

- the notion that all research is a special type of knowledge that is of superior quality to other forms of knowing. "In reviewing the literature for relevant findings and interpretations, the researcher goes primarily or solely to research reports that have been published in the premier professional journals of the discipline during the past 5 to 10 years. Reports, or observations appearing outside scientific literature are not especially valued or useful";
- that research and the researcher are value-free and unrelated to the development of the researcher, such that researchers can be interchanged without significantly affecting the findings. "Purposive and teleological considerations have no place in serious research, and the consciousness of the research personnel can have no direct influence on the phenomena being studied";
- that research is primarily about identifying "general principles or universal laws that provide the possibility of explanation, prediction and control" i.e. it should be distinguished from endeavours such as practical applications;

[21] This does not infer solipsism, i.e. that reality only exists in one's mind, nor representationism, i.e. "the positivist view that the mind operates with representations of the external world" (after Macdonald, 1997, p13).

- “the preferred empirical and theoretical research approaches should be modelled after those of the physical sciences of the 18th and 19th centuries” (i.e. primarily quantitative and more experimental methods using “data derived through the senses, consensually validated by others, and extended and expressed via logically sound mathematical and linguistic formalism”, rather than qualitative and more naturalistic methods);
- the ideal research environment is as isolated from other influences as is possible;
- “the researcher is the expert, the authority whose observations, views, hypotheses, and interpretations are privileged over those of the research subjects”;
- “the preferred outlets for original research findings and interpretations are peer-reviewed journal articles and professional conference presentations. The researcher communicates primarily with professional colleagues”.

In making this choice, my previous training and professional practice as an ecologist and environmental planner caused me considerable methodological angst in constructing this thesis. As the thesis developed, it became increasingly evident that I was required to extend beyond the scientific and ‘legal-rational authority’ paradigms with which I was exclusively familiar. I was challenged to make the quantum leap from the ontology of the ‘empiricist approach’ to that of the ‘interpretive approach’; brushing over ‘post-modern and deconstructive’ epistemologies, and finally coming to understand, appreciate and accept the ‘critical approach’ as per the frameworks of Connole, 1993 p12. Not only did I face rejecting or at least moving beyond many of the fundamental assumptions associated with my earlier training and practice as represented in the assumptions listed on the previous page, but I also found myself outside the relatively comfortable academic confines created by ‘conventional research’. Malone, 1996 Chapter 7, reports a similar experience in her adoption of a ‘critical ethnography’ approach entailing the researcher also being and environmental activist who both transforms and is transformed by her research work.

I do not dismiss the contribution of the so-called ‘natural’ or ‘physical’ sciences, or that of ‘social science’ in its many forms. Instead, I believe they do not offer sufficient scope by themselves to address the scope of this thesis. I still use accepted scientific tools such as observation and accepted sociological tools such as policy analysis, but I do so in a broader context than allowed by conventional scientism. Nasr, 1996 p287 advocates that one need not abandon science, but that scientific knowledge needs to be seen as confined by the limitations that “philosophical suppositions, epistemologies, and historical developments have imposed upon it.” Nasr’s key point is that scientism holds that science is the only form and indeed the ultimate form of Truth, yet it makes such a claim without acknowledging its inherent limitations – something that is strictly against its own methodology.

I do not see science as having a monopoly on the truth, but as one knowledge system amongst others. This "is not a criticism of science *qua* science, but an indictment of a belief system that does not question itself" (Macdonald, 1997 p23). Thus, I have chosen to move from the 'orthodox science' to the 'complementary science' of Lorimer, 1988; from the purely 'positivist' to the 'naturalistic' axioms of Lincoln & Guba, 1985; from the 'separateness science' to the 'wholeness science' of Harman, 1991; from the 'prevailing' to the 'alternative' paradigms described by Global Co-operation for a Better World, 1990; and I have adopted the 'extended science' of Josephson & Rubik, 1992. For further information on these perspectives see Braud & Anderson, 1998. In short, my position is a case of a conditional 'both and' rather than simply 'either or'.

An important aspect in my use of criticality is the dimension of personal reflexivity and experience. This is particularly important given that my research methods include 'participatory action research' and 'grounded theory', after Glaser & Strauss, 1967, and that I adopt the 'participatory philosophy' of Skolimowski, 1994. In mainstream, i.e. scientistic, research, inclusion of personal experiences arising through the research process is generally thought to contaminate a project's objectivity and is subsequently frowned upon if not dismissed entirely, (Reinharz, 1992 cited in Malone, 1996 p284; Milton, 2002 p3; also Dobzhansky, 1967 p2[22]). A different approach is possible and arguably essential to addressing the ecological crisis. "Presenting the personal 'self' … is not (used) as a form of 'confession' to overcome issues of bias as would be the case in positivist research, but as an explanation of the researcher's standpoint", (Malone, 1996 p284); a view also advocated by Milton, 2002, and Anshen, 1971. Such an approach is logically consistent with the basis of criticality. This is especially so when one acknowledges the interactivity between the researcher and the researched, and the personally as well as socially transformative potential of critical, reflexive, change-oriented research (after Skolimowski, 1994).

An additional aspect in my adoption of criticality stems from both my dismissal of the normative scientistic notion of 'objective' and 'disinterested' research, and from my acknowledgement of the existence and urgency of the global ecological crisis (which I discuss later in this chapter). Brady, 2000 p14, explains this in the context of The Earth Bible Series, which she notes is "a scholarly work, but it speaks to us here and now with some urgency – which is all to the good. A disinterested approach is of little use in a crisis. What is needed is passion – though this is a passion controlled by reason and respect for what is the case." Anshen, 1971 p.xvii, comments similarly that "The 'objectivity' of science cannot help man

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[22] "…speculations in the realms of philosophy and religion... are often regarded, among scientists, as regrettable foibles or even as professional misdemeanors. They are as often as not kept secret, for being caught at them is liable to damage a scientist's professional reputation" (Dobzhansky, 1967 p2).

[sic] in his [sic] present human predicament, since for science in this sense, there can be no commitment. So that in the end, we know everything but understand nothing."

The development of my methodology revealed the extent to which I was required to experience a metanoia (a 'change of mind') in relation to my ontology, epistemology, and the research topic (as it developed through several iterations). In experiencing this sometimes very difficult process and through exploring the breadth and depth of literature related to my field of study, I discovered an under-current driving both my metanoia and the changes I was observing in the relationship between religion and ecology.

This under-current is the healing of the philosophical dualities between 'Man and Nature', mind and body, 'head and heart', body and soul, matter and spirit, science and religion, the sacred and the profane, the Divine and Nature, and 'rationality' and 'emotion'. More broadly, the under-current is about the need to transcend dualism, itself a central tenet of Buddhism, but also a core philosophy of authors such as Skolimowski, 1994.

Many authors trace these dualities (in various forms) back to Plato and Aristotle, later intensified by key figures of the ironically-named Enlightenment, such as Descartes and Bacon, (see for example Birch, 1965, 1984; Gnanakan, 1999; Hitchcock, 1999; McGrath, 2003; Sherrard, 2003). My research topic requires that I address such deep issues to some extent, if only in relation to the controversial views of White Jr., 1967, 1973, and others who specifically or substantially blame Christianity (or in White's case, a particular interpretation of it) for Western[23] society's destructive relationship with Nature (see also Hallman, 2000).

My methodology seeks to reunite at least some of these divisions through a form of transpersonal criticality that recognises the danger of an academia and a society that commonly demands a researcher isolate notionally separate and purportedly 'pure' rationalist, intellectual thought from 'impure' personal and transpersonal experiences such as emotion, intuition, and spirituality. The scars of such divisive scientism and so-called rationalism are all too evident in the causes and outcomes of the ecological crisis, the related social crises and in the personal spiritual crisis that lies at their core, see for example Anshen, 1971; Milton, 2002; Nasr, 1996; Skolimowski, 1994.

In healing such divisions, I adopt the notion of research as therapy; as learning to know and heal myself; as a process of self-actualisation; and through this, to better understand and

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[23] After Milton, 2002 p6, I use the term 'Western' in its common but unsatisfactorily defined sense, noting that 'the West' is not "a sealed container"; it has "no clear boundaries, and it is in the nature of market capitalism and liberal democracy, which characterise the west, to break down whatever boundaries there are."

interact with the world. I see this in terms of the paraphrased view of J. Krishnamurti which says that 'if you want to change the world, you first need to change yourself' (Krishnamurti & Martin, 1997).

Much the same view is expressed by Skolimowski, 1994 p.xii: "Our world needs mending and healing; so does our psyche… The healing of the world (and ourselves within it)…are complementary aspects of the same process." A similar approach is taken in the work of Joanna Macy[24] and John Seed[25], and to some extent by Wilber, 2001, who writes that:

> "An increase in exterior or social development can only be sustained with a corresponding increase in interior development in consciousness and culture. Simply trying to put a new form of governance, political system, (techno-economic system) or social distribution network in place without a corresponding development in the levels of the interior dimensions of consciousness has historically guaranteed failure in societal transformation."

Caduto, 1985, sees that only "whole, healed individuals who are willing and able to look beyond their own lives and to work for the welfare of society and environment" can achieve the necessary level of personal and societal change required to address the ecological crisis. I feel this view suggests that one has to be 'perfect' before one can be an effective contributor. My view is that one needs to be substantially 'on the path', and not necessarily at some nominal endpoint in order to be able to contribute meaningfully.

Further to the notion of healing our psyche to heal the world, my position is also commensurate with that of Maslow, 1964, who argues that "dichotomizing and pathologizing" are immature states of mind. He holds that:

> "The empirical fact is that self-actualizing people, our best experiencers, are also our most compassionate, our great improvers and reformers of society, our most *effective* fighters against injustice, inequality, slavery, cruelty, exploitation (and also our best fighters *for* excellence, effectiveness, competence). And it also becomes clearer and clearer that the best 'helpers' are the most fully human persons. What I may call the bodhisattvic[26] path is an *integration* of self-improvement and social zeal, i.e., the best way to become a better 'helper' is to become a better person. But one necessary aspect of becoming a better person is *via* helping other people. So one must and can do both simultaneously. (The question 'Which comes first?' is an atomistic question.)

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[24] See for e.g. http://www.joannamacy.net/html/books.html
[25] See for e.g. http://www.rainforestinfo.org.au/wrr2000/WRR_Oct/seedintro.htm
[26] 'Bodhisattva' is a Sanskrit term from Buddhism and can be roughly translated as someone who is 'enlightened' (at least to some extent) but remained embodied or chosen to be reincarnated in order to aid fellow beings on 'the path'. Buddhism nominally holds that Jesus was a bodhisattva (see for e.g. Falvey, 2002).

> In this context, I would like to refer to my demonstration in the Preface to the revised edition (1970) of my *Motivation and Personality* (59) that normative zeal is *not* incompatible with scientific objectivity, but can be integrated with it, eventuating in a higher form of objectivity, i.e., the Taoistic[27].
>
> What this all adds up to is this: small 'r' religion is quite compatible, at the higher levels of personal development, with rationality, with science, with social passion. Not only this, but it can, in principle, quite easily integrate the healthily animal, material, and selfish with the naturalistically transcendent, spiritual, and axiological. (See my 'A Theory of Metamotivation: The Biological Rooting of the Value-Life,' *Journal of Humanistic Psychology,* 1967, VII, 93-127)."

3.2 Extended transdisciplinarity

The research encompassed by this thesis touches on matters that may be treated in depth in a number of academic disciplines. The thesis is eclectic in that I draw on work from any discipline that throws light on my subject. There are at least several recognisable fields of study relevant to this research, and there would be considerable overlap between them. This situation suggests the need for a transdisciplinary, multidisciplinary or metadisciplinary approach. However, consistent with the position of Midgley, 2000, I do not pretend to use a metadisciplinary or metaparadigmatic approach, which purport to be 'beyond' disciplines or their associated paradigms. Instead, I see the project as eclectic – traversing the disciplines, taking whatever is of value to my research from any relevant discipline.

My understanding of transdisciplinarity is, to paraphrase Berghofer, 2004 p.5, that it involves using multiple disciplines to integrate their knowledge in addressing a complex issue such that some new intellectual space is created and some emergent knowledge is generated, which could not possibly have come from single disciplines working alone. In adopting a transdisciplinary approach, I acknowledge that it needs to have regard to the partiality, frameworks and assumptions of each of the included disciplines and that a translation mechanism is required to bridge disciplinary divisions. This is a position adopted by Yorque *et al.*, 2002 p419-21 and Holling *et al.*, 2002 p8, 18-20 in their discussions of the need for disciplinary integration and the development of an 'integrated theory' to assist with the movement towards 'sustainable futures'.

When working with concepts and data derived from a range of sometimes-disparate disciplines, I assess this material critically. For example, I consider the context of the

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[27] I interpret Maslow's use of 'Taoistic' to mean 'enlightened' or 'critically enlightened' objectivity, i.e. that which recognises the very limit of objectivity as a concept and which situates it in an inherently inspirited and non-dualistic reality.

discipline's paradigm; I consider how I interpret it, and how my orientation might 'colour' that interpretation (reflexivity); and I consider it in the context of the framework of Human Ecology inclusive of what Boyden, 2004 terms 'biounderstanding'. I explain this approach in subsequent sections.

By adopting what I term an 'extended transdisciplinary', I acknowledge that academic disciplines and fields are not the only valid forms of knowledge. This perspective could be challenged as semantic based on how broadly one defines the concepts of academic disciplines and fields. Some would argue that all knowledge could be placed within an academic discipline (relatively formal domain) or a field (less formal and arguably broader domain). Others might argue that even the most inclusive of academic fields is still academic and therefore excludes non-academic knowledge cultures.

Not wanting to get mired in such theoretical discussions, I have chosen to adapt or at least clarify the transdisciplinarity of Midgley, 2000, by overtly extending it to encompass knowledge cultures that are not necessarily within academic domains or fields. Such knowledge cultures can include the personal, local community, organisational and holistic. This is consistent with the approach of Brown *et al.*, 2005, who describe working with all the knowledge cultures as synergistic. This is also consistent with the transpersonal /transformative/transcendental perspective advocated by Braud & Anderson, 1998, and Fox, 1990, and has been employed successfully by Malone, 1996, and Milton, 2002. In engaging in this approach, I am still making choices that inherently ally me with some disciplines and paradigms over others. This position reflects an acceptance of the apparent paradox that all research sits within a paradigm, even if it is one that adopts a transparadigmatic view.

3.3 Human Ecology

> "What people do about their ecology depends on what they think about themselves in relation to things around them. Human ecology is deeply conditioned by beliefs about our nature and destiny – that is, by religion" (White Jr., 1967 cited in Tucker & Grim, 2000 p.xvi).

In accordance with critical theory, I need to situate myself in a mode of thought for selecting this research topic, formulating my methodology and applying the selected methods. I have chosen to position my approach within the discipline of Human Ecology because it appears able to span the range of material addressed in this research and because it includes overt values of improvement, intervention, advocacy, and the promotion of ecological sustainability and social justice. It does not pretend to be value-free or value-neutral.

A very broad interpretation of the discipline of environmental sociology would come close to achieving this, but in my view, it is limited by some significant constraints of the sociological

paradigm. Environmental sociology struggles with attempting to legitimise itself in the scientific paradigm and in doing so, is at best inconsistent in terms of its position on issues such as ecological sustainability. This was evident in my investigation of environmental sociology literature relating to this thesis. I noticed that the orientation of research ranged from being concerned with ecological and social justice issues in the context of wanting to see positive change, through to an attempted distant observation of ecological attitudes and behaviours with no evidence of concern as to the results or their meaning beyond an abstracted academic context. The latter orientation was usually associated with more quantitative methodologies and methods.

Human Ecology encompasses the nominally social and physical sciences, and in this sense is transdisciplinary and transparadigmatic. It is also comfortable with an overtly environmentalist and pro-social justice teleology. The combination of the notional domains of ecological and social justice is recognised by the term 'ecojustice', also spelt 'eco-justice'. 'Ecojustice' is used by some Christian ecotheologians, for example Gibson, 1985; Ruether, 1993; Boff, 1997; McFague, 2001; Preston, 2002; Leal, 2004a, and is increasingly apparent in the wider Christian 'justice' literature.

There are significantly different interpretations of what the academic discipline of Human Ecology represents historically and at present, see for example Hawley, 1986. One could also argue whether it is an academic discipline or is better described as a 'field' of study. The view of Human Ecology given by Dunlap & Michelson, 2002, fails to explore the discipline in sufficient depth and does not address substantial developments in Human Ecology since ~1970. Instead, it places at least some of those advances within the authors' clearly preferred realm of environmental sociology (which is not surprising given their backgrounds in that field and the title and nature of their book – A Handbook of Environmental Sociology). Russell, 2007, provides a more up-to-date and detailed account of what Human Ecology represents, and how it came to be that way. The history of Human Ecology is a research topic in itself and I do not address it in this thesis.

In placing this research in the field of Human Ecology, I am less concerned about academic interpretations of the term and happily apply the term literally, i.e. the ecology of humans. In doing so, I note concerns raised by Deane-Drummond, 2004 p.ix, relating to the disciplinary separation of human ecology from what some now refer to as 'bioecology' – being the ecology of plants and non-human animals. Clearly the term 'bioecology' is problematic in that it suggests humans are somehow not of the biological realm. I acknowledge this separation and the problems it can cause as a result of it potentially maintaining the false dichotomy of 'Man and Nature', itself underpinned by the ontological separation of God and Nature and of science and religion, which I reject as flawed, (see for example Birch, 1965; Hitchcock, 1999;

McGrath, 2003). However, I believe that one can adopt an ecological focus on humanity without necessarily maintaining these dichotomies as is explained below. The founder of the Human Ecology (originally Human Sciences) Program at the Australian National University, Stephen Boyden (1987; 2004), has for some time used his term 'biohistory' in place of 'Human Ecology'. His methodology of biohistory is in part an attempt to address the problematic distinction between 'bioecology' and the social sciences.

My application of the term 'ecology' is not confined by the conventional scientistic paradigm from which the 'science' of ecology arose. This situation reflects an ontological position in which as a panentheist, I see Nature/the Universe/Creation/Divinity as an interwoven whole. From this perspective, one can legitimately focus on a particular aspect such as humans, mindful of the interconnected nature of reality, and the need for reflexivity. This is a view held by key philosophers of religion c. mid 19th century, for example Hartshorne, 1948; Birch, 1965 and is a strong theme in some of the more recent and progressive 'web of life' ecotheology discussed by John, 2005.

My definition of panentheism is as per McFague, 1993: "Pantheism says that God is embodied, necessarily and totally; traditional theism claims that God is disembodied, necessarily and totally; panentheism suggests that God is embodied but not necessarily or totally". This is an example of the application of 'both/and' rather than 'either/or' and contrasts the dichotomous view of Thomas, 1995 p105: "Pantheism is the belief that God and the universe are identical… Panentheism does not deify Nature. God is not identical with the universe, for the universe is dependent on God in a way that God is not dependent upon the Universe". Birch, 1965 credits Hartshorne, 1948 as the originator of the term 'panentheism'.

Panentheism is the antithesis of the conventional scientific view that has been influenced by Plato, Descartes and the dominant interpretation of Judaeo-Christian theology. In that view, there is a hierarchical ontology of God and Man (sometimes with Woman recognised only as an inferior form of Man), with the Universe/Creation/Nature acting as the background, stage or mechanism in which Man[28] lives out his life (see for example Merchant, 1980; Callicott & Ames, 1989 p3-4; Nasr, 1996).

As a trained ecologist with the above-described view, it seems entirely reasonable to me to place this research under the domain of Human Ecology. As per Merchant, 1992 p8, and Marten, 2001, Human Ecology relates to the interaction of or interrelationships between humans (in this case particular groups and individuals within Australia) with their environment[29]

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[28] I use the patriarchal terms here in accordance with that particular view.
[29] I note the human/environment dichotomy is a convenient but potentially problematic construct.

(encompassing sociological, political, physical/biological and transcendent aspects). There is also support for my perspective of Human Ecology as 'the ecology of humans' in the inaugural issue of the journal *Ecology*, which had this to say about the term 'ecology':

> "…ecology…covers practically the whole field of biology, and is related in one way or another to every science which touches life… Ecology is new in name but not in fact; it is superposed on the other sciences, not an offshoot… Geography, in so far as it is the study of man in relation to his environment, is human ecology" (Moore, 1920)[30].

Metzner, 1993 p163 says that, "Ecology, because of its concern with the complex web of interdependent relationships in ecosystems, including the pervasive role and impact of the human, is the interdisciplinary 'subversive science' par excellence." Such a view is consistent with my use of the term 'human ecology' on the proviso that reflexivity is employed.

The ecotheologian Ken Gnanakan recognises the use of 'ecology' in this way in his discussion about the terms, 'environment' and 'ecology'. He states that 'ecology' "came to be applied to the complete study of human beings within their different environments…" (Gnanakan, 1999)[31]. However, he also distinguishes between the 'ecological' issues that may be relevant to a particular 'environment'. I apply the term, 'ecology' more broadly to encompass any interaction between humans and the other aspects of Nature (inclusive of the Divine). This means, for example, that I see anthropology as a form of ecology.

As in all disciplines and philosophies, there is variation within Human Ecology. Some forms have a staunchly secular humanist orientation that retains aspects of post-Enlightenment science's antithetical relationship with matters religious or spiritual (for example the work of Boyden, 1987, 2004 as discussed in Chapter 2). This is in contrast with other forms of Human Ecology, such as that taught at the Centre for Human Ecology[32] at the University of Strathclyde,

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[30] Berry, 1993 p234 also notes that "ecology and geography were brought together" in the 1923 presidential address of H.H. Burrows to the Association of American Geographers entitled 'Geography as Human Ecology'.

[31] Gnanakan, 1999 also distinguishes between 'environmentalist' and 'ecologist'. He argues that the environmentalist is confined to advocating relatively superficial changes to the societal status quo, and on page 32, he claims that environmentalists also advocate pantheism. He argues that in contrast, the ecologist is "looking for fundamental solutions that take us deeper than mere survival." His argument has some merit but has been lost in semantics. Rather than splitting the definition of these terms as he does, he could have simply advocated the literature that recognises there are various forms and degrees of environmentalism ranging from very shallow approaches often based on a technocentric approach ('shifting deckchairs' / 'tweaking the cogs'), to the very deep and radical, e.g. forms of Deep Ecology, some of which are decidedly misanthropic and deeply unpalatable to most Christians because of this, see for e.g. Dryzek, 1997. I simply use 'ecologist' as a specialist term e.g. one who studies ecology *sens. lat.*, and 'environmentalist' as the term for one who advocates and practices environmentalism. Note that Gnanakan's perspective is arguably not typical of Western Christianity as he is an Evangelical theologian, apparently of Indian extraction, and working in a Christian training school in Bangalore.

[32] http://www.che.ac.uk/mambo/index.php

Scotland; with some forms of Social Ecology, which tends to be more open to religio-spirituality and transpersonal processes, see for example Hill, 1999; and with what Merchant, 1992, terms "Spiritual Ecology". I have chosen to situate the research within a version of Human Ecology that is consistent with an ecojustice agenda – one that recognises that the ecological crisis is at base a moral[33] and/or spiritual crisis. There is thus a logical connection with the role of religion and spirituality – more specifically, the role that these may play in addressing the ecosocial crisis, (see for example Finlay & Palmer, 2003; Gardner, 2002, 2003, 2006). This combination of religio-spirituality with ecology means that the version of Human Ecology that I adopt can include the Transpersonal Ecology described by Fox, 1990. His reworking of the philosophy of 'deep ecology' removes what some argue to be its misanthropic aspects, and is in accord with the transpersonal research methods of Braud & Anderson, 1998.

3.3.1 Critical Human Ecology

> "In the newly emerging worldview, with ecology as the model discipline, education and the pursuit of knowledge will of necessity be multi-disciplinary and integrative. Unconscious values and hidden agendas will need to be brought into the light of critical review" (Metzner, 1993 p168).

In addition to situating the research in the discipline of Human Ecology, I have chosen to include the practice of critical thinking. This addition, I argue, is essential for the full development of Human Ecology and in particular, for it moving beyond the limitations imposed by the normative paradigms of the physical and social sciences. I see criticality and related systems thinking as the evolutionary progression needed for Human Ecology to maximise its contribution to knowledge, and to maximise its effectiveness in achieving personal and societal 'improvement'.

The concept of criticality (inclusive of reflexivity), can be regarded as a step towards Western (re)discovery of what Buddhism calls (in English) 'mindfulness' (a concept used and advocated by Braud & Anderson, 1998 p242); what other Vedic belief systems call (in Sanskrit) '*svadhyaya*' (or self-study); what transpersonal psychology calls 'self-awareness'; what Naess, 1988, terms 'Self-Realisation!'[34]; and what Maslow, 1943, calls 'self-actualisation'. The concept has even been brought into current popular culture through a Latin phrase meaning 'know thyself'[35] (*Et Nosce*), which is used as a central tenet of the film trilogy, The Matrix, and

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[33] In his World Day of Peace Message in 1990, Pope John Paul II said that "The ecological crisis is a moral issue…". This was reiterated by Gore Jr., 1992.
[34] Sessions, 1993 notes that Naess' "ultimate norm" of "Self-Realization!" is "a blending of the systems of Spinoza [17thC Spanish philosopher] and [Mohandas K. 'Mahatma'] Gandhi."
[35] 'Know thyself' (*gnothi seauton* Gk.) is attributed to ancient Greece, where the phrase was said to be inscribed at the entrance to the temple of Apollo in Delphi. There are numerous views as to the origins of the phrase - see for e.g. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Know_thyself

in related philosophical works[36]. However, after Macdonald, 1997 p68, reflexive criticality (phenomenological understanding) is not the same as self-realisation (metaphysical understanding). To equate these terms would be a "category error" as per Wilber, 1990 p7.

A notable aspect of my interpretation of critical and systems thinking is that I view reflexivity as a prerequisite for their effective implementation. This is consistent with the views of Braud & Anderson, 1998; Fox, 1990; Macdonald, 1997; Midgley, 2000; Wilber, 2000a, 2001. The application of reflexivity/reflectivity in research is discussed by Brown *et al*., 2005:

> "In *The reflective practitioner* Schön, 1983 argues that it is necessary for all practitioners to reflect on their work, for both ethical and practical reasons, that is, from professional responsibility for their actions, and the desire to improve their performance. More recently, other scholars have also made a plea for more critical and subjective reflection on our professional practices, and on the contexts affecting these practices e.g. Flyvbjerg, 2001 & Wenger, 1998. Inheriting the scientific model of objectivity can make this particularly difficult for academically trained theorists and researchers in general."

Criticality and reflexivity are, in effect, the means by which Human Ecology seeks to improve itself and (in its more enlightened forms) its practitioners. This is a view consistent with a growing body of literature that can be loosely described as advocating the evolution of consciousness. It includes work by Carl Gustav Jung and is relatively succinctly captured by Berghofer, 2004 p10 who cites a pivotal explanatory statement by Wojceichowski, 2001. He writes in the light of the ecological crisis and the general failure of the scientific and materialist paradigm to resolve this: "It now becomes evident that, in order to survive, humans have to know and understand themselves more and more and much better than ever before." The sentiment is also captured by Wilber, 2001: "Simply trying to put a new form of governance, political system, (techno-economic system) or social distribution network in place without a corresponding development in the levels of the interior dimensions of consciousness has historically guaranteed failure in societal transformation." Again, this view is consistent with the work of Maslow 1964, and that of Skolimowski, 1994, and Naess, 1988. It is also within the scope of what Berry, 1988, means by his reference to inappropriately and ineffectively propounding microphase solutions to macrophase problems in the context of the ecological crisis.

Russell, 2007, also combines Human Ecology with critical theory and critical systems/intervention (after Midgley, 2000), in what she and others (for example, Bapat, 1988; and Wilson, 1996) have termed 'Critical Human Ecology'. Bapat and Wilson provide

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[36] Aiello, 2001; Irwin, 2002; Yeffeth, 2003; Grau, 2005

foundational works for the development of Critical Human Ecology as does the work of J. Habermas, W. Ulrich, A. Naess and G. Midgley (Russell, 2007).

If Human Ecology were not critical and therefore in my terms, reflexive, it would risk being simply 'the ecology of humans', with all the limitations that any form of non-reflexive practice of ecology has as just another branch of 'objective' science (see for example, Macdonald, 1997 p26-9).

The interventionist nature of this research is overtly intended to facilitate systemic improvement as per the work of Malone, 1996; Milton, 2002 & Midgley, 2000 p128-133. This is consistent with the Aristotelian idea of phronesis and the concept of phronetic research underpinned by values rationality which asks, after Flyvbjerg, 2001 p60: "Where are we going?", "Is this desirable?", "What should be done?", and which takes priority over instrumental rationality. In accordance with the methodology of Critical Human Ecology, I have to identify, as much as possible, my values and what I bring to the research. In doing so, I am also attempting to answer the above three pivotal questions asked by Flyvbjerg, 2001 p60.

3.4 Boundary judgements

A related aspect of Critical Human Ecology is the use of boundary judgements or boundary critique, after Midgley, 2000. This involves clearly defining the scope of the research in terms of what is in, what is out, and why. Some definitional and scope issues have already been addressed in the Chapters 1 and 2. I discuss others below.

3.4.1 Forum on Religion and Ecology

A substantial aspect of the methodology, particularly in relation to boundary judgements and orienting principles is consistent with that used by the Forum on Religion and Ecology (FORE). FORE is a venture of The Harvard University Centre for the Environment, the Harvard-Yenching Institute, Bucknell University, and the Centre for Respect of Life and Environment of the Humane Society of the United States. The FORE website describes the project as "the largest international multireligious project of its kind. With its conferences, publications, and website it is engaged in exploring religious worldviews, texts, and ethics in order to broaden understanding of the complex nature of current environmental concerns." It states that "The Forum recognizes that religions need to be in dialogue with other disciplines (e.g., science, ethics, economics, education, public policy, gender) in seeking comprehensive solutions to both global and local environmental problems."

FORE's work is broadly within the scope of what Taylor, 2004 p992, terms the field of "religion and ecology". He describes this field as:

> "…focusing first on identifying the obstacles that the world's mainstream religions may pose to environmental sustainability, and secondly the resources such religions may have available for promoting environmentally beneficent behaviours. A third, normative agenda often accompanied these two more descriptive ones, to promulgate the religious beliefs and practices that produce environmentally responsible behaviours, reappraising and reconfiguring the traditions as needed so they can provide the needed conceptual, spiritual, and practical resources for environmentally beneficent behaviour" Taylor, 2004 p992.

FORE has published numerous texts in its series, Religions of the World and Ecology. Of these, the key text used in this thesis is 'Christianity and Ecology: seeking the well-being of Earth and humans' (Hessel & Ruether, 2000b). That publication includes a section on the methodology of the project (Tucker & Grim, 2000) in which some orienting principles and boundary judgements are raised.

These include:

- accepting the existence of "the environmental crisis" and that it is a real and imminent threat to ecological integrity in which rapid growth in the human population, levels and inequities of consumption, and use of technology are contributing factors;
- accepting the need to "rethink worldviews and ethics" in light of the crisis and its nature – that scientific and political solutions to the crisis have proven inadequate to address the underlying causes of the problem;
- agreeing that in this context, religion offers both "problems and promise" in addressing the crisis. Religion has both progressive / prophetic and conservative / constraining aspects to it and there are diverse views within religion;
- accepting that religion has been late to address the ecological crisis (and so by inference may be behind other aspects of society in this regard);
- agreeing that the transformative and transpersonal aspects of religion can provide powerful motivation for personal and societal change in a way that is beyond or at least different to that of science and secular politics - in particular, in moving "from rhetoric in print to realism in action". This potential is beginning to be realised now that most religions have adopted environmentalism to varying extents; and
- supporting the statement that religions are not unique in having a policy/praxis disjuncture. This disjuncture "should not automatically invalidate the(ir) complex worldviews and rich cosmologies".

I have adopted the methodology of FORE but situate it within the broader context of Critical Human Ecology as discussed above. I draw on some of FORE's methodological boundaries that help to circumscribe their efforts with "healthy scepticism, cautious optimism, and modest ambitions", (Tucker & Grim, 2000 p.xxi). In discussing methodological concerns, Tucker & Grim, 2000 p.xxi-xxii, note that the field of research into religion and ecology is an emerging one in which "there are, inevitably, challenging methodological issues", in particular, "time, place, space and positionality".

"With regard to time, it is necessary to recognise the vast historical complexity of each religious tradition" (in this case Western Christianity as it manifests in Australia), which cannot be easily condensed…", (Tucker & Grim, 2000 p.xxi-xxii).

Place is an issue in this thesis as I am dealing with modern Western Christianity in Australia, which the literature suggests is distinct from its manifestations in, for example, the United States.

"With regard to space, we recognise the varied frameworks of institutions and traditions in which these religions unfold", (Tucker & Grim, 2000 p.xxi-xxii). Whilst I am dealing with mainstream Christianity in Australia, there are significant variations between the traditions and institutions of the Catholic, Anglican and Uniting Churches. In theological terms, there are significant differences between the Catholic faith and that of the Protestant tradition that includes the Anglican and Uniting Churches. There is also considerable institutional and traditional variation between the Protestant churches. For example, the Uniting Church of Australia is a relatively recent merger of three older denominations but operates with some arguably modern notions such as consensus decision-making and State-based management. In contrast, the Anglican Church of Australia has an organisational structure little different from that of the Catholic Church. Of additional and arguably greater significance in the context of ecotheology and related policies and praxis, is the extent of variation within each of the subject denominations.

"Finally, with respect to positionality, we acknowledge our (my) own historical situatedness… with distinctive contemporary concerns", (Tucker & Grim, 2000 p.xxi-xxii). This is particularly relevant in that way that FORE approaches ecological thought and action within religion. The central issue is that all major religious traditions pre-date modern ecological knowledge, though not necessarily ecological or related forms of knowledge in general. At the time when most of these traditions arose, there was no global ecological crisis, there were no weapons of mass destruction, no artificial fertilisers or biocides, no transgenic species, no ozone depletion or anthropogenic greenhouse effect. Thus, when researching any major religion and its relationship with ecology, we have to acknowledge that it originated, and

for most of its history has been interpreted in a world very different from the one we inhabit and claim to understand today.

Tucker & Grim, 2000 p.xxi, note that their approach could be criticised, as has mine, for being an instrumentalist and potentially exploitative use of religion to address ecological concerns. This is expressed in the context of a call by environmental ethics philosopher J. Baird Callicott, 1994, for scholars and others to “mine the conceptual resources” of religious traditions to create a more inclusive global ecological ethic (for further commentary on this issue see Taylor, 2004 p992). In essence, Tucker & Grim, 2000 p.xxii, argue that FORE does not seek to draw on such resources with a one-directional notion of taking and using. Instead, they see the process of investigating religions’ relationship with ecology as being at least a two-way exchange in which the knowledge systems of religion and ecology interact, as do the researchers and the religions they study.

Similar to the approach of Tucker & Grim, 2000 p.xxii, I do not simply “mine” information from the subject denominations for the purposes of my research. I also provide information to the Churches and my research participants as to the outcomes of my research, and this extends to improving dialogue between and within the denominations. One manifestation of this is my establishment of an Internet forum to which I invite participants in my research, and others, for the purposes of their sharing information that is intended to aid the ‘greening’ of the Churches, particularly in relation to achieving practical outcomes. This was in part motivated by several research participants asking to be kept informed of my findings and being very pleased when I forwarded information about what their peers were achieving in other areas and denominations. This extended to include information about what their peers were and were not achieving and my analysis of the reasons for this.

I also reject the instrumentalist claim because it presumes that my attempts to address the global ecological crisis through my research into the ‘greening’ of religion are based on a purely self-serving agenda. Such a stance would also have us believe that environmentalism is inherently instrumentalist because proponents of it are only trying to look after their own personal, familial, communal, corporate, or national interests. I reject that view because it is not based on critical thinking. It is a self-serving ruse and is generally proffered by those who have a vested interest in opposing environmentalism and/or who are fundamentally cornucopian in perspective (religious or otherwise). My research is based on a justice-oriented agenda in which my own interests in combating the ecological crisis are concomitant with what I believe to be in the global interest.

In adopting FORE’s methodology, there are some key elements that I develop further as explained in the following section and in the following two chapters.

3.4.2 Australia and mainstream Christianity

I have also made several boundary judgements that confine the scope of this thesis in relation to its focus on Australia, on mainstream religion, and therefore on the three largest Christian denominations. I discuss the boundary judgements associated with those choices in Chapters 4 and 5 due to the volume of associated text.

To summarise the associated boundary judgements, I chose to focus on Australia because as a long-term resident, I have an interest in its human ecology, including the religio-spiritual dimensions. Australia is also largely absent from the literature dealing with the 'greening' of religion, so I perceived a need to fill some of that gap. Linked to this is widespread confusion in academic and popular domains as to whether Australia has enough of a religious life to warrant any scholarly attention, especially within the field of the 'greening' of the Church.

Recent research by Bouma, 2006, has helped to clarify this issue, confirming that Christianity remains the dominant religion by affiliation, by membership and attendance. However, whilst conventional expressions of Christianity, such as weekly church attendance at one of several of the older denominations, have declined and continue to do so, religion in Australia is by no means dead or even dying. Bouma, 2006, and others such as Tacey, 2000, 2003, make the case that Australia is witnessing a spiritual and to some extent a religious renewal, which manifests almost entirely outside the mainstream Churches. This phenomenon was evident at least as far back as the early 1980s (see for example Millikan, 1981). Despite the predicted demise of most suburban churches within twenty years, particularly of the 'rationalist' Protestant traditions, Catholicism remains a very large and relatively strong denomination, though it too faces generational demographic challenges (Bouma, 2006).

Thus having chosen to focus on Australia and on the 'greening' of its mainstream religion, the thesis focuses on Christianity in the form of the three largest denominations as of the 2006 national census (ABS, 2007): the Catholic, Anglican and Uniting Churches[37]. Whilst the fortunes of the conventional mainstream Churches look relatively dim in the medium-term, they remain large organisations with considerable ecological and cultural influences. Even as the mainstream Churches decline, they remain a valuable case study into the nature of the 'greening' of religion in Australia. They provide a meaningful lens through which to explore the increasingly promoted view that religion is or could be an important or indeed vital vehicle via which the necessarily radical personal and societal changes can be made and sustained in order to address the ecological crisis.

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[37] Research for this thesis commenced in 2004 when the latest national census data was from 2001. The release of the 2006 census data in mid-2007 did not change the relative ranking of the three largest denominations.

3.5 Methodology as research-in-action

‘Methodology as research-in-action’ is a term derived from Malone, 1996 p113, which she explains as supporting “the view that a critical research design is emergent, active and responsive to the substantive issues of the study and evolves from the researcher reflecting on the research action and is consequently praxis-oriented”. It could also be termed an iterative approach, and is within the scope of the ‘grounded theory’ of Glaser & Strauss, 1967. It is the natural extension of the adoption of criticality and reflexivity. As Malone, 1996 p113-4 (citing Fien, 1992; Robottom & Hart, 1993; Wals, 1993) points out, “an applied science research methodology emerging from a positivist epistemology and an objectivist ontology does not value or support critical consciousness and is unable to respond to the critical and socially transformative orientation of environmental education”. Midgley, 2000 and Harris & Robottom, 1997 p51, also advocate such an approach and contrast it with a fixed and inflexible methodology and methods.

Whilst this thesis is not about ‘environmental education’ in the sense that Malone’s work is, it is similar in that it addresses in part, a process of environmental education (in a broad sense) within the mainstream Christian denominations of Australia. The Churches have adopted internal education agendas as part of their becoming ecologically informed and active. Furthermore, an important aspect of their conversion of policy to praxis is the effectiveness of their educative processes within and between Church organisations, and between them and the broader community. Equally, the research entails my becoming educated in matters related to the ecological policies and practices of the subject denominations.

Malone, 1996 p115-6, discusses the ‘empowerment potentials’ of critical research methodologies and divides them into ‘Empowerment as political consciousness-raising’ (critical ethnography; critical policy and text analysis; critical phenomenology) and ‘Empowerment as collective action/struggle’ (participatory research; action research; research as praxis). My methodology and methods encompass aspects from both of these groups: critical policy and text analysis; participatory/action research; and research as praxis. I discuss these further in Chapter 6.

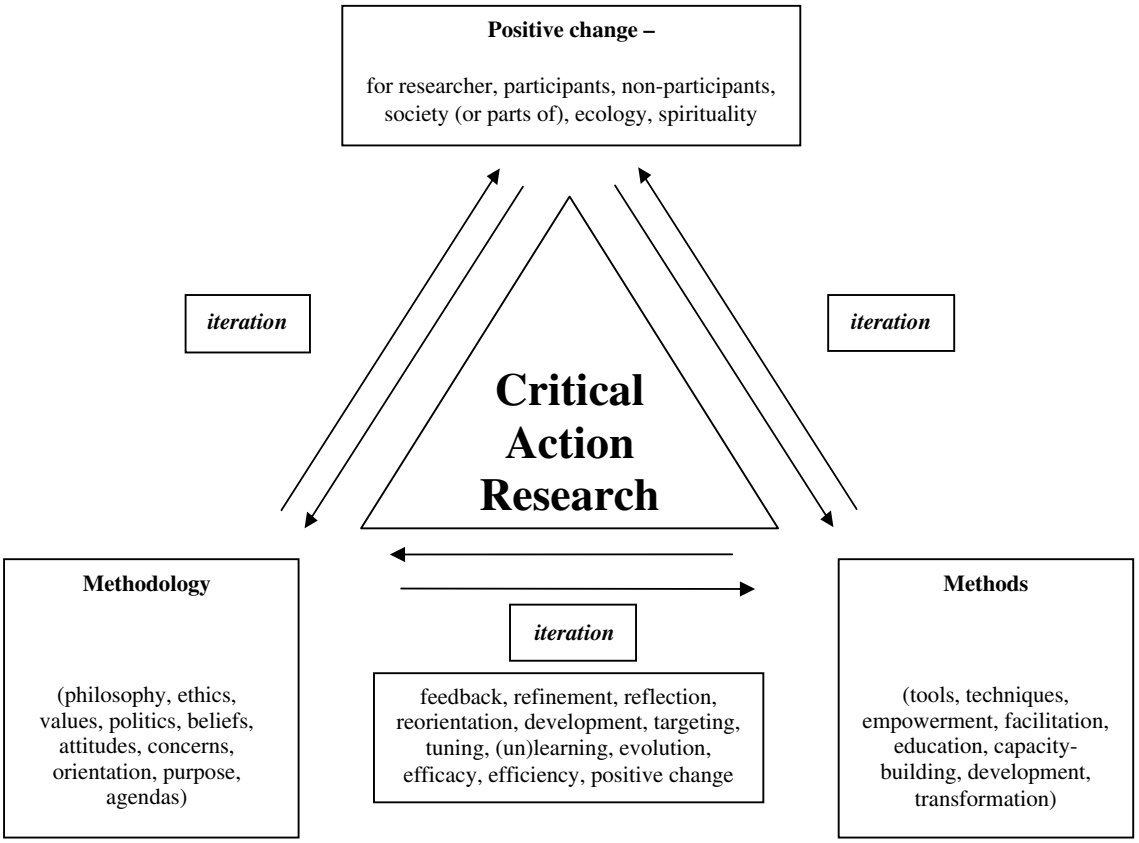
Figure 3.1 at the end of this chapter is a schematic representation of my methodology. The triangle, whilst it represents the triptych of interactions between the primary components of the methodology, is also a scientific symbol for change, and is widely used in Green politics. Change is placed at the top of the diagram to indicate that it is the primary driver of my research methodology.

In discussions and in several interuniversity workshops involving fellow research students, I found that the majority could not answer 'deep' questions about why they were undertaking their research project. They could provide 'shallow' answers in terms of simple instrumental values or general interests, but very few could identify what it was that really drove them in their research – a passion, a purpose, or what Catholics in particular term a 'vocation'. I note that in perhaps an increasing number of cases, students are constrained by the agenda of their supervisor and/or corporate or government funding conditions. Some are not permitted to ask deep questions about the work, and simply treat it like any other job.

When the student simply indicated that career advancement was the basis of their motivation, I would ask why that was important; if financial gain and security were the answer, I would ask why they were important. I would continue to probe to try to discover what the student's ultimate motivation was in order to illuminate something of their worldview, their philosophy, perhaps even their religion or spirituality. I was largely doing this because I had earlier found the process useful for clarifying my own motivations. Not surprisingly, few of the students were comfortable with this approach, though others welcomed it. In the latter case I helped them to uncover something of their deep intention – what they were trying to achieve and why, which in turn helped them with their methodological deliberations and their motivation. The very small number of students who stayed with me in this exploratory process emerged the better for it, in my view, and some thanked me for perhaps helping them to uncover what it was that brought them to their research project and what it was that would sustain them throughout it. I found my journey through this process to be very revealing. Some of the discoveries assisted in crystallising my methodological framework as well as the methods that I chose and how these interacted with my internal and external change/growth/development/ improvement orientation.

Admittedly, many research students from the physical sciences and from some of the more traditional and conservative humanities had never been asked such probing questions, and it seemed that some disciplines discouraged such levels of reflection. However, for those of us who view our research as more of a journey, perhaps even as therapy, and with more of a transformative orientation, the central question of 'why' is pivotal. In my case, I see the research project as a vehicle of and for change. Initially I saw it as changing the attitudes, knowledge and behaviour of others, primarily research participants or related groups. I came to see that the research was at least as much about changing me, perhaps in part so that I may be better equipped to promote the broader societal changes that I seek.

Figure 3.1 Schematic representation of the research methodology



Chapter 4: The Australian focus

This research focuses on the Australian context for several reasons. I live in Australia and have always done so, which is connected to my knowledge of, and interest in Australia's natural and cultural environment (including religio-spirituality and politics).

4.1 A gap in the literature

Another key reason for the Australian focus is that the 'greening' of Western religio-spirituality has been described internationally, but has received relatively little scholarly or popular attention in Australia. When I began this thesis in 2004 there were apparently no publications dealing specifically with the 'greening' of religion in Australia. The closest to this was a 30 minute television program entitled 'The Greening of God', produced by the Australian Broadcasting Commission (ABC Religion and Ethics Unit, 2000). That program did not address the ecological policies and praxis of the Churches in Australia, and instead focused on individual views and actions. There were other relevant works that predate 2004, such as Australian Theologies (Goosen, 2000), Chapter 6 of which included some specific information about the 'greening' of religion, including, to some extent, the Churches.

Earlier Australian works such as Birch, 1965; Passmore, 1974, 1975; Birch, 1976; Birch & Cobb Jr, 1981; Birch, 1984; Edwards, 1992; Collins, 1995; Pearson, 1998; Chew, 1999; Habel, 2000, are philosophical and/or theological, rather than substantially addressing the response of the institutional Church to environmentalism. However, Passmore, 1974 p3-40, does mention that he sees little support for environmentalism coming from the Church because the Church has largely supported the Western economic growth model, and environmentalism opposes or at least threatens this.

A more recent publication by Collins, 2004, includes a chapter entitled Catholicism and Ecology. However, it not specific to Australia and provides just a couple of unsupported condemnatory sentences devoted to the response of the institutional Catholic Church to ecological concerns. What little comment he makes appears to draw largely or entirely on another author's non-specific view of such matters in 1991. He does not mention any developments since then, which include three official Catholic Church publications that address ecological issues directly or indirectly.

Other relevant material includes that which deals with the sociology and demographics of religion. In this context, environmentalism sometimes rates a brief mention, mainly in attempts to explain the decline of mainstream denominations which are widely agreed to have been late

to address ecological issues (see for example, Berry, 1992; McDonagh, 1990; Scharper, 1997 p27; Van Dyke *et al.*, 1996 p167).

There are also some primarily internal and often unpublished writings dealing with ecotheology and related policy matters, principally within the Uniting Church, and to a lesser extent from within Catholicism. For example, Harrison, 1986; Uniting Church of Australia, 1988; Budden, 1990; Dutney, 1991; Green, 1991; Wansbrough, 1994a, b; Gore & Garrett, 1995; Kelly, 1995; Rue, 1996; Smith, 1996; Wansbrough, 1996; John, 1997; Wansbrough, 1997; Gormly, 2000; Stringer, 2000; Uniting Church of Australia National Assembly, 2002; John, 2003; Leal, 2003; Menteith, 2003; Rue, 2003.

Even allowing for differences in population size, and official measures of religiosity, the volume of work addressing the 'greening' of religion in Australia is very small compared with works focussed on the USA, the UK and the West in general. The particularly low volume of scholarly works on this topic may stem from what Bouma, 2006 (p. xv, p 5) citing Beckford, 2003, describes as an ideology of secularism – an anti-religious rationalist orientation that is seen to be dominant in Australia's academia. Bouma, 2006, adds that "...to many educated in the 1960s and 1970s 'Australian religion' was a contradiction in terms or at best an embarrassing legacy of the forgettable past". Tacey, 2000, indirectly suggests that such subject matter would not be seen as respectable by the academic mainstream, and would likely be career limiting in Australia's predominantly secular university sector. My experience suggests that there is some truth to Tacey's view.

It is unsurprising then, that Australian scholars have shown relatively little interest in the more specific, at least multidisciplinary, and recent phenomenon of the 'greening' of religion in Australia. However, the same deficit is evident in terms of international scholarly interest in the 'greening' of Australian religion as well.

The situation appears consistent with the view taken by Palmer, 1993, that Christianity is seen by many as largely irrelevant and particularly so in relation to ecological concerns. The secular self-perception (Millikan, 1981 p7) and reputation of Australia further magnifies the tendency for Australian and international researchers and authors to avoid or simply fail to consider the 'greening' of Christianity in Australia to be worthy of study or commentary.

Having encountered the international literature dealing with the 'greening' of religion as both a global phenomenon, and within the context of various nations and religions, I explored why Australia had not rated a mention in the publications of an international leader and

substantive author in the field of religion and ecology, Martin Palmer[38]. I learnt that Palmer had visited Australia in recent years to assess the extent to which his work might extend there. He operates the UK-based International Consultancy on Religion, Education and Culture, which works with WWF International and The World Bank. Palmer is said to have left Australia having concluded that it was so secular (meaning non-religious) that it did not warrant his attention (Claire Morgan, consultant to Catholic Earthcare Australia, pers. comm. 03/05).

Palmer's view of Australia's religiosity (or apparent lack of it) is variously bemoaned or proclaimed by a range of sources. Some would claim that Australia is so secular as to make any exploration of its religion, let alone the 'greening' of its religion, variously trivial, unworthy of attention, or indeed, impossible. For example, Breward, 1988 p86, cites Colin Williams of the Aspen Institute of the USA as suggesting "that Australia is the most secular nation on earth". Writing on Australia's religiosity, Millikan, 1981, says that he is sure most people would say that Australians aren't a religious population. In addition, renowned Australian sociologist and social commentator, Hugh Mackay (2004b), a later-life convert to Anglicanism, claims that Australia is now a secular nation (noting that historically it wasn't). Much the same finding emerged from a major report into religion and culture in Australia by Cahill *et al.*, 2004.

More recently, Desmond O'Grady wrote an article in Melbourne's 'The Age' newspaper about "a dire warning" issued by Pope Benedict XVI in relation to the decline of Christianity in which the Pope "singles out 'faithless' Australia" (O'Grady, 2005 cited in Lohrey, 2006 p 40). O'Grady, 2005, cites the Pope as bemoaning "the state of religion in Australia, saying mainstream Christianity is dying more quickly here than in any other country." O'Grady writes that:

> "In remarks to priests in Italy, Pope Benedict spoke of a crisis for the main Christian churches as people in the Western world felt self-sufficient, with less need for Christ and Christianity. 'Certainly this is a suffering linked to the present historical moment in which generally one sees that the so-called mainstream churches appear moribund,' he (the Pope) said. 'This is so in Australia above all and also in Europe but not so much in the United States.' He said the Catholic Church was not as badly off as the mainstream Protestant churches, which were in a 'profound crisis' because of sects."

Yet there are others who argue that Australia is by no means secular, for example Breward, 1988 p86, and O'Farrell, 1982. In the middle are those who claim that when attempting to measure religiosity, we tend to think of this concept in a manner that is barely relevant today, for example, Bouma & Lennon, 2003; Bouma, 2006 (sociologists of religion); and Tacey, 2003 (a prominent author on Australian spirituality). A related factor is the cryptic nature of

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[38] For example, Breuilly & Palmer, 1992; Palmer, 1992, 1993; Palmer, 1998; Finlay & Palmer, 2003.

religiosity in Australia as indicated by Millikan, 1981, who notes that whilst Australians don't regard their society as religious, and religion "is rarely a topic for popular discussion" (p8), a large number of people still have religious affiliations and observances.

Some of those who argue that Australia is secular are not irreligious or anti-religious but are senior clergy who, like Pope Benedict, bemoan the related decline of the Church and 'Christian values', (Cahill *et al*., 2004). The converse applies, with some overtly antireligious writers, particularly in the commercial media, expressing alarm about how surprisingly religious Australians (still) are; the alleged rise of overtly religious influences in politics; or at least how much political influence religion still has, for example, Marr, 1999; O'Dwyer, 2000; Douez & Gray, 2002; Latham, 2002 cited in Jensen, 2005 p.27.

Despite concluding that Australia is largely secular, Cahill *et al*., 2004, describe the debate about the relevance of religion to Australian society as full of disagreements. There are various claims that Australia is a deeply Christian nation; that Australian culture has historically been strongly influenced by Christianity[39] (O'Farrell, 1982; Breward, 1988); that Australian culture remains predominantly Christian in nature (Costello, 2004); that Australia is "religiously pluriform" (Frame, 2005); that secularism has displaced or is displacing all religions in the dominant Australian culture (Mackay, 2004b); that Australia is a secular state[40] (Maddox, 2005b); and that whilst the trend towards secularism is very real, there is a perhaps concomitant increase in secular spirituality or spirituality outside the major religions (Tacey, 2000, 2003). The consultations conducted by Cahill *et al*., 2004 indicated that even Christian leaders view Australia as having a secular culture and see their faith as increasingly marginalised.

4.2 Is Australia secular?

So who are we to believe? Is Australia completely secular in the sense of there being no functional religion here? Clearly not, as even the lowest measures of conventionally perceived religiosity show ~8% of the nation attends church weekly and ~18% of Australians attend Church at least monthly. So how secular is Australia and what does 'secular' really mean? What is the secularisation argument about? I address these issues below in the context of the relevance

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[39] Australia used to be more overtly religious and it also experienced considerable religious sectarianism, particularly between Catholics and Protestants. Australia's alleged secularity or cryptic religiosity may in part be attributable to a pragmatic decision by many Australians to avoid discussing religion to avoid the sort of bitter sectarianism that previously divided society (Schooneveldt, pers. comm. 08/07).

[40] In purely legal terms, Australia is a secular state, as is the USA, because the Constitutions of both nations clearly separate the roles of the Church from those of the State. This contrasts with the UK, where the monarch is also the head of the Church of England, which is effectively, at least 'on paper', the religion of the State. However, even in the UK, the State has been increasingly separated from the Church. Some who claim that Australia is a secular nation or state confound, deliberately or otherwise, constitutional secularity with the notion of a population being anti-religious or having no religion.

of this debate in determining the validity and viability of my exploring the ‘greening’ of mainstream religion in Australia.

4.2.1 What does ‘secular’ mean?

Breward, 1988 p86, notes that in relation to the “imprecise” term, ‘secular’, “there are a cluster of meanings around the word...”. It is commonly used to mean non-religious but can be used to mean antireligious. Australia’s Macquarie Dictionary offers several meanings, the most relevant of which is “not pertaining to or connected with religion”. Given the on-going debate about the meaning of ‘religion’ and ‘spirituality’, it is unsurprising that a term broadly understood to mean ‘not religious’ and sometimes ‘not spiritual’ is also subject to different understanding and usage.

Writing in the Australian context, Gary Bouma, citing Fenn, 2001, adopts a meaning for ‘secular’, in which it is explained that “The secularity of the twenty first century is not anti-religious or irreligious, as it was in the twentieth century. Rather, according to Fenn, contemporary secularity is best seen as a social condition in which the religious and spiritual have moved out from the control of both the state and such formal organisations as the church” (Bouma, 2006 p xiv). Using this definition, a strong case can be made that Australia is indeed a relatively secular nation and that the process of secularisation is continuing. However, this does not mean that Australia is irreligious, as many appear to claim.

Fellow Australian, David Tacey argues that ‘secular’ does not mean ‘a-spiritual’, but rather, not religious (Tacey, 2000). He argues that the claim that Australia is secular does not mean that it lacks spirituality or that religion and spirituality are necessarily mutually exclusive. Indeed, he holds that Australian secularism masks a deep spirituality that is increasingly outside mainstream religion, i.e. the established Christian Churches. This is a view broadly shared by Millikan, 1981 p83, who concludes that “The churches seem to be less and less places where the vague religious feelings of Australians find a home.”

Along similar lines, commenting on changes in religious belief and affiliation in Britain, Davie, 1994 cited in Ross, 2005 p94, argues that much of the claimed secularisation is far more accurately described as an increase in the number of and extent to which people are ‘unchurched’. Ross, 2005 p94, connects this with a pattern that parallels the still quite high levels of self-nominated religious affiliation in Australian as shown in the national census (ABS, 2007), despite far lower levels of regular church attendance as shown by Bellamy & Castle, 2004.

Bouma & Lennon, 2003, note, “Estimating the extent of religious activity in a society has exercised the creative talents of social scientists for over a century”. They present evidence that

suggests there is no easy answer to questions such as whether or to what extent a nation is secular. They argue that there is a need to appreciate "that secularisation does not entail the absolute decline of religion but refers to changes in the influence of religion and to shifts in interinstitutional relationships involving religion" (Bouma & Lennon, 2003).

I acknowledge that there are two primary meanings of the term 'secular' in this context. The more conventional meaning of 'not religious', puts 'secular' up as a polar opposite to a notion of religion, or more specifically, religiosity, that is increasingly outmoded and decidedly Protestant (in the broad sense), based as it is on weekly or at least 'regular' church attendance (Fenn, 2001; Tacey, 2000; Bouma, 2006). Few authors and commentators in this field, unlike Tacey and Bouma, are overt as to their personal orientation towards the 'secular/religious' debate, though much can be gleaned from the subtext of their work. Many of those who argue that Australia is secular (meaning absolutely or substantially non-religious) are apparently secularists (i.e. opposed to religion and/or supporters of the once heralded demise of religion due to the foreseen rise of 'rationalism' – a sort of Enlightenment v.2.0). Others are religious people (including clergy) who perceive religion in simplistic, falsely dichotomous, and somewhat adversarial terms. For example, they see that you are either Christian and attend church weekly or at least monthly, or else you are atheist/non-religious, or of another faith (which for some amounts to the same thing as atheist because there is only one God – the Christian one). The more current, and I believe meaningful concept of 'secular' is that which sees secularisation as a movement of religion and religiosity away from the formal expressions that have historically been the domain of the mainstream Churches and, to varying extents, the state. However, I acknowledge that the common understanding of 'secular' as non-religious, problematic though it is, dominates much of the literature and public discourse.

In the following section I discuss some of the empirical problems arising from differing understandings of the term 'secular' and difficulties in measuring religiosity even when there is agreement as to what 'secular' and 'religious' mean.

4.2.1.1 Measuring secularity and religiosity

4.2.1.1.1 Affiliation

Much of the data used to support the arguments about Australia's religiosity/secularity is itself problematic. Bouma, 2006, notes that a central problem of religious demography is the question of what to measure. The answer clearly depends on how you conceive of religion and which religion is being studied. Measurements tends to focus on organisational aspects of religious involvement, clearly something of little or no relevance in addressing non-religious spirituality nor the increasingly 'unProtestant' forms of religion where the norm of weekly church attendance does not apply (Bouma, 2006 p50-1).

One of the most commonly used measures of Australia's religiosity is the response to the question about the respondent's religion in the national census. However, Bouma, 2006, emphasises that such data is about respondents' 'religious identity' rather than their religion in any functional sense. It does tell you about participation in religion in any form, and it notoriously over-estimates religiosity (see for example, Armstrong, 2001; Bouma & Lennon, 2003; Brighton *et al.*, 2004). It tells you part of the respondents' "cultural background" and isn't actually a measure of religiosity, just religious affiliation (Bouma, 2006). However, "Religious identity has been shown to be related to political and social attitudes and behaviour" (Bouma & Dixon, 1986; Bentley & Hughes, 1998; Evans & Kelley, 2004 cited in Bouma, 2006 p51). Therefore, to that extent, the census data, which can be termed 'religious affiliation', remains useful in the context of the debate about Australia's secularity and in the context of this thesis. However, it should not be used as a measure of religiosity in the strict sense of the term.

In addition to the above-mentioned constraints, the census asks only about religion and thus fails to address the issue of spirituality outside religion, i.e. what might be called 'secular spirituality'. Tacey, 2000, notes, "Spirituality is a larger social category than formal religion, and (therefore) the decline in formal religious practice tells us very little about the spiritual interests and preoccupations of the Australian people, apart from the fact that these interests are not being pursued in conventional ways."

Bouma, 2006, points out what is likely to be an increasingly problematic limitation of the census question in that the ABS only allows each respondent to provide one answer. You cannot have, for example, a Buddhist Christian, or a Christian Yogi, or indeed any other such combination of nominally separate belief systems. Bouma, 2006, notes that such responses were received through the census but that the ABS would not tell him how it actually processes them. He says that it rejected outright the validity of anyone giving an answer involving more than one religion. He sees this as indicative of an increasingly out-dated view of religion as strictly institutional and inherently exclusive, something which he and others such as Tacey, 2003, show is increasingly not the case.

4.2.1.1.2 Attendance patterns

Another common measure of religiosity is attendance patterns, i.e. counts or derived estimates of those who attend, for example, church or mosque. This measure suffers from a variety of problems and is seen as of decreasing value given the trend away from conventional notions and patterns of religious attendance (see for example, Tacey, 2000; Bouma, 2006). Following are some of the various data and claims based on religious attendance.

As noted earlier, Mackay, 2004b, claims that Australia is secular (meaning not substantially religious), apparently based on his unreferenced figure that 15% of the public

attend church once a month or more often. His figure is not too far removed from data derived from the 2001 National Church Life Survey (Bellamy, 2005) and the Australian Community Survey[41] (Bellamy *et al.*, 2002) which puts the figure at ~20% for monthly or more frequent attendance. Notably Bellamy & Castle, 2004, report that "Church attendance has fallen while the Australian population continues to grow. It is estimated that the proportion of Australians present in Anglican, Catholic or (other) Protestant churches each week has decreased from 9.9 % in 1996 to 8.8% in 2001." Therefore, it is reasonable to expect that the 2001 data at ~20% will have dropped by 2004, though not by as much as the 5% or so indicated by Mackay's figure.[42]

Evans & Kelley, 2000, cite their series of national surveys as finding that self-reported church attendance in Australia has remained stable at ~18% since 1979. Yet Tacey, 2000, states that "regular church attendance in Australia…(is) between 7 and 12% of the population". One of the more recent publications within the scope of this topic, 'Voting for Jesus' (Lohrey, 2006), states that the figure for regular church attendance is ~9%; data she cites as being from the 2001 National Church Life Survey.

One explanation for the significant differences between church attendance figures that range from a high of ~20% and a low of ~7% is a variation in what is being measured. Many use the term 'regular' church attendance, but not all specify what 'regular' means. Some attendance studies measure 'at least monthly' attendance, whilst others use weekly attendance as their benchmark. This is notable given that the Christian tradition nominally requires weekly observance of the Sabbath and associated rituals in church. The shift from a benchmark of weekly to one of monthly attendance may indicate a change in the normative standard of religiosity. It may also be evidence of growing conflict between modern lifestyle choices and the historical requirements of the faith (Armstrong, 2001; Bouma & Lennon, 2003; Brighton *et al.*, 2004; Bouma, 2006).

The different measures of 'regular' church attendance may also explain why some authors who may reasonably be perceived to have an interest in making a case that 'regular church attendance' is not as dramatically low as others have claimed, tend to use monthly attendance as their benchmark. The monthly figures are at least twice as high as for data in which weekly attendance is used as the standard. Some who want to make the case that Australia is a predominantly Christian nation, largely for the purposes of conservative political agendas, steer

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[41] Both of these surveys are produced by NCLS Research, a Christian demographic consultancy which is sponsored by the Uniting Church Board of Mission and which appears to work primarily for church clients. See the NCLS website at http://www.ncls.org.au/.

[42] At the time of writing, there earlier statements, some of which relate to the 2001 national census, had not been updated to reflect the data from the 2006 census.

away from the above figures and use the dramatically different affiliation data from the national census. Conversely, those who want to argue that Australia is 'secular' in the sense of having little or no religion, appear all too happy to use the much lower 'regular' attendance figures, especially those that relate to weekly attendance, and often without any explanation of the data or its derivation.

The relatively low figures for religious attendance in Australia are in very stark contrast to the 2006 national census data which shows that 64% of the Australian population identify their religion as Christianity[43] (ABS, 2007). Armstrong, 2001 provides substantial detail on the differences between affiliation figures and religious attendance patterns. Breward, 1988 notes that this "gap between census figures and reality" was evident in Australia early in the 20th century, with observations that in Sydney, only 10% of Anglicans worshipped regularly, a figure also cited from the 1980s by Millikan, 1981 p80. This is perhaps indicative of a key difference between religious attendance patterns in Australia and those of the USA as discussed by Bouma, 2006.

4.2.1.1.3 Time-budgets

Another measure of religiosity involves so-called 'time-budgets' that look at how much time a population devotes to various tasks including those deemed to be variously religious and spiritual. Using time-budget data drawn from Australian Bureau of Statistics' Time Use Survey in 1997, Bouma & Lennon, 2003, calculated that 10% of Australian households engage in religious and spiritual activities. Such activities are not restricted to Christianity, but from census data alone, one would expect that the majority of these activities would relate to this faith. Bouma & Lennon, 2003, argue that despite the apparently low figure of 10%, the level of engagement in religious and spiritual activities is greater than that for sporting pursuits. They comment that "No one argues that sport is trivial in Australian society; thus…a similar conclusion needs to be drawn for religious activity."

4.2.1.1.4 Religious membership

Membership of religious organisations is also sometimes used as an indicator of religiosity (Hill & Hood, 1999), however Bouma & Lennon, 2003, citing Davie, 1994, state that "membership itself is a very 'Protestant' notion and excludes many who participate in formally organised religion but do not belong." This is considered to be a growing weakness in the use of membership data as a result of a trend toward individualised spirituality which often operates outside religious organisations and because not all religious activity happens in 'churches' or

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[43] Census data also shows significant variation in the level of religious affiliation between some States and Territories, with NSW and Victoria having substantially higher levels of affiliation with Christianity than some other jurisdictions such as the Northern Territory (ABS, 1994).

other formal settings (Bouma & Lennon, 2003, citing Hofferth & Sandberg, 2001, and Fenn, 2001).

4.2.1.1.5 The halo effect

Unless the measurement method counts confirmed factors such as actual membership and actual attendance or time allocation, all such social surveys investigating religiosity are also considered problematic because of the 'halo effect'. This occurs where, in response to obviously religious questions, respondents tend to over-report their level of religious activities, beliefs and attendances (Bouma & Lennon, 2003). Inadequate sample size is also considered a significant constraint on all such surveys (Bouma & Lennon, 2003), with the presumably low level of financial support for surveys of religion in Australia likely being a limiting factor.

An example of the above problems is seen in Bellamy *et al*., 2002, who use the 1998 Australian Community Survey (ACS) to conclude that "While only 20% of Australians attend church frequently (meaning in this case, at least monthly), 43% believe that Jesus' resurrection was an actual historical event, 42% believe that Jesus was divine, and 53% believe in Heaven. This would suggest that there are a significant number of Australians who can be said to 'believe without belonging' to a church." Bellamy *et al*., 2002, also state that ~30% of Australians hold "the full range" of core Christian beliefs. Such data is likely to suffer from a significant halo effect and a bias caused by a failure to address the difference between accepting particular religious beliefs associated with Christianity (especially the simplistic ones used in the ACS), and deriving any spiritual meaning from them. Accepting certain or even all of the basic Christian beliefs does not necessarily make one a Christian. This is perhaps an example of the difference between religious dogma and spirituality, i.e. stated beliefs do not necessarily translate into consistent values or behaviours.

4.2.2 Conclusion

There are clearly different meanings of the key terms 'secular' and 'religious' and associated concepts such as secularisation and religiosity. There are also arguably growing problems with measuring religiosity and this in part stems from changing understandings of the relationship between religion and spirituality. Whilst it is inconsistent, sometimes confused, and particularly in the less scholarly sphere frequently rather biased, I have interpreted the literature as follows:

- Much of the debate about whether or to what extent Australia is a religious nation has become confused by different understandings of the term 'secular' i.e. whether it means outside religion, 'unchurched', or irreligious.;

- some of the confusion arises through not only conflicting usage of such terms, but conflicting agendas between those who lean favourably towards conventional religion, and those who want to proclaim its actual or imminent demise;
- Australia retains a high and currently relatively stable level of self-declared religious affiliation (almost entirely to Christianity) but with low and declining mainstream church attendance (7-18% of total population depending on the data source and methods), which is not on its own necessarily indicative of reduced religiosity – just changing expressions of belief;
- conventional measures of religiosity have significant limitations, and such measures are of decreasing value due to changes in the nature of religiosity;
- Australia's national religiosity is not so much absent as much less public and flamboyant than in the USA, though by conventional measures of religiosity (limited though they are), Australia is less religious, but not necessarily less spiritual, than the USA;
- that whilst the mainstream Churches are in or are facing decline, other forms of Christianity and other faiths are on the rise, and not solely due to immigration patterns;
- whilst there has been a decline in conventional expressions of religiosity in terms of religious affiliation, religious membership and church attendance, along with a growth in the number of self-declared non-believers (meaning the absence of religion), there is evidence of rapid growth in the 'spiritual but not religious' grouping;
- Australia is not a predominantly secular (meaning non-religious and non-spiritual) nation; and
- modern Australia remains strongly influenced by its' Christian cultural heritage, so the influences of Church thought, policy and action, are potentially still very relevant.

4.3 Political dimensions

Another of my reasons for researching the 'greening' of mainstream religion in Australia includes recent developments in Australian politics. Religion is now very much on the political agenda, albeit largely focused on negative aspects of Islam, on sensational aspects of the rise of Pentecostalism and the so-called 'Prosperity Gospel', and most notably within Australia, on the 'rise of the Religious Right'. Despite the prominence of these other issues, the mainstream Churches are speaking out and getting media attention on controversial and sometimes politically pivotal issues such as the treatment of asylum seekers, the 'war on terror'(ism), industrial relations reforms, and ecological matters, most notably climate change.

Whilst Australian politics have featured some significant periods in which religion was an overt influence, recent decades have seen little apparent role for religion in politics. There are notable exceptions such as the long reign of conservative Lutheran, Sir Joh Bjelke-Petersen, former Premier of Queensland and one-time Prime Ministerial candidate. Whilst never rising to such high office, New South Wales politics has also seen substantial influence from the conservative Reverend Fred Nile (from the Festival of Light faction within the Uniting Church), other members of the Christian Democratic Party, and from the NSW Liberal Party's 'religious right', (see for example, Cohen, 2006; Lohrey, 2006). This has sometimes amounted to very significant influence when one of more CDP members has held the balance of power in the State's Upper House of parliament. The CDP retains two members in the NSW Upper House as of 2007. The CDP aligns itself with the recently emerged and similarly oriented Federal party, Family First.

Family First emerged onto the Australian political landscape in the 2004 Federal election. It originated in Adelaide, 'the city of churches', driven primarily by the political activism of the prominent Pentecostal congregation known as Paradise Church - described by some as the equivalent of Sydney's controversial Hillsong Church, (ABC Religion and Ethics Unit, 2005a; Bouma, 2006; Lohrey, 2006). Family First is said to be closely affiliated with the Assemblies of God, which is the umbrella organisation for Australia's rapidly growing Pentecostal / Evangelical churches (Maddox, 2005a), though it officially denies any formal affiliation (Walker, 2005b). The tendency of Pentecostal/Evangelical denominations to see religion and politics as intertwined rather than needing to be separated (see for example Wallis, 2005), saw their church networks operating as *de facto* party machines, with promotional literature and campaign support allegedly being distributed and sponsored by them, (ABC Religion and Ethics Unit, 2005a).

It has been suggested by some commentators, for example, Maddox, 2005b, that there was a clear agenda on the part of the Coalition government to (re)capture the 'religious' (i.e. conservative Christian) vote. Maddox, 2005b, argues that the Coalition strategy involved attempting to distance itself from the more extreme elements of Family First without distancing itself from that party's overall agenda. The tactic is said to operate such that the comparatively liberal Coalition could exploit Family First's radicalism in order to draw sympathetic voters to the Coalition by saying in effect, 'we agree, but we're more reasonable than them'. Similarly, it allowed voters with more extreme inclinations to back Family First whilst effectively still backing the Coalition because of preference flows. Ironically, it was not Coalition preferences that got a Family First candidate elected to the Senate by a very narrow margin. Lohrey, 2006, outlines how this was instead a perhaps unforeseen outcome of a Labor Party campaign against The Greens in Victoria and Tasmania.

Family First's campaign[44] led to perhaps the first overt political delineation between a form of anti-Green Christianity in allegiance with traditionally anti-environmentalism conservative party politics (Liberal/National), and the environment movement allied to (relatively) progressive party politics (The Greens/Labor). This dramatic change in the political landscape caught the Labor Party off-side, with its then leader, Mark Latham, believing that he could safely hold the secular (i.e. not substantially religious) ground that represents the now dominant constituency of modern Labor. Decades earlier, Australian Labor had earlier split on religious lines, forming the now largely defunct Democratic Labor Party, based on the once large and influential Catholic and staunchly anti-communist component of its membership (Walker, 2005a).

In 2004, Labor lost its 'unlosable' election and Mark Latham 'crashed and burnt', leaving the Party and subsequently publishing a damning account of federal Labor and its handling of the election. The Party recovered and soon formed a working group headed by moderate Christian (then) frontbencher Kevin Rudd (Anglican) to break the public perception that Christian views are inherently more comfortable in the domain of the Coalition. It is essentially about reclaiming the 'religious left' in a manner consistent with that advocated by Lerner, 2006a, in his publication, The Left Hand of God. Rudd was joined by several colleagues including Peter Garrett, the now 'out of the closet' Christian (Catholic) and long-time socio-environmental activist who headed the Australian Conservation Foundation for several years (ABC Religion and Ethics Unit, 2005b). Rudd, now Opposition Leader as of December 2006, seeks to show that Labor can represent Christian views, albeit those of a more progressive inclination than would conventionally associate with the conservative Coalition parties (ABC Religion and Ethics Unit, 2005b; Hawley, 2005). Similar machinations have been described by commentators discussing the Democrat party's successful moves to reclaim the religious vote in the landslide USA non-presidential elections in 2006.

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[44] Family First drew a disproportionately large amount of media attention with dramatic events such as its members publicly and vigorously attacking The Greens (ABC Religion and Ethics Unit, 2005a). Their targets were the somewhat traditional Evangelical concerns of abortion, narcotics liberalisation, and gay rights – a situation very similar to US national politics (see Wallis, 2005). This included vociferous public protests by some members who called for lesbians to be burnt at the stake (ABC Religion and Ethics Unit, 2005a). Church-based fundraising also meant that Family First was able to run a substantial TV advertising campaign in which the slogan 'That's not Green Bob, that's extreme' was used to attack The Greens leader Bob Brown on a range of issues but particularly in relation to narcotics policy(ABC Religion and Ethics Unit, 2005a; Brown, 2007).

The rapidly growing[45] Evangelical denominations that dominate a very small number of key marginal electorates are yet to clarify their ecological position, but at least through their affiliation with Family First, they placed themselves in fervent opposition to The Greens (Walker, 2005b). This opposition is apparently based on nominally social rather than ecological issues, an outcome consistent with the situation in the United States as per Wallis, 2005. This added a new dimension to the phenomenon of the 'greening' of mainstream Christianity in Australia – namely the interaction between Christian environmentalism and the nominally secular environment movement. We are only recently seeing the emergence of political or at least institutional alliances between the Churches and the environment movement. This has occurred to a greater extent in North America (Gardner, 2002) and in the UK. The multi-faceted issue of climate change and its impacts on humans and other parts of the biota is a particular focus that draws together the social and ecological justice agendas of the mainstream Churches and the broader environment movement (see for example, Geason, 2006).

Bringing the above factors together, it made sense to investigate the 'greening' of mainstream religion, i.e. Christianity, in Australia. Of particular note is the growing common ground between the environmentalism of the mainstream Churches and the nominally secular environmental organisations. This is unsurprising given that the environmental movement in some cases has or at least had religious and/or spiritual origins. For example, Greenpeace was founded on Quaker principles; whilst the former long-serving president of the ACF, Peter Garrett is now open about being motivated by his Catholic beliefs; along with national Greens senator Christine Milne (who was also on the Advisory Council of Catholic Earthcare Australia); Tasmanian Greens MP Lance Armstrong (Uniting Church Minister); and former WA Greens senators Jo Valentine (a Quaker) and Christabel Chamarette (Anglican).

Notably, the opening chapter of 'Memo for a Saner World,' written by Australian Greens leader Bob Brown (2004) draws primarily on Christian thought and defends Christianity from what many incorrectly see as Lynn White Jr.'s (1967) criticism of it as the basis for the West's flawed relationship with Nature. Are we now seeing the re-emergence of 'green' spirituality, perhaps colonising the once ecologically sterile ground of mainstream Christianity?

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[45] Lohrey, 2006, quoting Philip Almond (not cited), argues that the most controversial forms of Australian Pentecostalism, the so-called 'megachurches' such as Hillsong and Paradise have received a much higher profile than their numbers warrant, and that they are not really growing at the rapid rate alleged by many commentators. She argues that the media finds 20,000 churchgoers at a single venue to be much more interesting than the far greater number of mainstream church attendees dispersed amongst numerous parishes. She suggests that whilst these high profile churches are attracting many members/attendees at a time when almost every other denomination is in decline, the Pentecostal churches also have a high turnover rate of members. Nonetheless, census and NCLS data shows a genuine growth in affiliation with and attendance at Pentecostal churches, even when factors such as denominational amalgamations are considered. Lohrey, 2006, argues that whilst the growth rate may be high, the percentage of the Australian population involved with these churches is still very low.

Chapter 5: Why Christianity?

Having chosen to focus my research on Australia and on the mainstream of its religion, there was no other option than to focus on Christianity. Quite simply, Christianity "has been by far the major religious influence in Australia since the arrival of the Europeans, who dominate modern Australia's population" (Thompson, 2002). It is still the dominant religious tradition in Australia, despite a drop in affiliation and significant on-going and increasing overall declines in church attendance and membership; major changes in ethnic composition due to immigration, with related growth of other religions; and despite a substantial increase in the number of people who state that they have no religion or do not answer the national census question about religious affiliation (ABS, 2001; Armstrong, 2001; Bellamy *et al.*, 2002; Thompson, 2002; Bellamy & Castle, 2004; Bellamy, 2005; Bouma, 2006; ABS, 2007).

More specifically, the thesis deals with Western Christianity as this has been and remains the dominant form of Christianity in Australia. It is quite distinct from Orthodox (Eastern) Christianity and especially so in relation to its historical relationship with Nature, (see for example, Nash, 1991; Breuilly & Palmer, 1992). The subset of Western Christianity dealt with can be divided into two primary forms: Protestant (for example the Anglican and Uniting Churches), and Catholic.

5.1 The mainstream

In focusing on the mainstream of Australian religion, and therefore, Christianity, I confine my scope to the three largest denominations: the Catholic, Anglican, and Uniting Churches. These denominations are the most popular forms of Christianity in Australia based on the number of people who affiliate with them (ABS, 2007). I note the limitations of affiliation data as discussed in the previous chapter but reiterate the view that affiliation data equates to religious identity and that "Religious identity has been shown to be related to political and social attitudes and behaviour" (Bouma & Dixon, 1986; Bentley & Hughes, 1998; Evans & Kelley, 2004, cited in Bouma, 2006 p 51).

The three largest denominations are significant because of the number of people who identify with them and because of their institutional size. These generate the actual and potential influence that they have within the Australian Christian community and the Australian community in general.

The three largest denominations by affiliation remain the most populous manifestations of Christian faith even when affiliation data is replaced by church attendance figures (Kaldor *et al.*, 1999; Bellamy *et al.*, 2002; Bellamy & Castle, 2004; Bellamy, 2005). However, the more recent data provided by Bellamy and colleagues at NCLS Research[46] shows that the much-discussed rise of the Pentecostal and related denominations poses a very real threat to the place of the Uniting Church as the nation's third most popular denomination. This is not simply due to the rise of Pentecostalism but also due to the dramatic decline of Uniting Church affiliation and membership. This position is supported by the recent work of Bouma, 2006 and is evident in the results of the 2006 national census (ABS, 2007) which reveals a drop of >110,000 or ~10% from the 2001 census for the Uniting Church, yet an increase of >25,000 or >12%for the 'Pentecostal' category over the same time.

Contrary to the extensive popular and academic commentary about the death of religion in Australia, in the 2006 census, ~64% of Australians still identified themselves as Christian, with more than a quarter of the total population associating with Catholicism (ABS, 2007). Not only are the Catholic, Anglican and Uniting Churches mainstream religion in Australia, but Christianity, or at least affiliation with it, is mainstream as well.

The three largest denominations also retain a significant historical influence, particularly in the case of the Catholic and Anglican traditions, with the more recently formed Uniting Church having a longer history through the three smaller denominations of which it is an amalgam (namely the Methodist, Congregationalist and 75% of the Presbyterian Churches). The largest denominations are also economically significant as major holders of land and other assets (Cummins, 2005), the management of which has significant ecological implications. Their relative longevity and more centralised organisation also mean that they provide more reliable research material in terms of their official policy positions. Some of the rapidly growing and emergent denominations are still relatively fragmented and can have diverse policy positions at a national scale. They generally lack an easy means of accessing cumulative policy and praxis material.

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[46] NCLS Research is a church-affiliated demographic research group whose name stems from their original and major research project, the National Church Life Survey, which is a regular 'census' of one or more denominations.

5.2 Diversity within the denominations

I wish to emphasise again the issue of diversity within Christianity and within the denominations that are the focus of this thesis. Despite popular perceptions of the Churches as strongly hierarchical, top-down theocracies or "tiered monarchies" (after Murray, 2006) within monolithic institutions, even within the oldest and most hierarchical denomination, Catholicism, there remains considerable diversity in theology and praxis. As a brief example, one can contrast the very conservative and covert Opus Dei movement[47], with the broadly progressive Catalyst for Renewal[48] organisation and its' Spirituality in the Pub[49] project. All are parts of the Catholic Church, yet they are very different entities.

Such diversity is also present within Anglicanism, where the conservative and evangelical Sydney Archdiocese is in theological and indeed demographic contrast to many other Anglican dioceses. The 'Sydney Anglicans' are seen as so different to the rest of the denomination, including by other Anglicans, that there has been seemingly serious talk of a formal division in the denominational ranks. This parallels international developments in Anglicanism which is beginning to rift over different approaches to several contentious issues, most notably homosexuality and particularly in the context of the clergy.

The Uniting Church is perhaps even more diverse. It has been losing members at the rate of several thousand per year due in part to internal disagreements arising from this diversity[50]. It too has deeply conservative organisations within its structure, such as the Evangelical Movement of the Uniting Church (EMU)[51], The Reforming Alliance[52] and The Festival of Light. The latter spawned an associated political movement in New South Wales, the Christian Democratic Party, spearheaded by the archconservative Reverend Fred Nile, who along with his wife Elaine, went on to become a member of the NSW Legislative Council for several terms, remaining there as of 2007.

This thesis acknowledges that diversity of views and praxis extends through all layers of Christianity. Whilst I focus on the three largest denominations, I concentrate on the official institutional positions of these organisations, rather than attempting to cover the extensive breadth of views within each denomination.

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[47] Opus Dei is Latin for 'the work of God'. Its orientation and alleged involvement in sponsoring conservative politics in Australia, especially in New South Wales, is discussed by Maddox, 2005b and to some extent by Cohen, 2006.
[48] http://www.catalyst-for-renewal.com.au
[49] http://www.catalyst-for-renewal.com.au/prod01.htm
[50] http://www.abc.net.au/rn/talks/8.30/relrpt/stories/s1515081.htm. Other losses are mainly due to aging.
[51] http://www.emu.asn.au
[52] http://www.reformingalliance.org.au/About/

5.3 The Church and Christendom

In dealing with 'Christianity', I acknowledge the difference between the institutions of the Church and individual Christians. King, 2002 p.13, covers the important distinction between "the personal faith of individual believers, and the official structures (both the material buildings and the intellectual doctrines) of their particular religious tradition." This thesis focuses primarily on the institution of the Church, in this case in the form of the three largest denominations in Australia. Each is covered in separate chapters that amount to denominational case studies.

In most instances, it will be clear when I am referring to the institution rather than the individual. References to the institution will generally be capitalised, for example 'Church', whereas references to non-institutional views will be identified by the person or group of people who hold them. Sometimes there will be overlap, for example, when a group of people sharing a particular view form an Order or other structure within the institution but have a view that is not representative of the position of the institution as a whole. References to both institutions and individuals will usually use the term 'Christendom', whereas I tend to use 'Christianity' with more of an institutional meaning.

The distinction between what some refer to as 'capital R' religion and 'small r' religion is significant in the context of the relationship between religion, as it is commonly understood, and spirituality. 'Capital R' religion is a way of identifying institutionalised belief from personal belief, with the latter commonly seen as close to or the same as spirituality. In this way, whilst spirituality can be at least broadly said to be the basis for the formation of religion, religions can go on to lose, abuse or misplace that spirituality to varying extents. As previously pointed out, one can have Religion without spirituality just as readily as spirituality without Religion.

My focus on the Churches ('capital R' religion), rather than on individual Christians, is both a matter of expediency, and a considered choice. The former relates to the relative ease of access to the official institutional views of the Churches. The latter relates to my desire to address the institutional ecological policies and praxis of the Churches because this is very rarely dealt with in the 'greening' of religion literature. Most of that literature is theological and theoretical. My interest is not primarily in the theology but in the policies and the praxis that arise from it. I also focus on the institutions because of their cultural and ecological impact.

I note that whilst I focus on institutional policies and praxis, both are often the work of one or a small number of individual change agents rather than originating from a broadly based movement of the membership. This is particularly evident in the context of ecological policy, though it is also seen in the more traditional area of social justice policy.

5.4 The ecological reformation

With my focus on Australia and its mainstream religion, Western Christianity, a significant question remains for many people as to whether there is anything worth exploring in the way of Christianity and its response to environmentalism. Some might argue that even if Christianity is responding positively, there is little point pursuing this because the faith is in terminal decline, at least within the West. Some such concerns are addressed by Palmer, 1993, when in his opening chapter, and writing as a British Christian, he asks "Why bother with Christianity?" He points out the view that "The faith doesn't seem to speak to our world, or if it does, it speaks of a world now largely gone" (Palmer, 1993 p3) – hence its appeal being increasingly restricted to the elderly, at least amongst the more traditional denominations. He mentions that many people have rejected Christianity, having heard only unappealing versions of it such as that of US televangelists or "the confused voices of the Anglican Church wondering about the status of women" (Palmer, 1993 p3). "In the light of contemporary social concerns, the past influence of the Church is seen to have fed the growth of capitalism and the rise of sexism, and to have indoctrinated us with a view of human superiority which has led us to abuse the planet. Its current attempts to be relevant are often seen as jumping on the (environmentalism) bandwagon as it passes by" (Palmer, 1993 p3). He sees the Churches' poor ecological record and on-going struggles with ecological realities and broader social issues as a factor in the decline of the mainstream denominations.

My reply to the views raised (not propounded) by Palmer, 1993, is to agree that: the mainstream Churches are in decline (especially Protestantism); they do struggle for social relevance; some forms of the faith are predicted to all-but-disappear in Australia (see Bouma, 2006); and that Christianity, or more specifically many of the Churches, have been responsible or at least partly responsible for various social ills, but that changes, at least in its ecological stance are increasingly evident, albeit belatedly[53].

However, not all forms of Christianity or even mainstream Christianity are in decline. In Australia, whilst being very vulnerable to the ageing of its affiliates, having problems recruiting clergy, and being affected by large drops in regular church attendance, Catholicism is so large that it cannot be sensibly considered an 'endangered species'[54]. Indeed, the number of Catholic

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[53] "Christians have been slow to wake up to the reality" (of the ecological crisis) (Gnanakan, 1999).
[54] The International Union for the Conservation of Nature uses a hierarchy of terms to classify the level of threat faced by particular biota. 'Endangered' means 'at risk of becoming extinct in the next 20 years' – a situation that Bouma, 2006, predicts for most suburban churches of the Anglican and Uniting Churches in Australia. Catholicism in Australia would be better classified as 'vulnerable', meaning that it is at risk of becoming 'endangered' within the next 20 years. Such predictions are based on demographic models and cannot take into account all manner of potential social changes that may occur over those timeframes, in particular, changes to immigration policy.

affiliates grew by ~125,000 between the 2001 and 2006 census (ABS, 2007) – more than the number of affiliates by which each of the Anglican and Uniting Churches declined. Much of the historical and recent growth in Australian Catholicism is attributable to immigration but also to the relatively high birth rate amongst Catholics – no doubt due in part at least to the tradition's official opposition to contraception and abortion and to its strong 'Pro (human) Life' stance. There is also no guarantee that the decline in some forms of Christianity will persist. Were the Churches to undergo dramatic changes, they may be able to win back at least some of their lost numbers. Indeed, some churches specifically target the interests of environmentalists as part of their recruitment strategy (Bellamy & Castle, 2003).

As Palmer, 1993, and others have suggested, the Churches' generally poor ecological record has been a factor in its overall decline in the West. With the emergence of an increasingly mainstream Christian ecotheology and evidence of an 'ecological conversion'[55] or reformation underway in the Church, this factor in the Churches' decline has the potential to be at least ameliorated[56].

Along with the growing view that despite their problems, religions (including Christianity) are an essential part of any effective response to the ecological crisis, we have a situation where some fresh questions need to be asked. For example, if those outside the Church see it as vital to addressing the ecological crisis, and if the Churches are in the process of a genuine and comprehensive ecological reformation, then surely there is merit in exploring the progress and nature of this reformation, and the capacity of the faith and its institutions to be a substantial part of the solution.

However, despite the emergence of modern Christian environmentalism and an extensive literature dealing with related ecotheology, there remain strongly held views about Christianity's involvement in causing and furthering the ecological crisis. There is abundant literature that condemns Christianity as the driver of Western society's disastrous treatment of the biosphere, or at least a significant contributor to this (Peterson, 2001 p6). However, there is also a growing literature that sees Christianity as a victim of one or more older and more insidious philosophical flaws (primarily but not exclusively of Western society) that underpin the causes of the ecological crisis, (see for example. Nasr, 1996; Gnanakan, 1999). I agree that broader societal changes have progressively compromised Christianity, but I also see aspects of it as a driver or at least a vehicle of ecologically problematic views.

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[55] Pope John Paul II called for an "ecological conversion" of Catholicism and the phrase is now widely used within that Church's writings on ecotheology and ecological policy.

[56] "Westerners are looking for a religious vision that is able to again make sacred the physical world and the natural environment, as our need to direct positive attention to the environmental emergency becomes more apparent" (Tacey, 2000).

Clearly, it is not sensible to analyse Christianity outside the context of Western society, nor can Western society be understood without regard to Christianity. I do not see Christianity as inherently antithetical to the cause of addressing the ecological crisis. Instead, after Santmire, 1985, I recognise that it is "ambiguous" in its relationship with Nature, offering both negative and positive possibilities, a view shared by writers including Nash, 1991, Gnanakan, 1999 and Guess, 2005. Christianity's diverse history includes traditions and views that are very different to the instrumental 'dominion' theology that has been prevalent in Western Christianity for at least several hundred years. I particularly acknowledge the significance of the recent reformation or 'ecological conversion' seen as a theme within Western Christian theology.

My focus on Christianity is substantially influenced by my interest in the view that the 'greening' of the mainstream Christian Churches represents a significant cultural shift that may lead to ecological and social justice benefits, including through greater collaboration between the Churches, Christians, and the nominally secular environmental movement. This is a view propounded by a range of authors, both secular and Christian, for example Oelschlaeger, 1994; Gardner, 2002; Gottlieb, 2006; Hamilton, 2006a, b; Lerner, 2006a; Gottlieb, 2007; Hamilton, 2007b. It is also a view that I test through my exploration of the Churches' responses to the ecocrisis.

5.5 Why not non-Christian religions?

A further consideration in my focus on mainstream Australian Christianity is that as the dominant religion of Australia, I believe it is more effective to look at Christianity's changing relationship with Nature than it is to look to other religions or belief systems as a vehicle for ecosocial change.

Like many environmentalist authors of the late 1960s onwards, and like the popular misreading of Lynn White's controversial 1967 publication, for much of my life I viewed Christianity as substantially to blame for the West's devastatingly unsustainable relationship with Nature. I believed that it needed to be routed entirely, perhaps to be replaced by a 'greener' religion such as Buddhism – a view consistent with secular environmentalism as discussed by Nash, 1991 p88-91; W. Berry, 1992 p54-55; Law, 2001. Law, 2001 writes about this in the context of environmentalists' attempts to replace the dominant Christian tradition with nominally 'greener' Buddhism in the conflict over forestry in Montana USA. She argues that rather than seeking to impose some notionally ideal or even preferred ecological religio-spirituality, it is far more appropriate to work with the belief system or systems that are most relevant to the particular group or area. In essence, she advocates trying to change people's understanding or interpretation of their religion or belief system to include environmentalism, rather than trying to remove or replace their religion or belief system with one that is 'greener'.

Finlay & Palmer, 2003, effectively reach the same view in their documentation of the power of various religions to achieve and sustain positive ecological (and related social) outcomes. Wilber, 2000b; 2001, takes the proposition to the personal scale and argues that different approaches are needed because people are, in additional to cultural variances, at different stages on the transpersonal journey.

My view is that Australia is still at a stage where Western Christianity remains the most significant religious influence on Australian culture. This makes a focus on Western Christianity arguably more relevant than abandoning it entirely and searching for preferable ecological perspectives in other traditions, indigenous or imported. The approach of Passmore, 1974 p117, is similar in that he seeks "seeds" from "Western thought" in his quest to "construct a case for (ecological) preservation… (in the West) without having to fall back on… non-Western principles…."[57]

However, I am not suggesting that one should only work with Western and/or Christian worldviews. I believe that there is scope, if not a need, for cross-fertilisation of Western/Christian views with those from the East.

Writing from an apparently secular, pragmatic perspective, Midgley, 2000, condenses the proposition further to: "start where you're at". These words are echoed by Australian author and former Catholic, David Tacey (2000 p170-1), who, writing in a specifically Australian context, elaborates on this view, stating that:

> "We cannot simply invent a new religion or myth to suit this (ecological) situation, nor can we appropriate an 'ecologically sound' religion from indigenous peoples, although the so-called New Age popular movement appears to condone such cultural theft….Clearly we must engage in a legitimate soul-search, rediscovering our own historical roots and reanimating some of the religious attitudes and values we thought we had outgrown. But above all, we must start from where we are. We cannot 'graft on' new ideas or steal from exotic cultures. We have to build upon our own cultural heritage, and develop in ways that are directly linked to our history, lest our 'solutions' leave us more psychologically rootless and confused than ever before. We need to understand the cultural forces that have led to our disenchantment (of Nature), then work towards reversing these forces, if enchantment or binding[58] is to be found again."

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[57] Passmore concludes this sentence "as that 'nature is sacred'" suggesting he rejects as Eastern or at least other than Western, any notion such as pantheism or panentheism. Numerous later works in ecophilosophy and Christian ecotheology argue that there are traditions, even historical Western Christian traditions, in which Nature was seen as sacred.

[58] Tacey's use of the term 'binding' is a reference to the etiology of the word 'religion', which originally meant 'to bind back', meaning to restrain excesses and to reconnect with deeper truths.

It is important to note that Tacey is by no means excluding Aboriginal spirituality from his focus, indeed the opposite is true because he sees it as central to his vision of an Australian spirituality. It is also significant that many Aboriginal people are Christian or Christianised. In many cases, traditional spirituality has merged with Christian influences such that they are effectively inextricable, and for their adherents, completely compatible.

However, this thesis does not examine traditional Aboriginal ecotheology, or that which has been Christianised to various extents. Nonetheless, the three largest Christian denominations in Australia all advocate the inclusion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander representatives in their ecological policy-making. They also recognise, at least to some extent, that the Christian tradition has much to learn from the ecological spirituality and practice of Australia's indigenous peoples, (see for example, Goosen, 2000; Leal, 2004a).

The relevance of indigenous cultures in the quest to resolve the ecological crisis is addressed in the global context by Nash, 1991. Moncrief, 1970, Derr, 1975, 1995 , Nash, 1991 (citing Farb, 1974), Scharper, 1997, and others, conclude that neither Christianity nor Western society is unique in their negative association with ecological degradation. Nash writes:

> "It appears to be a characteristic of the human [evolutionary] line – perhaps the one that accounts for its domination of the earth – that from the very beginning *Homo* [*sapiens*] has exploited the environment up to his technological limits to do so. But until recently the harm this exploitation could cause was limited, for ancient man's populations were low and his technology primitive" (Farb, 1974). (Nash's additions in square brackets)

Such a perspective is reiterated in numerous more recent works including that of Diamond, 2005. On the basis of this view, Nash, 1991 states:

> "Though we have much to learn from the ecological knowledge and moral attitudes of indigenous communities, advocating their practices for technological societies seems largely irrelevant. If these communities grow in population and develop further technological skills, they too are likely to be tempted to follow the path to ecological disaster, for the problem appears to be dormant[59] in the human condition."

I believe that there is ample evidence of this amongst Australia's indigenous population, though I note that there are complex reasons for such changes, not merely technology and associated population growth. Indeed, there is a contrary case to be made that were indigenous cultures able to adopt external technology fully cognisant of the cultural and ecological implications of doing so, and without being subject to the multitude of damaging impacts

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[59] My understanding of Nash's comment is that by "dormant" he means 'inherent but remaining dormant until particular thresholds are exceeded'.

associated with most exchanges between indigenous and technological cultures, the outcomes may well be significantly different. That said, I agree with Nash and many others, that the root cause of the ecological crisis is a product of human nature[60], not of any one particular culture or religion. I also agree that harking back to often-romanticised notions of indigenous culture or using a contemporary exploration of indigenous relationships with their habitats is of limited use in addressing the global ecological crisis.

However, by adopting a focus on Christianity, I do not dismiss the contributions to Australian culture derived from Aboriginal spirituality or from other religious and spiritual traditions. I believe that other researchers have devoted attention to the ecological aspects of Aboriginal spirituality, with a body of work also emerging in the field of non-Christian religions' relationship with the natural environment, for example the FORE project. In contrast, as noted in the previous chapter[61], I was unable to detect other than a very small number of published or thesis-based research that addresses in any form the 'greening' of Christianity or the Church in Australia - this despite Christianity's historical and demographic significance. I aim to fill some of this gap.

It is important to state that in choosing to research Christianity, I do so without being either a member-advocate of it, or an opponent of it. The focus on Christianity in this thesis is not a result of my having any formal affiliation with this religion now or historically[62], nor is it driven by an agenda to criticise the religion of Christianity from either a secular perspective or that of another religion. Writing as a Christian biologist, King, 2002, argues "that it is possible to criticise religion and doctrine – and to change them – without damaging the faith that underlies them". This is essentially compatible with my concept of how religion (institutions, doctrine, and dogma) differs from spirituality (faith). King holds that criticality, a central aspect of this thesis, is compatible with faith and should not be interpreted as secular rationality attacking religious belief.

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[60] Unlike its common usage in Western Philosophy, I do not use 'human nature' to mean something that is both inherent and fixed. I see 'human nature' or 'the ecology of the human' as something that, like the rest of Nature, is subject to evolution or at least to change.
[61] See the section: Section 4.1 'A gap in the literature' p46.
[62] I address this issue further in the Methods chapter section entitled 'Insider or outsider?'

5.6 Why not Pentecostal or Evangelical forms of Christianity?

5.6.1 Pentecostal/Evangelical Christianity

My decision not to include the Pentecostal/Evangelical churches such as The Assemblies of God, and The Churches of Christ in the scope of this thesis could be seen as unsound because of their growth worldwide (McGrath, 2004) including within Australia (for example Maddox, 2005b[63]). It is claimed that there are now more members of Pentecostal and related denominations in regular church attendance than there are regular attendees of the Uniting Church, (Maddox, 2005b). Depending on the information source being used and its method of assessment, some claim that there are now more Pentecostalists regularly attending Church than there are regular Anglican Church attendees in Australia (Philip Hughes, Christian Research Association, cited by Croucher, 2002). However, the weighting of a particular denomination or grouping's significance based on regular church attendance assumes that regular attendance is a sound measure of religiosity – a view that I contest along with authors including Davie, 1994; Fenn, 2001; Hofferth & Sandberg, 2001; Bouma & Lennon, 2003; Ross, 2005.

In choosing not to include these forms of Christianity, I do not deny their demographic, political or theological significance. Maddox, 2005b, writing in an Australian context, and Wallis, 2005, writing in a USA context, see the Pentecostal/Evangelicals as a particular concern because these denominations have tended to be the bastion of 'old' Christian views of humanity's relationship with the rest of Nature. Conventionally, this takes the form of the so-called 'dominion' theology in which 'Man' is seen as having been given control of Nature (a separate part of Creation) by God for the purposes of human utility. Such a view unsurprisingly sees many Christians and Churches of this persuasion allied with conservative politics and thus with its problematic position on ecological matters. This is particularly evident in the USA where party politics and religion are more overtly intertwined than in Australia and where key Evangelical figures can be publicly linked to ultraconservative factions and individuals in the Republican Party, (see for example Wallis, 2005[64]).

Pentecostalism and associated forms of Christianity have certainly tended to be at the most anthropocentric end of the theological spectrum in relation to ecological matters, (see for example, Leal, 2004a). Some authors, including prominent Christians, see this as an area that

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[63] As noted earlier, this is disputed by Lohrey, 2006.

[64] http://www.salon.com/news/feature/2006/02/09/evangelicals/index.html - addresses a split in USA Evangelicals on the issue of climate change, with the peak Evangelical organisation being persuaded by conservative politics not to endorse the concerns expressed by 86 Evangelical leaders as part of the Evangelical Climate Initiative.

demands attention to highlight and often to debunk such theology because it is seen as incompatible with ecological and related social reality. Of particular concern is the so-called 'Prosperity Gospel' promoted by some forms of Pentecostalism. Lohrey, 2006 explains this as "a Calvinist-derived doctrine in which one of the visible outward signs of God's favour is the affluence of the faithful."[65] The direct impact of this is consumerism, with resultant impacts of rampant resource depletion, waste generation, habitat loss, pollution, and issues of social inequality.

Whilst I appreciate such concerns, this thesis is not primarily about Christian theology or ecotheology and it certainly is not about comparative Christian ecotheologies and attempting to settle the associated differences. I also note that Wallis, 2005, writing as a leading authority on and a member of Evangelical/Pentecostal Christianity in the USA, claims that this form of Christianity has begun its own ecological conversion, similar to that undertaken by mainstream Christian denominations. This is a view evident in the World Evangelical Forum's 1992 report on ecological issues by the Theological Commission Study Unit on Ethics and Society (see Appendix 2 of Gnanakan, 1999). Gnanakan's own work builds on this and develops a well-argued Evangelical ecotheology with a strong emphasis on praxis. More recently, a 2005 BBC World News article[66] and the 2006 Statement of the Evangelical Climate Initiative[67] reveal the rise of Evangelical environmentalism. Wallis, 2005, argues that Evangelical Christianity in the USA is moving to adopt ecological concern as 'core business'. He certainly sees it as such, and as editor of a major Christian newspaper and magazine, his views are presumably influential. An often-touted example of emergent Evangelical environmentalism in the USA is the 'What Would Jesus Drive' website.[68] This is a derivative of an earlier and apparently widespread 'What Would Jesus Do?' (WWJD) movement that aimed to have believers ask themselves this question in dealing with a wide range of moral and ethical dilemmas.

In his 2004 publication, Australian ecotheologian, Barry Leal, states that "Evangelical theologians have also begun to show interest in the links between their conservative faith and ecological matters" (Leal, 2004a). He lists several key Evangelical writers: Calvin DeWitt, James Nash, Chris Sugden, David Hawkin and Lawrence Osborn, giving particular praise to the work of Osborn's 'Guardians of Creation: Nature in theology and Christian life'. This issue is also addressed in the Compass TV program 'The Greening of God' through an interview with

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[65] Calvinism is a theology within Christianity based on the 16thC work of John Calvin. It is also known as The Reformed Tradition and is a second stage derivative of the Protestant Reformation. In the context of ecotheology, it is particularly problematic for its doctrine of 'predestination', which holds that God determined who would be wealthy and powerful, and, by default, who would not. This is what connects it with so-called Neo-Calvinism or the 'Prosperity Gospel' of George W. Bush and Hillsong Church.
[66] http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/americas/4642241.stm
[67] http://www.christiansandclimate.org/statement
[68] http://www.whatwouldjesusdrive.org/

an Australian Evangelical Christian (Philip Johnson) who also holds environmentalist views (ABC Religion and Ethics Unit, 2000).

Pentecostal/Evangelical forms of Christianity are yet to substantially engage in such a shift within Australia (Maddox, 2005b; Walker, 2005b), though it is hard to determine their precise position because they lack a singular and consistent voice[69]. However, if the changes evident in North American and British Evangelical ecotheology are an indication, Australian Evangelicals are likely to adopt their own version of a pro-ecological stance in the near future, (Walker, 2005b). Indeed, I was informed of some ecological works being undertaken by a Pentecostal-style church group in Dubbo, Western NSW a region not known for its progressive religion or politics. Similarly, in mid-2006, the Anglican Diocese of Sydney released a publication entitled 'Environment: a Christian response' (Cameron, 2005). This diocese is dominated by a form of Anglicanism that is widely recognised as Evangelical and very conservative[70], even by other Australian Anglican clergy. Nonetheless, its first published document dealing with ecological concerns is not anti-environmentalist and clearly promotes the legitimacy of Christian concern for and action to protect ecological values.

A further consideration in my choice not to include Pentecostalism is that, other than for minor exceptions, this form of Christianity lacks the large on-line presence that the Catholic, Anglican and Uniting Churches have. This makes it much more difficult for me to determine a representative institution Pentecostal ecological policy, let alone the extent to which and ways in which this is or is not implemented.

5.6.2 Hillsong Church

Because of its high profile[71]; its feature role in the 2004 Federal election (see Maddox, 2005b; Lohrey, 2006); its allegiance with Adelaide's Paradise Church, which spawned the Family First Party; and its potential value as a test case in exploring the accessibility of the Pentecostal denominations, I did research the controversial Hillsong Church. Whilst it has a significant on-line presence, this did not present any material related to ecological issues as of

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[69] Pentecostalism, Evangelicalism (not the same as evangelism) and similar forms of Christianity in Australia comprise numerous 'sub-denominations' and individual congregations, some with only a single church or otherwise highly localised influence. In 2000, many of the Pentecostal-style churches in Australia formed an entity called Australian Christian Churches, however this body does not appear to function as a centralised or authoritative policy hub and there is likely to be significant variation on policy and praxis between the member churches. The Assemblies of God is the largest of the Pentecostal Churches and is allegedly the key backer of the Family First Party (Maddox, 2005b; Walker, 2005b; Lohrey, 2006).

[70] "The Sydney churches have traditionally been more conservative than their Melbourne counterparts. This is true for both Catholic and Protestant…" (Millikan, 1981 p80).

[71] See for example http://www.abc.net.au/lateline/content/2005/s1406778.htm and http://www.abc.net.au/lateline/content/2005/s1406779.htm

early 2005 and had not changed by mid-2007. The only 'justice' material on Hillsong's website is within the scope of conventional social justice, i.e. it is entirely anthropocentric and disconnected from ecological reality.

I sent an email via the Hillsong Church website[72], identifying myself as a research student, and flagging my interest in obtaining any "environment-related" material. I did not receive a reply. The Australian Conservation Foundation's Graham Tupper, formerly of the National Council of Churches of Australia, reported a similar difficulty in engaging with Hillsong Church on ecological issues (Tupper, pers. comm. 06/05). Friends of the Earth (Australia) also invited Hillsong to contribute to the 'Faith & ecology' edition of its national newsletter, but also received a null response (Walker, 2005a). Lohrey, 2006, also notes a similar situation in her interviews with some young members of the Hillsong congregation. My experience in attempting to research Hillsong's ecological stance contrasts with the *relative* ease of researching and communicating with various organisations and individuals within the three largest mainstream denominations.

The situation in relation to Hillsong Church is not entirely surprising given studies of Pentecostalism and other Evangelical denominations from the USA (see for example Wallis, 2005), which indicate that ecological concern has until very recently, been seen as deeply antithetical to their theology, or perhaps more specifically, their associated conservative politics.

5.6.3 Exclusive Brethren

Again, despite its high profile in the media and much controversy, particularly after the 2004 federal election, this thesis does not investigate the ecological orientation of another controversial Christian group, the Exclusive Brethren. The Exclusive Brethren are particularly controversial in the context of ecological issues because of their overt and covert opposition to The Greens in Australia and overseas, and to anything resembling social liberalism.

In late 2006, the Exclusive Brethren received international media coverage because of their being allegedly involved in smear campaigns against the Labor Prime Minister of New Zealand, her husband, and several government figures. This is consistent with the alleged involvement of the Exclusive Brethren in funding and directing campaigns against left wing candidates.

During the 2004 Australian election, The Exclusive Brethren and agents operating on their behalf are alleged to have run smear campaigns against The Greens and individual Greens candidates, particularly in Tasmania. In August 2006, Australian Greens Senator, Bob Brown,

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[72] http://www2.hillsong.com/

tabled a "motion for a Senate inquiry into this sect, its members who are political activists, any connections with the Howard government and family excommunications" (Brown, 2006). In September 2006, the ABC TV's Four Corners program ran an investigative documentary about some of the Exclusive Brethren's practices, including their involvement in elections, despite the fact that their religion prohibits members from voting. A similar program was produced by SBS TV's Dateline program and screened in November 2006. During the unofficial 2007 Australian election campaign, Labor leader and overt Christian, Kevin Rudd, publicly denounced the Exclusive Brethren as a "cult" and warned his colleagues to be on the lookout for covert smear campaigns against the Labor Party and its members.

Despite the above-described controversy surrounding the Exclusive Brethren, this thesis does not address their views or actions in relation to Christian environmentalism. This is because the Exclusive Brethren is, arguably by their very nature, anything but mainstream.

5.7 Why not forms of Christianity long known as ecologically progressive?

5.7.1 Lutheran

My focus on the three largest denominations does not mean that I consider the smaller Churches irrelevant in the context of ecotheology and interaction with the environment movement. Some, such as the Lutherans, have a strong stewardship policy grounded in their very agrarian[73] theology. Whilst it has conventionally been a productivist stewardship, it has broadened to become more ecologically grounded and less anthropocentric. Australia-based Lutheran theologian, Norman Habel, is a world leader in Christian ecotheology and heads the international Earth Bible project (see Habel, 2000). Mainstream Christian ecotheology often cites his work, and there was strong evidence of this and his high esteem at an ecumenical and multifaith conference about faith and the environment that I attended in Adelaide in January 2004. I certainly do not view the mainstream denominations as so parochial as to not exchange views or otherwise interact with the smaller denominations. There is also formal interaction between smaller groups such as the Lutherans, with the larger groups via the National Council of Churches of Australia.

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[73] 'Agrarianism' has several recognised meanings. It is used here to mean 'pro-farmer', 'pro-farming' and 'pro-agricultural productivism' inclusive of the notion that farming brings people closer to God through their contact with Nature. See for example http://encarta.msn.com/dictionary_/agrarian.html and for a more substantial explanation http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Agrarianism. Agrarianism in Catholic Church policies is criticised by McDonagh, 1990 p181.

5.7.2 Jehovah's Witnesses

Similarly, I note that the Jehovah's Witness denomination has a strong ecotheology linked to an opposition to consumerism and a belief that it is a Christian's duty to prepare the Earth to be remade as the second Garden of Eden by undertaking ecological restoration and protection works. Such a theology is far more proactive than many, and in strong contrast to dispensationalists and others who believe that Earth or at least its surface will inevitably be destroyed and remade by God after the return of Christ.

5.7.3 The Religious Society of Friends (Quakers)

The Religious Society of Friends (commonly termed 'Quakers') is also notable as a form of Christianity with strong ecojustice values and a connection with the modern environmentalism movement unmatched by mainstream Christendom, (see for example Brindle, 2000). The international environmentalist organisation, Greenpeace, was founded with Quaker support and is based on Quaker principles, in particular the concept of bearing witness (V.A. Brown, Australian Chair of Greenpeace, 1988-1991, pers. comm., 09/05; Weyler, undated). Weyler, undated, also mentions a founding connection between Greenpeace, the Unitarian Church and the United Church of Canada. Unitarianism is another small denomination within Christianity that has potentially influenced mainstream Christian ecotheology through its far more holistic perspective.

5.8 Back to the mainstream

I acknowledge that there is considerable scope for exploring Christian environmentalism well beyond the mainstream denominations but I have made the boundary judgement to exclude other than mainstream Christianity from the focus of this thesis.

I base my focus on the mainstream forms of Christianity because of their size (using various measures) and their social, political, and ecological impact. More specifically, I focus on what I view as the positive changes within the mainstream Churches that are leading to the rise of Christian environmentalism. I do not focus on the countervailing movement that is in opposition to environmentalism. In this regard, my approach is consistent with an application of the 'trim tab' methodology described by Buckminster Fuller, i.e. that rather than trying to change the course of the 'ship' (society; the Church; Christianity) by forcing a realignment of the 'rudder' (the whole culture), it can be far more strategic and effective to seek out situations where relatively little effort can be exerted yet produce a relatively substantial change in course. The 'trim tab' is a steering device used on large ships to make minor but ultimately potentially significant changes in direction.

Chapter 6: An iterative approach

In accordance with the emergent and responsive nature of my methodology, the thesis uses a variety of methods– an approach promoted by Harris & Robottom, 1997; Midgley, 2000. The methods emerged from the research rather than being predetermined – being in part an application of the 'grounded theory' of Glaser & Strauss, 1967. The research iteratively informed both methodology and methods. This was a useful approach for several reasons that I discuss further below.

When I commenced this thesis, my experience in research outside the field of natural science consisted of an undergraduate research project in which I undertook a comparative study of the understanding of ecological issues amongst Catholic and public high school students. My approach to that research was still primarily empirical (quantitative analysis of questionnaires, and class interviews). In formulating a methodology for this thesis, I had to fill in the large gap in my understanding of methodologies that extend beyond the quantitative.

In addition, the thesis topic varied several times during the first two years of research, with further refinements in focus occurring throughout the process. This meant that my methodology and methods had to change, at least to some extent, to match these shifts. Discovering bodies of literature that I had previously been unaware of drove some of the earlier changes. Later, finer-scale changes in focus were largely due to my growing insight into the topic arising from my research findings and through further reading. To some extent, the thesis emerged through a form of 'gap analyses'.

The original and inherently transdisciplinary nature of my research field further compounded the situation, as there was no easy route when it came to adopting a methodology and methods that were well established as appropriate tools for the thesis topic.

When I commenced my research, I had very little knowledge of my subject material, and much of what I thought I knew I subsequently found to be wrong, a partial truth, and too often based on prejudices generated by my personal and professional background. I also had little knowledge of the philosophy of research.

Finally, the phenomenon of the 'greening' of mainstream religion in Australia is an emergent one, about which very little has been written. What little specific literature was available was primarily theological or was non-scholarly and prone to making unsubstantiated claims based on international experience or sweeping and simplistic observations. The paucity of academic material available on this specific topic may be due in part to the phenomenon's currency but also because it tends to cross the entrenched division between 'science' and 'religion' – something with which academic institutions continue to struggle.

The emergent dimension of the phenomenon means that at least some aspects are changing or can change very quickly. Hence, there is a need to be flexible and responsive in methodology and methods if a researcher is to keep pace with developments in both the phenomenon and the research into it. This is also a consideration because some key aspects of the phenomenon are cryptic (completely outside the literature) and once uncovered through, for example dialogue, can rapidly change my research direction or at least hone my focus. A fixed 'off the shelf' methodology and methods, especially if dictated by an initial literature review alone, would have been unlikely to suit such a dynamic, emergent and transdisciplinary research field.

What follows is a brief outline of the methods that I employed. Whilst they are organised as discrete components of the research, the reality is that they all interacted, informing each other and feeding back into the development of methodology and methods as the research progressed.

6.1 The 'greening' of mainstream religion in Australia – a case study

The overarching method employed in this thesis is that of case study. Subsidiary methods such as critical policy analysis should be understood in this context. I do not analyse the ecological policies of the subject denominations simply to document and critique them. Instead, they are analysed as part of the broader investigation of how the Churches are responding to the ecological crisis, and beyond this, how they respond as institutions inclusive of their component groups and individuals. I extend this with my research into the Churches' ecological praxis where the focus is still primarily on their response as institutions, but where the actions of groups and individuals are also considered. I discuss the specific methods employed in the thesis later in this chapter.

6.2 Action Research

Within the case study, the primary research tool used in this thesis is a form of critical policy analysis (discussed in section 6.4). The analysis was not restricted to formal institutional policies, instead, in addition to the use of the Internet as my initial source of policy material, I engaged with research participants through a variety of other media and processes. This was undertaken in the tradition of so-called 'action research' or 'participatory action research'[74].

[74] These terms are somewhat contested. I use them here in their broadest sense and do not discuss the academic debate about their meanings and appropriate application.

This aspect of my research was the subject of a Human Research Ethics Committee protocol (permit) number 2005/151.

Consistent with my methodology, I chose to engage with participants as an interested and active researcher who was also supportive of the process of 'ecological conversion' within the Churches. A similar approach, though in a different context, was employed by Malone, 1996. In most cases, I believe this approach, which was sincere, resulted in me gaining more information of a higher quality than I might otherwise have been able to obtain. In a minority of cases, my overt enthusiasm for or at least interest in the 'greening' of the Churches appeared to reduce my access to information, though this outcome was itself useful as it revealed some of the sources and nature of resistance to the process of ecological reform.

My 'activist' or 'advocatory' approach does not inherently prejudice my research to the extent that it is invalid. In accordance with my methodology, I simply need to disclose the nature of my orientation and approach, and to assess my findings in that context.

6.3 Insider or outsider?

This section addresses the so-called 'insider/outsider controversy' of research, for example, Minichiello *et al.*, 1995; Midgley, 2000. Some scholars of religion or sociology would argue that my not being overtly Christian[75] and my being 'unchurched' makes me an outsider to the extent that I cannot properly understand the Church or Christianity in the context of my thesis. Were this definitively the case, only a Christian and perhaps only a Christian of a particular denomination could provide the necessary attributes to be an effective researcher within the context of what this thesis attempts to research. That would mean that only an insider view is a legitimate view, a situation that would make ethnography and much of anthropology invalid on the basis that one cannot properly understand anything that one is not 'inside'.

This is not a view that I can support, as at its most extreme, it is ultimately a false dichotomy that would have everyone labelled as either an insider or an outsider irrespective of the fact that the boundaries are rarely, if ever that simple. The 'insider-outsider' dichotomy fails to acknowledge the interconnectedness between observer and observed, and the complexity of

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[75] I do not identify myself as specifically Christian because my perspective on the faith rejects its normative assertion of exclusivity, i.e. one has to be a Christian to the exclusion of any other faith. However, I do not reject Christianity, nor am I an atheist. My orientation is within the scope of the organisation entitled the Sea of Faith (http://www.sof-in-australia.org) which arguably amounts to Christianity in a Buddhist tradition (see for e.g. Falvey, 2002, 2003). However, I am also very much within the group that defines itself as 'spiritual but not religious' (see for e.g. the work of Tacey, 2003). I have previously identified my 'religion' as Buddhist, Jedi (with tongue in cheek) and Yoga (in which I am formally trained and qualified to teach).

that relationship – “everything in the Universe is directly or indirectly connected to everything else” (Midgley, 2000). This perspective is consistent with the orientation of this thesis in so-called ‘process thought’, ‘process philosophy’, and ‘process theology’ which are “strongly opposed to dualistic approaches to reality” (Leal, 2004a p56). It is also consistent with the methodology of Braud & Anderson, 1998, and with my acknowledgement of the socially constructed nature of knowledge. One is always going to be somewhere on the scale of insider to outsider on any particular issue.

The ‘insider/outsider’ status of a researcher should not be invoked as the primary determinant of their objectivity, validity or legitimacy. The primary determinant of objectivity adopted here is criticality – in this context, the ability of the researcher to identify the ways in which the matrix of relative insider and outsider positions influences their perspective and research processes. In Midgley’s terms, the decision as to whether one is ‘in’ or ‘out’ on any criterion, requires a value judgement about what is to be included and what is to be excluded (Midgley, 1992; 2000 p135-158). I have addressed this in previous chapters.

There are advantages and disadvantages of being an insider or outsider when conducting research. The central issues are being aware of the researcher’s position, how the advantages and disadvantages operate, and what, if anything, is required to address their influence. Despite its problems and common misapplication, the insider/outsider dichotomy can be of value when used within its limitations, particularly when addressing methodology and methods.

As a relative outsider in the context of my research into the Churches, I have certainly struggled to understand the ecclesiology of the subject denominations. I received some feedback from churchmen to the effect that they thought my conception of their particular Church’s orientation was wrong. Some of that feedback was, to my mind, more to do with my looking at three different denominations and my seeing the functions and dysfunctions of the denominations from outside their respective institutional cultures, a situation that is arguably advantageous depending on one’s point of reference. I also received a larger number of converse opinions that indicated that despite being outside the Church, I had managed to cut through to the core of the relevant issues affecting the ‘greening’ of these institutions. Some suggested that being outside the Churches’ cultures was a clear advantage, though not essential, in being able to examine and detect the various processes and challenges that the Churches face.

In the earlier stages of this research I was concerned about being unable to access some of the information that I considered necessary because of my relative ‘outsiderness’ in relation to the Churches. However, I found that very few research participants wanted to know whether I considered myself a Christian or whether I was of a particular denomination before they would engage with me or before they would offer information of a more personal or insightful nature.

What seemed to be more important was my ability to think and speak in ‘Christianese’ (after Lohrey, 2006) when engaging with research participants. My adoption of ‘Christianese’ was in no way deceptive, as I was simply attempting to work with the ‘language’ of my research participants to maximise mutual communication. As a simple example of this situation, I would use the term, ‘Creation’ when communicating with Christian research participants, rather than my preferred term of ‘Nature’ or other terms such as ‘Gaia’ or ‘the universe’. This was also a less confrontational approach and was therefore more likely to facilitate effective engagement on a topic that is full of sensitivities, both personal and institutional.

I also aimed to project my orientation through actions as well as words, hoping, and sometimes finding that I did not need to declare myself a Christian in order to be accepted by research participants as having a valid interest in and positive contribution to make to researching and potentially aiding the development of Christian environmentalism. Had I been pressed to declare and explain my religio-spiritual orientation to a research participant as a condition of their involvement, I would not have claimed to have a normative Christian view simply to gain the participant’s involvement.

There is no doubt that my relative ‘outsiderness’ in relation to the Churches posed some difficulties in terms of my gaining adequate knowledge of the religion, its theology and ecotheology, the Churches as institutions, and the social and economic context in which their ecological reformation has occurred and is occurring. In some instances, my not being an ordained and suitably influential member of particular denominations or parts thereof excluded me from access to particular processes and information. The other side of this is that being outside the Churches gave me a different (potentially but not necessarily better) perspective on the process of and limitations to their ‘greening’. Coming from a professional ecological background and from the environmental movement sometimes appeared to work in my favour but in other situations it seemed to work against me. The key point is that I was aware, as much as possible, of how my situatedness affected what I was able to observe and how I interpreted it.

6.4 Critical policy analysis

6.4.1 Overview

Policy analysis is a substantial body of literature in itself and an exploration of this field was beyond the scope of this thesis. Then fellow PhD student and former Commonwealth departmental policy officer, Brenda Foran (University of Western Sydney) provided me with expert advice on policy analysis, a succinct summary of the literature, and a recommended text (Hogwood & Gunn, 1984). Fortunately, that text is a critical review of the literature relating to policy-making and policy analysis. It provided me with sufficient knowledge to adopt a method

suitable for my purpose. I describe the particular approach that I employ in the following sections.

I apply critical policy analysis to the ecological policies of the three subject denominations representing mainstream Christianity in Australia. The analysis commences in c.1977, a date determined primarily by it being the year in which the Uniting Church formed. The analysis draws on a detailed Internet content search as the initial and primary data collection method. All of the subject denominations have large Internet profiles.

The analysis extends beyond a review of the on-line and related material. To the extent that it was possible in terms of the availability of information and other constraints imposed by the nature of this thesis, the analysis includes aspects of policy development and the relationship between policy and praxis. The latter is particularly directed towards the 'policy/praxis disjuncture' raised by writers including Dutney, 1991; Mische, 2000; Conradie, 2003; Collins, 2004 p121; Leal, 2006; Conradie & Martin, 2007 p441.[76] Though most do not use this term, they comment on the fact that whilst the Churches have produced ecotheologies and ecological policies, few manage to implement them or at least with any degree of depth and consistency. Goosen, 2000 p206, claims "the official statements from church leaders…often go no further than repeating pious platitudes." More recently, his fellow Australian author, Collins, 2004, observed that "The institutional (Catholic) Church's response to ecological theology is window-dressing and the engagement with environmental issues lacks substance and commitment".

Ruether, 2000 p613, expresses this view particularly clearly:

> "Only by embodying the vision of ecology and justice in its own teaching, worship *and praxis* (my emphasis) can the Church make itself a base for an environmentally responsible ministry to the larger community in which it stands. Eco-justice becomes central to the Church's mission only when it is understood as central to the Church's life. Anything less will lack credibility."

The problem of the policy/praxis disjuncture is also addressed in a general institutional sense by Dovers, 2005, and in relation to the Uniting Church in Australia's relationship to people with disabilities by Wansbrough & Cooper, 2004. I do not suggest that the problem is unique to the Churches, nor to their implementation of ecological policies.

My view is that policy analysis is not complete or necessarily meaningful unless it entails an assessment of the extent to which the policy can be, has been, and is being implemented. This means that in some cases, my consideration of what amounts to policy, and what is praxis

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[76] The listed authors include writers from Australia, South Africa, and the USA. I believe their views are representative of the Churches' problems with ecological praxis throughout the West.

tends to blur. For example, when a diocese decides to require its parishes to prepare their own ecological policy, is the diocese's decision an example of policy, or if it is enacted by the parishes, is it then praxis? A more useful distinction in this example is between symbolic policy and operational policy. I do not concern myself with the semantics, instead simply focusing on who is saying and doing what.

Whilst my emphasis is more towards policy outcomes, this does not exclude the contribution of purely symbolic policy (see for example Hamilton, 2007a). I also note that in some cases, there is little or no data available on the extent to which some policies have generated outcomes, for example, the effect of ecological education on the related attitudes and behaviours of students in the Churches' education systems. Because of the lack of such data or at least their ready availability to me, and because of the limited size of the thesis, the Churches' specific ecological educational policies are outside the scope of this research.

Because my emphasis extends beyond policy-development to policy implementation, I consider issues relating to the nature and effectiveness of operationalisation. This can entail the Churches' use of methods including education, incentives, coercion, and regulatory enforcement.

The policy analysis serves a dual role in that it also effectively forms a component of the conventional Literature Review section of a thesis. It was also important in informing other aspects of the research including issues of methodology and method.

The critical policy analysis method employed is an adaptation of a conventional policy analysis technique described by Hogwood & Gunn, 1984. Changes include adding an overt aspect of criticality, and adapting, to a minor extent, the use of this technique in relation to religious institutions.

6.4.2 Secular policy analysis meets the Church

The field of policy analysis and policy-making is an almost entirely secular domain in which the foci include government or public and corporate or commercial policy (after Torry, 2005). There are subsets of each, such as social, economic, and more recently, ecological issues. Many of these aspects of policy apply to both the public and commercial realms. Many could also apply to Church policy, and the Churches certainly have a long history of policy development in social welfare and related aspects of economics and governance, with recent ventures into ecological policy. However, it was unclear to me whether the field of policy analysis could be applied without modification to the domain of the Church, as it is neither a public nor a commercial entity. Whilst it clearly has aspects of both, it also has features that are arguably quite different to those generally encountered in either public or commercial domains.

In ‘Managing God’s business’, Torry, 2005, agrees that religious organisations are different to public and commercial organisations. He concludes that they are best categorised as “voluntary” organisations. These are also known as the ‘third sector’ (with government being the ‘first sector’ and the commercial domain being the ‘second sector’).

I also note that the small subset of policy analysis literature that I have dealt with is exclusively Western and tends to be divided into ‘schools’ that can be distinguished as British or American, see for example Hogwood & Gunn, 1984. As such, it does not deal with non-Western situations such as non-Christian theocratic states in which models of secular government and corporate policy development and analysis would need to incorporate overtly religious considerations. Perhaps the main exception would be the specialised literature that deals with policy-making and analysis in the context of the Vatican, an area that I have not chosen to explore.

I asked myself, “What is it about the Churches that make them different to either public or commercial sectors in the context of applying ‘off the shelf’ models of policy analysis that derive from a secular context?” Some of the features of the Churches that appear to distinguish them from conventional Western forms of government or commercial policy-making might be viewed as simply superficial variations. For example, the Church in all its varied forms and manifestations is ultimately a charitable and not-for-profit organisation[77]. This makes it different to most commercial corporations, which are profit driven, even if they have other motivations for operating. However, there are also corporations unrelated to the Church that also operate on a specifically not-for-profit basis. Does this mean that the nominally charitable nature and status of the Church makes it so different from commercial corporations that a different approach to policy analysis is required?

The modern mainstream Churches include business entities such as insurance firms, banks, retirement facilities, hospitals, investment companies, education institutions, employment agencies, welfare providers, conference centres and retreats (see for example Torry, 2005). The Churches are also significant owners and sellers of real estate[78]. In her article about the sale of land by Church groups Cummins, 2005, reports that “Property experts have estimated the big

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[77] This is not necessarily the case for some modern US-style Pentecostal Churches.

[78] There is a lot of speculation about the economic position of the Churches and about their real estate assets and transactions. None of them makes this information readily available, a situation that fuels suspicion and even conspiracy theories in this context. The Churches are very sensitive about their real estate dealings and this sometimes causes considerable concern within Church membership. I encountered Uniting Church members who readily expressed concern about the NSW Synod’s ownership of an office complex in Pitt Street Sydney valued in the tens of millions of dollars when the same organisation promotes notions of social justice and Christian charity. Similarly, I encountered concerns within Catholic ranks about land sell-offs that would result in the destruction of bushland, loss of significant visual amenity, and the privatisation of areas previously accessible to the public (as Church land).

five churches had revenue of more than $21.7 billion last year" (i.e. 2004). Citing an undated article in Business Review Weekly, she states, "The Catholic Church alone is thought to have more than $100 billion in property and other assets in Australia". She adds, "The Uniting Church has been involved in a number of deals, the most recent being last November when it outlaid about $16.5 million for 100 Mount Street, North Sydney."

Some would argue that whilst, in Australia, the Churches are legally recognised for taxation[79] purposes as not-for-profit organisations, they are functionally no different to commercial corporations other than in the way that 'profits' are used. Rather than returning profits to shareholders and/or directors as dividends, salaries and performance bonuses, the Churches put their profits back into their organisations and associated enterprises. Despite their at least notionally charitable ultimate nature, the Churches still have to consider their financial viability and some, particularly the emergent Pentecostal and the more evangelical traditional Churches, have a strong expansionist agenda that relies on substantial capital generation. For the largely declining mainstream Churches, the challenge is less about expansion and more about consolidation and moving into more profitable or at least more economically viable activities such as private education and retirement facilities.

The profit motive may operate differently in that personal financial gain is nominally not such a factor in the Church as it is in the business world. The fact that clergy have no equity in the Church and are avowed to poverty is a key difference, though this is not so clear when it comes to the fact that bishops receive a higher standard of accommodation than priests, extending to the point of relative opulence in the form of the traditional bishop's mansion or palace. However, the advancement or at least survival of the Church as an institution would appear to operate no differently to the goals of advancement or survival of commercial entities. Indeed, some argue that the Church is little or no different in function to business corporations, with the oldest, the Roman Catholic Church, seen as the first multinational corporation (Rifkin, 1992; Boyden, 2004 p102-3).

Indeed, the Uniting Church's NSW Synod uses the term 'profit centres' for component bodies that operate on a 'for profit' basis inclusive of charging churches and individual church members for their services.[80] Howe, 2002, discusses the shift towards more corporate,

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[79] Cummins, 2005, points out, "Unlike in most countries, they (Churches in Australia) do not pay tax on commercial businesses or capital gains tax on the sale of assets."

[80] http://pru.nsw.uca.org.au/aboutus.htm demonstrates the use of the term 'profit centre', as well as showing how some parts of the Church operate in fields no different to 'for-profit' businesses, e.g. the notoriously ecologically problematic field of so-called 'property development'. The website of the Property Resources Unit is also notable for the complete absence of any content relating to ecological considerations and management, and for its clear focus on maximising financial returns from real estate http://pru.nsw.uca.org.au/faqs.htm.

economically oriented business models in certain fields of Church activity such as welfare provision. He notes:

> "Whereas in the past the motives of churches and church agencies seem to have been primarily driven by religious or charitable motivations, this seems less true in recent times – not just in welfare but across the spectrum of church-based services and institutions. Many of the wealthiest private schools are owned and managed on behalf of the churches and religious societies. Similarly, the changing role of hospitals and private health insurance means that many hospitals established by churches and religious societies now serve higher income groups… For some agencies the original church base or religious base may no longer exist and agencies may become increasingly distant from their religious roots" (Howe, 2002 p6-7).

This leads to what is a very controversial topic, namely the question of whether the Church should be permitted to retain its tax exempt status as a registered charity (or group of charities) when it operates corporate entities that generate profits for the institution, and which in some cases compete directly with non-charitable businesses that are taxed. I do not explore this issue but raise it in addressing the question of whether the charitable taxation status and nominally charitable orientation of the Church warrants a variation to conventional policy analysis methods and if so, what are they and why are they needed?

My view is that the Churches are insufficiently different from for-profit corporations to warrant significant variation to conventional forms of policy analysis that are applied to the corporate domain. Whilst some of the differences between the corporate world and the Church may be seen as significant, they are not substantially different in terms of organisational function in relation to policy-making and thus to analysis. Furthermore, whilst the Church has, at least in theory, a religio-spiritual agenda at its core, its denominations, particularly the larger ones that are the focus of this research, have a multitude of business agendas in which profit generation has become the focus, even if such funds are intended for and used in a religious context. Though as Howe, 2002, points out, many church entities may now be at least functionally removed from their original religious orientation.

I note that Torry, 2005, examines religious and faith-based organisations, concluding that they are very different in structure to secular organisations. He sees religions as the most complex, followed by faith-based organisations, and then secular entities (see especially pages 176-177). Torry's perspective is credible and goes a long way to explaining some of the often confounding organisational structures and processes that I encountered during my research into the ecological policies, policy-making, and praxis in the three subject denominations. However, for the purposes of selecting and fine-tuning a policy analysis method, such differences, whilst important to understanding policy-making, do not appear to warrant a significantly different approach.

Having concluded that Churches are not radically functionally different to business corporations, I next ask, "To what extent are corporations different from government?" One similarity between the Church and government is that its most senior policy-makers are elected. However, in the Catholic and Anglican Church, they are not elected by 'the people' in the way that democratic governments are (at least in theory). The situation is somewhat different in the Uniting Church, which operates in a more democratic fashion[81].

The older and larger Churches are largely autocratic (or theocratic, in theory) and whilst they include democratic principles such as voting, and they certainly have their factions which function similarly to political parties, their leaders are not directly accountable to or elected by the full body of Church members. A comparison can be made with the process by which a Prime Minister is not directed elected by the people, but by Cabinet i.e. the senior ministers and would-be ministers within the elected party or coalition. This comparison is valid for the Anglican and Catholic Churches with their heads, the Primate and the Pope respectively. In contrast, the Uniting Church of Australia regularly and frequently elects a President through its National Assembly, which has members drawn from the State Synods (led by Moderators) and Presbyteries (regional groupings of congregations) and which are not restricted to clergy.

The Church is a complex and multilayered group of organisations and it has a clear division between its senior policy-makers – the autocratically appointed clergy, and its lay bureaucracy. The latter arguably functions just like governmental bureaucracy and could be termed the 'administrative' arm of the Church, being distinguished from the policy-making arm which in most cases is controlled by senior clergy or bodies that they effectively control. Despite a nexus of power, the administrative arm can function with little or no functional accountability and oversight from the policy-making arm, especially in terms of theological matters. This issue is given particular attention in the ecological context by authorities such as Uniting Theological College Lecturer Rev. Dr Clive Pearson[82], and Rev. Emeritus Prof. Barry Leal (pers. comm. 06/06), both of the Uniting Church.

The Church also has a religio-spiritual agenda that could arguably make it different to secular Western governments for the purposes of policy analysis. However, this largely depends on one's definition of religion and spirituality because some definitions would at least loosely extend to include political ideologies as 'religious' or at least 'quasi-religious'. Even with the

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[81] The Uniting Church of Australia uses consensus decision-making as its default position, only using majority voting under exceptional circumstances. The Catholic and Anglican Churches of Australia are more traditionally theocratic and hierarchical, being far older institutions, and where voting occurs, it is by majority decision, not consensus. The Uniting Church uses its less hierarchical, consensus-based approach to distinguish itself from the older Churches (see for e.g. http://nsw.uca.org.au/whatis.htm - Structure and Administration).

[82] http://www.utc.uca.org.au/clive

separation of Church and State that is intended to exist in most Western democracies, there is an assumption in this dichotomy that the State, being separate from the Church, is inherently secular in the sense of non-religious and non-spiritual. This is clearly not the case because individuals within government and indeed some parties and factions thereof, can and do have sometimes strong religious orientations that have significant influence on government policy and its implementation, (see for example Maddox, 2005b).

Without wanting to be mired in semantics and a potentially substantial philosophical debate on this issue, I believe that the religio-spiritual aspect of the Church does not make it so different from the public or commercial sectors to warrant a different approach to analysis of its ecological policies. However, I acknowledge the important structural differences of the Churches and their consequences for policy-making (as per Torry, 2005). Governments and corporations can be significantly driven by what are directly or indirectly religious and spiritual motivations. Some are so influenced by these factors as to arguably be little different from the Church. Equally, the Church can be greatly influenced by internal and external politics and economics.

I have concluded that whilst the Church has features that differentiate it from government and corporate organisations, it is not so functionally different as to warrant a unique or substantially modified method of policy analysis. The differences and complexities that exist can be addressed through any sound policy analysis method, i.e. one that is able to acknowledge the specific circumstances of the policy-generating organisation under scrutiny. I have chosen to apply a standard policy analysis model that I believe is suited to Church ecological policy but in doing so, I am mindful of special issues related to the Church's nature. Similar to my methodology, my approach to policy analysis allows me to be flexible and adaptive, acknowledging that I am new to this field of research, and that I do not profess to have 'the answer' (if there is one) or to know the optimal technique to apply in this circumstance.

6.4.3 Composite (descriptive/prescriptive) analysis

Discussing approaches to policy analysis, Hogwood & Gunn, 1984 p62, state:

> "A policy analyst must be aware of the existence and importance of models in everyday life as well as in the literature of policy studies. He [sic] should be explicit and self-critical about the models he [sic] himself uses. As Allison, 1971 says, 'the fact that alternative frames of reference… produce quite different explanations should encourage the analyst's self-consciousness about the nets he [sic] employs'. The 'policy frame' he [sic] adopts in defining a problem will certainly influence his [sic] solution to the problem."

This is an argument for criticality – an approach adopted in the methodology of this thesis. In choosing my approach to policy analysis, I frequently reflected on the influence that my

orientation brings to this choice, the manner in which I implement it, and the consequences for the outcomes. This was an on-going process throughout the analysis and it allowed progressive outcomes from the analysis to feed back into the method and to some extent the methodology.

After Hogwood & Gunn, 1984 (esp. Ch.4), I employ a composite policy analysis model to analyse Church ecological policy. I first employ a descriptive approach, i.e. addressing 'what is' inclusive of 'what has been'. I follow this with a prescriptive approach to examine the extent to which historical and current (at the time of analysis) policy is able to meet its apparent goals. In adopting this approach, I note that the descriptive component is restricted to a listing of the policies that came to my attention through research. I do not attempt to create a descriptive model, ideal or symbolic, to explain the historical development of Church ecological policy. It is in the prescriptive component, i.e. 'what ought to be', that I include the development of a model, or more accurately a framework, against which I analyse the policies. The framework is simple and is based on the idea that to be substantive and effective (in my terms), Church ecological policy should:

- be ecologically literate/grounded or 'biosensitive' (after Boyden, 2004), having an "ecological model of reality" (Goosen, 2000 p205, citing Birch & Cobb Jr, 1981);
- be developed beyond so-called 'motherhood statements' or rhetoric, i.e. it must be relatively detailed and specific in terms of its purpose and intent; and
- employ a 'whole of Church' approach that includes and values both top-down and bottom-up policy development and implementation, combined with a clear and viable method of implementation. It must provide "a positive example of…the ecological axiom that the truth of theology is in the doing" (Goosen, 2000 p207/8).

I have not termed my approach an 'ideal-type' model after Hogwood & Gunn, 1984 (Ch.4) because I do not view it as offering an unachievable state, for example the frictionless engine. Instead, I see the prescriptive component as offering an achievable state but one that is not necessarily intended to be reached immediately.

I have established the framework purely to examine the extent to which a policy or policy development process is able to achieve what I perceive the underlying goal of such policy to be. I see this goal as what is variously termed 'ecological sustainability' or more appropriately in this context, 'ecojustice'. I take this position based on a belief that the Churches are trying to formulate and implement policy that will move society or at least the parts that the Church influences, towards a state of social and ecological justice. For the Churches, this is an ecotheological concept with a range of complexities that I do not expand on here.

My approach is positive (not positivistic) in that I do not see the Churches as producing and implementing ecological policy for what might be termed inauthentic or cynical reasons. Some authors have suggested that the 'greening' of Church policy is simply a desperate move by the Church to better align itself with broader society (so-called 'social relevance') and to potentially retain or even recruit members. Based on my reading of the policies, the ecotheology underpinning them, and discussions with some key Australian figures in Church policy development, I do not believe this to be the case. However, I acknowledge that there are certainly elements within at least some of the Churches, particularly those of an evangelical orientation, who see ecological policy-making and a modicum of simplistic praxis as a necessary but minor tweaking of the 'business as usual' agenda that is warranted primarily, if not exclusively for the political and membership gains it might bring.

In describing this approach, I am not suggesting that it should be considered a standard for all such policy, instead that it should be viewed as an end-point or destination. It would be unreasonable to expect Church ecological policy to emerge in immediate compliance with this model as policy-making is an incremental process – it has to be developed and as such, will not be 'perfect' in its first form, or necessarily after several iterations.

Hogwood & Gunn, 1984 Ch.4, describe the differences between views of policy-making and related analysis as incremental or rational. I reject the 'rational' view because it is an ideal-type that assumes policy makers and policy-making can be perfectly 'rational' and it does not consider who or what defines rationality in this context. It also fails to take account of the influence of values in affecting 'rationality' (Hogwood & Gunn, 1984 p48). For example, a political regime may view its policy on ecological matters as 'rational' in that it produces rapid income for the regime and its select beneficiaries, promoting employment growth on a time scale and in locations that favour the regime's political prospects. Yet the same policy when viewed from an ecological perspective or from that of the traditional owners, whose lands are being exploited by the regime, would appear anything but rational due to its short-sightedness, racism, and interspecies and intergenerational inequities.

This raises an aspect of my consideration of a policy's context. For example, it is an important part of policy analysis to examine contextual issues such as the 'political' setting in which policy emerges and develops, including its relationship with other policies, and events within and outside the policy-making organisation. This is a similar notion to that employed in contextual theology[83] and to some extent in process philosophy, with the central tenet being that

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[83] Contextual theology "may be said to be that way of doing theology which seeks to explore and exhibit the dialectical relation between the *content* and the *setting* of theology" Lehmann, 1972. A more extensive explanation is available at http://theologytoday.ptsem.edu/apr1972/v29-1-editorial2.htm.

the subject material cannot be properly understood if removed from its context. This also equates to an aspect of criticality. The opposite approach might be literalism, which in a theological sense entails taking scripture/policy and interpreting it without any reference to historical context including translation and editing issues. My approach is thus hermeneutic, being based on the concept that the parts and the whole must be interpreted from each other whilst acknowledging the subjectivity of knowledge, (see for example Wiseman, 1993 p.115).

6.5 Internet-based policy research

6.5.1 Why the Internet?

Despite extensive literature searches, I was unable to detect publications that specifically address mainstream Christian environmental thought and action in Australia. Goosen, 2000 devotes some comment to Christian environmentalism in Australia as part of a broader view of Australian Christian theology. Leal, 2004a, deals with Christian environmentalism in general, and comments briefly on the Australian context. I became aware of three PhD theses that dealt to some extent with particular aspects of Australian mainstream Christian environmentalism. However, two of these were incomplete and unavailable, and the third (John, 2005), relates mainly to the ecotheology underpinning policies, and is specific to the Uniting Church.

An unconventional research method had to be used to fill the gap in the literature. I chose to undertake extensive Internet-based research as the primary data gathering method used to determine the 'state of play' in regards to the ecological policies and praxis of the subject denominations. Internet searches were supported by following-up any significant leads or literature revealed through this approach via email, telephone or face-to-face interviews with individuals and/or organisations identified on-line or otherwise known to be potential sources for data, particularly that which is not accessible on-line.

A consideration in my choice of an Internet-based search was that I did not have any of the 'insider' contacts and information that a researcher who was also a Christian environmentalist might have. I had to learn afresh about the structures and specialised terminology associated with the three subject denominations. The Internet proved to be an effective way of obtaining much of this information and using it to gain more specific data about Christian environmentalism.

The Internet is now a significant source of information for people seeking information in general and particularly for those looking for religio-spiritual information. In October 2004, the monitoring firm Nielson//NetRatings, stated that 66% of the Australian population made use of the Internet. The Anglican Archbishop of Melbourne quotes unverified data that "more people use the Internet to find information on religion and spirituality than have gambled on-line,

traded stocks on-line, or banked on-line"[84] in stating his belief that the Anglican Church should have a strong Internet presence.

The Reverend Michael Raiter, Lecturer at Moore Theological College in Sydney introduced a lecture[85] by stating:

> "If you conduct a net search on the Web - which is increasingly the place to start when researching a topic - and look up the websites about religion then you enter into a vast universe of information. If you narrow down your search to a topic such as 'Spirituality' you come across a myriad of sites, such as one called simply GOD.com. GOD.com proudly announces that spirituality is the biggest thing on the World Wide Web. In a world hungry for experience and satisfaction, religion is more popular than sex. It boasts that if one asks the Internet search engine Alta Vista to locate sites related to 'Sex' it will return 683,643 documents. However, request 'God' and it lists nearly three times as many: 1,772,945. So, the Internet which is often portrayed as the domain of sin and sleaze is even more the home of the supernatural and the spiritual."

The National Church Life Survey of 2001 revealed, "31% of Australian churches use the internet or email to communicate with attendees. The highest users of email and the internet were Baptist (53%), Pentecostal (54%) and small Protestant denominations (55%). Usage at mainstream denominations such as Anglican, Catholic and Uniting ranged between 20% and 30% of churches" (Bellamy, 2005). Given that Australia has a very high rate of increase in Internet usage (Lloyd & Bill, 2001), it is expected that these figures will have grown significantly by 2005-6 when most of the Internet research for this thesis was undertaken. NCLS researcher, Ruth Powell is quoted[86] as believing that the rate of Internet use is "much higher" than in 2001. The 2006 NCLS will provide data about the rate of Internet and email usage in this context but this information was not available in mid-2007. The gathering of such information has been a part of the US equivalent of the NCLS, the National Congregation Study since at least 1998 (Scheitle, 2005).

Sam Sterland, (NCLS Research, pers. comm., 09/05) noted that the Uniting Church (NSW Synod) was then in the process of appointing a minister to develop on-line content, indicating the extent to which it values the Internet as a ministry tool.

The Internet is also increasingly used as a research tool, including in the field of religion. In the late 1990's, Spuler, 2000, made significant use of the Internet and group newsletters when investigating the characteristics of Buddhism in Australia, and reported that she found it useful. The three Christian denominations that are investigated in this thesis are much larger and

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[84] http://www.melbourne.anglican.com.au/intro/welcome.html accessed 05/05.
[85] viewable at http://www.sydneyanglicans.net/culture/thinking/383a/
[86] http://www.ncls.org.au/default.aspx?docid=3536

more established than Buddhism in Australia (Spuler, 2000), and Spuler's work was conducted several years ago, when Internet use was far lower than at present.

Scheitle, 2005, used external website hyperlinks as an indication of the social (functional) and symbolic (notional) boundaries of a subset of congregations in the USA during 2004. I adopt a version of his method in this thesis. I examine interconnecting hyperlinks on Church websites to indicate the extent of connectivity between the ecological policies, policy-making bodies, and points of praxis within the various parts of the Churches. External hyperlinks on Church websites can also signal interaction or endorsement of Christian and secular environmental organisations where the Church website links to, for example, the website of the Australian Conservation Foundation.

In an article entitled, 'Religion and science', (Bainbridge, 2004), used a "massive" Internet-based questionnaire to address attitudes towards the future of religion, science and any relationship between them.

In mid 2005, the following comment on the move of the Church into the Internet appeared on the ABC's Religion Report website: "It's been reported in Britain this week that thousands of worshippers are listening to sermons on their iPods and other MP3 players. One Anglican vicar posted some of his homilies on the online music store iTunes, and he was astonished when two and a half thousand people downloaded them. He said it was wonderful to see technology enabling the church to remain in contact with people who were 'believers rather than belongers'[87]. It's called podcasting - or 'Godcasting', if you will" (Rutledge, 2005).

All of the three of the Christian denominations that are the subject of this thesis have a substantive Internet presence, with some having extensive links within and between their organisations, sometimes extending from the national administrative level through to regional bodies and down to an individual church. Thus, in researching mainstream Christianity's ecological policy and praxis, I considered the primary use of the Internet to be sound.

However, at scales below the national level, subsidiary organisations such as the regional administrative and semi-autonomous units known as a diocese (Anglican and Catholic Churches), did not always have substantive websites and few had internal search engines that could be used to search for key terms such as 'ecological' and 'environmental'. In such cases, manual searches were necessary.

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[87] The phenomenon of Christians who remain believers (i.e. affiliate as Christian) but who do not attend church or do not attend frequently and may not associate with a denomination is discussed by authors such as Millikan, 1981; Tacey, 2000, 2003; and Bouma, 2006. This is a growing phenomenon described as the deinstitutionalisation of religion.

This situation was much more restrictive at the parish level, (which represents a local grouping of churches), and at the individual church level, with very few parishes or churches having their own substantive websites. An exception was found in the diocese of Adelaide, where numerous parish websites were listed, though several of the links failed, possibly because these sites had been moved or closed. In some situations, content relating to local and regional environmental policy and praxis was available via the website of the next highest administration level.

Whilst the relatively poor availability of on-line information at the finer scale of Church organisation is a constraint, I initially considered this to be of little consequence because the hierarchical structure of the Churches indicated that matters such as ecological policy would be primarily a top-down process. I also believed that information about organisationally endorsed praxis would also be likely to be evident on the websites of the higher levels of Church organisation, i.e. national and regional bodies. It was only much later into the research process that I found evidence to suggest that my assumptions were only partially valid.

6.5.2 Data collection – the 'web'

My Internet research commenced in late 2004, with most conducted in 2005 and 2006. I revisited some key websites in 2007. The use of at least two searches for most of the websites that were initially found to have some ecological content proved to be useful in revealing the rate and nature of 'greening' in these parts of the Churches.

Data collection entailed visiting each of the three subject denominations' official websites, following any links that seemed relevant to ecological policy and action, and where available, using internal search features to look for pages containing keywords such as 'ecology', 'environment', 'ecojustice' and variants thereof. As my focus was on the official Internet presence of the denominations, the data was not subject to the problems of credibility that would be associated with a general search of the Internet for any relevant material. Where I followed links from official websites to off-site locations, I was careful to evaluate the extent to which any of the information was representative of the official position of the Churches or parts thereof[88].

The kinds of policy material that I searched for included official statements (for example encyclicals, pastoral letters, and synod decisions), religious teachings (liturgy), open letters, issue-specific publications, and media releases. The boundaries as to what is and what is not

[88] I obtained training in the skilled evaluation of Internet-based information as part of my completion of a Graduate Certificate in Information Literacy at the ANU.

policy in this context are often unclear. This is partly because the Churches do not necessarily produce formal policy statements in the same way that governments or business corporations do. Whilst all three Churches have bodies that deal with ecological policy, they have significantly different forms, with substantial implications for the nature, development, availability and implementation of ecological policy. Some of these differences are connected with long-established administrative and power structures in each denomination. Information about the different structures and their implications for policy and praxis are contained in subsequent chapters.

I made extensive use of hyperlinks in compiling the results of the research, particularly where the link is to a relatively large document. Whilst these were active when researched, some will have changed by the time this thesis is published. Indeed, during the research phase of this thesis, several of the relevant sites were redesigned, sometimes extensively, indicating that the denominations that operate them are expanding or at least updating their on-line presence. Others were several years out of date and did not change during the course of research.

Manual searches of websites did not consistently extend to checking all documents, such as archived newsletters, for ecological policy content. In most instances, I checked recent newsletters, event calendars and any similar links for relevant content. Checks included manual scanning or software-based searches of the text where the documents were in the PDF format. Unless specific information was detected or otherwise received, investigations did not extend to the parish level.

I also used the Internet in the form of email communication between myself and research participants, as well as other interested parties. Some of this communication was through existing email lists relating to Christian and multifaith ecological policy and praxis, for example Faith and Environment Network. I mention some of these contacts in the following section.

I also used the Internet to establish two Yahoo Groups where participants could share information on religious and spiritually motivated environmentalism. I did not use either of these groups in a formal manner, but they played a role in networking and building contacts.

The Christian Ecojustice Group that I established was the more academically oriented and national of the two Groups and I used it in part to discuss and share some of my research findings. It also revealed some of the policy and praxis challenges facing the Churches. It included researchers, authors, ministers (including Australia's first 'ecominister'), Christian ecojustice activists, and members of Church ecological policy and praxis bodies. The other group arose from a local interfaith workshop in Canberra on 'spirituality and the environment'. With its broader field of interest and a small geographic range, it was less relevant to this thesis.

I do not specifically report the information generated by these Groups in this thesis, in part because of the relatively small volume of material generated but also because it was not intended to be used in a formal way. Consequently, I did not ask participants whether any information they supplied could be used in this research. I did not perceive there to be any need for or value in seeking such consent retrospectively. Any information used in the thesis that derives from the Groups is used anonymously to protect participants' identities.

6.6 Policy research beyond the 'web'

In addition to the above techniques, I used existing hardcopy and off-line digital documentation (for example CD-ROM publications) in the literature review and as a source of references and links. In some cases, my initial search of Church websites provided links to important hardcopy literature. The majority of this material was not available through conventional academic literature searches, in part because it was intended for use exclusively within the Churches, and they have their own distribution networks.

Other research methods that I employed included attending a meeting of Catholic Earthcare Australia's Council to discuss my work, and attending and taking extensive notes from CEA's first national conference on climate change. I also presented some findings from my research at a series of workshops held by a local (Canberra) Uniting Church group who were in the process of preparing what they later called their 'Ecojustice Charter'. Because of that presentation and my input into other workshop sessions, I became the facilitator of the plenary session and of the process that preceded the drafting of the Charter. I did not intend that my involvement in these workshops be used as a formal research tool, however it did provide some insights into the processes of grassroots ecological policy formation in the Uniting Church, and it yielded some useful information about the associated challenges.

I also employed telephone and face-to-face conversations with some key people within the subject denominations to obtain information. I obtained some of these contacts through network 'snowballing'; for example, they may have come to my attention through various email lists. I used such contacts to obtain material that might not be on-line because of its currency; because it was in draft form; and/or because of its sensitivity to public exposure. In many cases, these contacts also provided an insight into the history of policy development, and the issues affecting praxis. They often provided a knowledge that greatly improved my understanding of the context in which policies had arisen.

Some of the key contacts included:

- Col Brown, an environmental lawyer and inaugural CEO of Catholic Earthcare Australia (until late 2006);
- Bishop Chris Toohey, inaugural Chairman of Catholic Earthcare Australia (until 2006);
- Dr Bill Castleden, Chairman of Doctors for the Environment and a former organiser of Anglican and broader environmentalism in southwest Western Australia;
- Cath James, Environmental Project Officer & leader of the Uniting Church's Earth Team;
- Bishop George Browning, principal author of the Anglican Church's national 'environmental statement', and Chairman of the international Anglican Communion Environment Network;
- Reverend Professor Barry Leal, ecotheologian, author, and founder of the Earth Ministry program within the Uniting Church (Sydney);
- Emeritus Professor Campbell Macknight an influential figure in Uniting Church ecological policy and a long-term member of the Australian Conservation Foundation;
- Reverend Peter Walker, a local Uniting Church minister and keen advocate of ecological reform within the Church;
- Vernon Bailey, a committed and practical environmentalist and the leader of a process of ecological reform in his local Uniting Church congregation;
- Dr Catherine Baudains, a member of the National Anglican Working Group and an academic at Murdoch University; and
- Deborah Guess, a PhD student in ecotheology, and a member of the Environment Commission and the Social Responsibilities Committee of the Anglican Diocese of Melbourne.

I also gathered information and contacts through publicising my research in a variety of formats as described below:

- I had a letter about my research published in The Web (newsletter of the Threatened Species Network, which had earlier run two articles about an aspect of Church environmental action in Tasmania). The letter called for input from readers who knew of examples of mainstream Christian environmental praxis relating to land management. I received several responses from a diversity of interested people. It was apparently reproduced in the newsletter of the Tasmanian Greens and it generated a particularly useful response from that source;

- I had a similar letter published in Insights (newsletter and e-zine of the UCA NSW Synod);
- I had a letter about my research published in the August newsletter of Sustainable Population Australia in reply to another letter to the editor which had called for strong protests against the Churches (in general) based on their alleged inaction on ecological matters;
- I had an article published in the newsletter of Friends Of Grasslands about existing and prospective collaboration between church groups and field naturalists in the protection and management of significant biota on Church lands;
- An article about my work was published in the newsletter of the Australian Association of Bush Regenerators (this was apparently a 'snowballed' article derived from another publication as I didn't submit anything directly to AABR);
- I wrote an article that was published in the peer-reviewed journal, Australasian Plant Conservation, about the prospects for ecologists and related practitioners to assist the Churches in managing their estates to protect natural heritage values such as remnant flora (see Douglas, 2006b);
- I had a similar article published in Environment NSW, the newsletter of the Nature Conservation Council of NSW (special edition on the theme of collaboration) (see Douglas, 2006a); and
- I attempted on several occasions to have an article or letter about my research published in the Australian Conservation Foundation's 'Habitat' magazine but I received no replies to emails or faxes. An executive member of the ACF later told me that this is typical of the magazine's operation and not a reflection of antipathy towards my research.

6.7 Summary of constraints and boundaries

The methods used in this thesis have several constraints, some of which are the result of deliberate boundary judgements, such as my primary focus on institutional policy, and others are inherent in the method itself.

The dataset that I gather from the Internet is only ever a snapshot of what I encountered during the search period. It can become dated as soon as it is gathered. The latter occurs in situations where the website investigated is already out of date, i.e. not representative of the current policy and praxis situation.

I have not assumed that all of the information relating to the Churches' ecological policy and praxis will be available on-line. Even though I employed other methods to extend my search beyond that which was on the Internet, the information that I obtained will not be

comprehensive. At the higher levels of the Churches, my information will be as comprehensive as was readily and publicly available. However, at the lower levels, and in relation to the more peripheral parts of the Churches such as their religious orders, it will be far from comprehensive.

International literature such as Mische, 2000; McFarland Taylor, 2002, 2007b, a, indicates that there are good reasons to prioritise bottom-up policy and more particularly, grassroots praxis. These and other authors have suggested that most ecological praxis occurs at the grassroots level and that there is a large gap between this and the top-down and largely symbolic institutional policies. However, in this thesis, I have prioritised top-down institutional policy, though I have attempted to capture at least some of the bottom-up policy and praxis, in part because there is inevitably a blurring of these two forces when it comes to praxis. For example, when searching for praxis based on institutional top-down policy, one can encounter praxis that is driven by grass-roots policy, by top-down policy or a mix. I prioritised the top-down institutional policy and related praxis partially because very few researchers appear to have used this approach within Australia, and I did not want to rely on inferences drawn from North American research.

Below the level of the regional bodies such as the dioceses (Anglican and Catholic) and the synods (UCA), the Internet search is very limited in its scope. However, this was not considered a major constraint because of my focus on institutional policy and because of the at least nominally hierarchical nature of the institutions. I assumed that most of the substantive ecological policy would be top-down. However, this did not address bottom-up praxis. In addition, when I tested the availability of Internet-based information below the diocese and synod levels, relatively little was available.

Whilst I focus on policy and related praxis, there is another more regulatory aspect to the Churches in the form of denominational laws. I specifically avoid any exploration of denominational Church law or any laws made by governments that affect the operation of the Churches. In the latter case, what little body of law exists predates any notion of the Churches having ecological responsibilities or indeed the concept of ‘the environment’. Such laws relate primarily to property and associated financial aspects of administration.

In the case of Church (or ‘Canon’) law, I do not address this area because despite extensive literature and Internet searches, I am unaware of ecological issues being addressed in this way at an institutional level. However, the Anglican notion of Canon Law is such that where a diocese or even a parish passes a formal regulation, such as the need for all new buildings to meet ecological criteria, such regulations are deemed to be ‘law’. For the purposes of this thesis, I treat any such ‘law’ as policy.

Chapter 7: Church structures and their relevance to ecological policies and praxis

7.1 Introduction

This chapter provides background information about the Catholic, Anglican and Uniting Churches of Australia that is important for understanding their ecological policies and praxis. I first provide some international context relating to the organisational and associated policy-formulation structures of the denominations. I then provide some policy analysis. I provide information about the organisational structure of the Churches only to the extent that it is useful for understanding how this influences ecological policy-making and praxis. For detailed information about the organisational structure and demographics of the Anglican, Catholic, and Uniting Churches in Australia, refer to the relevant chapters in Hughes, 2004b.

7.2 International context

A notable difference between the Anglican and Catholic Churches of Australia is that the Anglican Church is wholly self-governed and not answerable to the Archbishop of Canterbury in the UK. The only external ecclesiastical authority that could significantly direct the ecological operations of the Anglican Church of Australia is the international Anglican Communion. If the Australian Church made Canon Law or policy, or took action in strong contrast to the official Anglican Doctrine as determined by its international Lambeth Conferences, it could be removed from the Communion but is otherwise free to do as it sees fit.

This arrangement within Anglicanism contrasts with that in the Catholic Church of Australia, which is directly answerable to the Vatican, particularly on matters of Canon Law and theology. The Vatican has the capacity to take far stronger actions than simply disassociating itself from its Australian branch, and it can directly instruct Australian bishops on matters of denominational law and policy. As the Vatican appoints bishops, it can also remove them from office.

The Uniting Church of Australia is even more independent than the Anglican Church of Australia and it is not answerable to any international ecclesiastical body, though it is associated with the international Reformed Churches movement.

Because the Catholic Church of Australia is not as autonomous as the Anglican and Uniting Churches of Australia, it is particularly important to provide some international context before considering this denomination’s ecological policy within Australia. Councils that are

interpreted by the Vatican, which is headed by the Pope, determine the official ecotheological position of the Roman Catholic Church. This forms a significant part of the context in which Australian Catholic Church policy and praxis occur.

7.2.1 The Roman Catholic Church

I intend that the following information serve as background to the policies and praxis of the Catholic Church of Australia. Rue, 2006, provides a relatively current and more detailed history of the Catholic Church's attitudes towards Nature in Australia. Dixon, 2005, provides a detailed explanation of the denomination's organisational structure and demographics as an update of that provided by Hughes, 2004b.

A Council of all bishops produced the 1965 Vatican II statement. It called on all Catholics to "cooperate with people of good will to find solutions to the problems of our time", but the ecological crisis was not specifically mentioned. The recent history of the Catholic Church's involvement with environmentalism substantially began when Pope Paul VI commented officially on the Church's recognition of the "environmental duties" of the Church and its members' in 1971. This is reported to be a result of the primary Catholic aid agency, Caritas, recognising that its social welfare cause was linked with ecological concerns[89]. The Pope had earlier made an important ecotheological statement in his address to the Council of the then World Wildlife Fund in 1969: "The image of the Creator must shine forth ever more clearly, not only in his creature man, but in all of his creation in nature" (cited in Morris, c.2002).

Pope Paul VI then made a speech to the 1972 United Nations Conference on the Human Environment (also known as the Stockholm Conference) in which he proclaimed a strong environmentalist message[90]. Whilst the Church has altered the theology in that statement somewhat in more recent times, Pope Paul VI nonetheless uttered some significant statements such as:

> "So man is warned of the necessity of replacing the advance, often blind and turbulent, of material progress left to its dynamism alone, with respect for the biosphere in an overall vision of his domain, which has become 'one Earth', to quote the fine motto of the Conference".

Whilst not specifically mentioning the environment, in 1979 Pope John Paul II stated that:

> "Christians will want to be in the vanguard in favouring ways of life that decisively break with the frenzy of consumerism, exhausting and joyless.

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[89] Originally stated at http://www.columban.org.au/cmi/cmi_pej_lit03.htm, this link no longer exists on the revamped Columban website.
[90] http://conservation.catholic.org/pope_paul_vi.htm

> We must find a simple way of living. For readiness to create a greater and more equitable solidarity between peoples is the first condition for peace."

It seems that the Pope's next official involvement in ecological policy matters occurred at the interfaith dialogue on religious attitudes towards Nature in 1986 and which lead to the formation of The Alliance of Religion & Conservation.

The Catholic Catechism (which I understand to be the equivalent of a corporate mission/belief statement or central policy document) had been gradually updated in a manner that progressively lent support to the environmentalist cause. It was amended to "put respect for the integrity of creation as central to faith" in 1994.

The publication, 'Let the many coastlands be glad', written as a pastoral letter from the Catholic Bishops of Queensland provides some more recent background to the Church's ecological policy position through statements from Pope John Paul II.

In his New Year Message for 1990 (released 08/12/89) entitled 'Peace with God the creator – peace with all of creation', the late Pope stated "Christians in particular, realise that responsibility within creation and their duty towards nature and the Creator, are an essential part of their faith."[91] In the same Message, the Pope made the significant comment that "The ecological crisis is a moral issue…".

In his 1999 New Year Message, Pope John Paul II warned "the danger of serious damage to land and sea, and to the climate, flora and fauna, calls for a profound change in modern society's typical consumer life-style, particularly in the richer countries."

Again in 2001 in his General Audience at the Vatican, he described disregard for the integrity of Creation as "humiliating…the earth, that flower-bed that is our home", and he called Catholics to participate in "ecological conversion" to avoid planetary "catastrophe". In 2003, Pope John Paul II released a book of his poems, approximately one third of which are devoted to Creation themes (Brown, 2003).

The late Pope also issued a regional document entitled 'Ecclesia in Oceania', in which he describes the theological basis for requiring respect for the Creation. He declared, "It is the task of human beings to care for, preserve, and cultivate the treasures of creation" and stressed that "natural beauty of Oceania has not escaped the ravages of human exploitation", calling on the Churches of Oceania to care for features such as coral reefs and kelp forests.

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[91] Other quotes from that speech are shown at http://www.columban.org.au/cmi/cmi_pej_lit00.htm

The international Catholic Church has produced numerous documents and proclamations relating to its stance on ecological issues in general. Some of these include:

- ‘Peace with God the Creator - peace with all of Creation: General audience address of Pope John Paul II: Message for the celebration of the World Day of Prayer for Peace, 1990’;
- ‘Declaration on environment’: signed by Pope John Paul II and Patriarch Bartholomew I of Constantinople, Italy, 2002; and
- ‘The human person, the heart of peace’ (see the subsection: The ecology of peace): Message of His Holiness Pope Benedict XVI for the celebration of the World Day of Peace, January 2007[92].

At the time of writing, it was not yet fully apparent whether Pope Benedict XVI would maintain the relatively ‘green’ stance of his predecessor. Indeed, in various on-line fora and in emails, it was evident that at least some of the ecologically progressive Catholics in Australia were very concerned that the new Pope would take a decidedly backward step in this regard.

Well before Cardinal Ratzinger became Pope Benedict XVI, Catholic author and environmentalist Sean McDonagh expressed his concerns about the Cardinal’s views:

> “Pope John Paul's (then) recent concern for the environment is not shared so enthusiastically by other key figures in the Vatican. Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger… criticised environmentalists (and) threw cold water on the ecumenical meeting in Assisi (dealing with ecological concerns)... For Ratzinger, the Greens[93] are a blend of ill-defined romanticism with elements of Marxism and even stronger strains of liberalism – none of which he has much time for. According to Ratzinger, the Greens’ synthesis is based on a: ‘somewhat antithetical, somewhat antirational concept of man as united to nature. It is a concept that has an antihumanist element. It presents man as having, by his thinking and action, destroyed the beauty and equilibrium that once existed[94]. That would mean that man had moved backward in regard to himself. That seems to me the position of one who no longer recognises himself in himself, who even has a kind of hate of himself and his history’” (McDonagh, 1990 p191).

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[92] World Day of Peace message

[93] McDonagh is referring to environmentalists generally, not to The Greens as a national or international political party.

[94] There is no doubt that this is exactly what “Man” [sic] has done. The problem with the then Cardinal’s position is essentially one of denial linked to anthropocentric Cornucopianism. It appears that in later statements, he came to accept that humans have harmed and can potentially destroy or at least greatly degrade ‘the Garden of Eden’. Some of the then Cardinal’s concerns may relate to an aspect of some forms of Deep Ecology which even many outside Christianity would agree is ‘antihumanist’. However, it is unreasonable to view misanthropy or even the notion of humans as morally equal to all other beings, as broadly typical of environmentalism.

McDonagh's concerns about then Cardinal Ratzinger's views are yet to be fully allayed. However, during 2005 and 2006, some statements emerged from the Vatican to suggest that Pope Benedict was not inclined or perhaps able to revert to the decidedly anti-environmentalism orientation for which he was previously known. The first such statement was contained in the Homily of Pope Benedict 16, Sunday 24th April 2005, which in part said:

> "The external deserts in the world are growing, because the internal deserts have become so vast. Therefore, the earth's treasures no longer serve to build God's garden for all to live in, but they have been made to serve the powers of exploitation and destruction. The Church as a whole and all her Pastors, like Christ, must set out to lead people out of the desert, towards the place of life, towards friendship with the Son of God, towards the One who gives us life, and life in abundance" (Homily of Pope Benedict 16, Sunday 24th April 2005).

This text was cited by Bishop Toohey (inaugural Chairman of Catholic Earthcare Australia) as the first indication of what Pope Benedict's ecological policy might be (DeBlas, 2005).

Perhaps the most notable ecological policy statement by the new Pope is contained in 'The ecology of peace' section of his January 2007 World Day of Peace message[95]:

> "Alongside the ecology of nature, there exists what can be called a 'human' ecology, which in turn demands a 'social' ecology. All this means that humanity, if it truly desires peace, must be increasingly conscious of the links between natural ecology, or respect for nature, and human ecology. Experience shows that *disregard for the environment always harms human coexistence*, and vice versa. It becomes more and more evident that there is an inseparable link between peace with creation and peace among men. Both of these presuppose peace with God. The poem-prayer of Saint Francis, known as 'the Canticle of Brother Sun', is a wonderful and ever timely example of this multifaceted ecology of peace."

The next paragraph of the Pope's message rightly raises concerns of inequitable access to material resources and the associated conflicts that arise. Nothing is said of concerns relating to non-human Nature other than in the most general and cursory sense. The ecologically relevant sections of the Pope's message are anthropocentric and instrumentalist. However, there are only two paragraphs of the relatively short statement that focus on ecological concerns and the primary theme of the message is peace.

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[95] Link to the Pope's World Day of Peace message

Further evidence of deep anthropocentrism and instrumentalism is evident in Pope Benedict's official message to the President of the Pontifical Academy of Social Science at its meeting on the 28th April 2007[96]:

> "Everything that the earth produces and all that man transforms and manufactures, all his knowledge and technology, is meant to serve the material and spiritual development and fulfilment of the human family and all its members…. It is the duty of all peoples to implement policies to protect the environment in order to prevent the destruction of that natural capital whose fruits are necessary for the well-being of humanity…"

Pope Benedict also refers to "sustainable growth", something that is by definition, impossible. No mention is made of any regard for non-human Nature other than as something that is to serve humans. Whilst Pope Benedict's earlier anti-environmentalism stance has apparently mellowed, it seems that he is intellectually weighed down by the depth and duration of anthropocentrism in the Western Christian tradition, and arguably in Western society in general.

This thesis examines not only Church ecological policy but also whether and to what extent it is converted to praxis. In this regard, it is notable that in August 2007, the Vatican launched a budget airline for Catholic pilgrims.[97] The Vatican already part owned freight airline, Mistral Air, and it will use two of its jets to fly passengers to select world pilgrimage sites. This venture appears to be in complete conflict with notions of reducing ones' ecological impact. Jet air travel has notoriously substantial impacts on climate change.[98]

7.2.2 The Anglican Communion

As noted earlier, the Australian Anglican Church is not governed by an external organisation such as its denominational parent, the Church of England[99]. Whilst it is largely independent, the Australian Anglican position on ecological matters needs to be understood in the international context of the Doctrine of the Anglican Communion, which is still significantly influenced by the Archbishop of Canterbury and the Church of England.

A lecture by the Archbishop of Canterbury given at the University of Kent in March 2005 and entitled 'Ecology & Economy'[100] provides a relatively accessible perspective on his view of environmental matters as does his letter to UK political party leaders produced prior to the

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[96] Link to the Pope's Letter to the President of the Pontifical Academy of Social Sciences
[97] http://www.cwnews.com/news/viewstory.cfm?recnum=53138
[98] See for e.g. Monbiot, 2007 and Mackintosh & Downie, 2007.
[99] See http://www.anglican.org/church/ChurchGovern.html for further information about the structure and governance of the Anglican Church.
[100] http://www.aco.org/acns/digest/archive.cfm?years=2005&months=3&article=335&pos=#335

national election[101]. A link to the Environment Policy on the Church of England website also provides important context and is notable for its overt inclusion of ethical investment considerations[102].

The Church of England's Mission & Public Affairs Council has also produced a briefing document for the Synod in relation to environmental matters[103]. Whilst focused on UK-related issues, it also has a global aspect and some important theological information that helps to understand at least some of the broader Anglican perspective.

The Anglican Communion participated in the World Summit on Sustainable Development held in Johannesburg during September 2002. The subsequent Anglican Consultative Council, following the Summit's conclusion resolved to:

> "support actions in the five key areas identified by the Summit, namely water and sanitation, energy, health, agricultural productivity, and biodiversity and ecosystem management; add its voice of concern and support to those calling for a renewed and committed international approach to the control of those processes which increase global warming and affect climate change; and urge each member church of the Anglican Communion to celebrate the Sunday nearest to 1st June, World Environment Day as Environment Sunday in order to raise environmental awareness across the Communion."

Also in 2002, the Global Anglican Congress on the 'Stewardship of Creation' took place and provides additional international context to the Australian Anglican response[104]. It reveals that the environmentalist reformation of institutional Anglicanism significantly commenced after the 1998 Lambeth Conference and the subsequent resolution by the bishops of the Anglican Communion to address the 'environmental challenge'. To quote the Commission for the Environment of the Diocese of Canberra & Goulburn, "Lambeth saw the environment as one of the key issues of our time, recognising it as a *moral* issue and not just a matter of good housekeeping" (my emphasis). The document from the 2002 Congress suggests that despite the outcomes of the Lambeth Conference, the author is pleading for thorough and integrated ecological reform that goes well beyond symbolic policy-making and platitudes, right down to the detail of how each church and parishioner operates. It is also noteworthy that until the 1998 Conference, ecological concerns were not on the official agenda of the Anglican denomination. This explains in part the relatively undeveloped response to ecological issues seen in the Anglican Church of Australia at a national level when compared with its Catholic counterpart.

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[101] http://www.cofe.anglican.org/news/abcletter.html
[102] http://www.cofe.anglican.org/info/ethical/policystatements/environment.pdf
[103] http://www.cofe.anglican.org/about/gensynod/agendas/gsmisc767.rtf
[104] http://www.anglicancommunion.org/acns/articles/31/00/acns3108.html

The Lambeth Conference's recognition of the ecological crisis as a moral issue rather than simply an anthropocentric and instrumentalist concern is significant. The environmentalist movement is dominated by arguments that privilege a form of science, perhaps because science is, along with a form of economics, one of the two dominant knowledge systems of Western society. Environmentalism has increasingly pushed its case on scientific and economic grounds, with some believing these truths to be the whole story. Others know or feel that science and economics are only partial truths but that they are the 'languages' that are more acceptable to the bulk of society, or at least its decision-makers, than are the languages of morality and ethics.

Lambeth makes the connection between the scientific data such as the rates of species extinction, levels of pollution, changes and forecast changes to climate, etc., and the moral dimension in which these need to be seen. This is essentially a recognition of the difference between supposedly objective 'facts' and the values that can be attached to them.

Recognition of the moral dimension of the ecological crisis appears to be a significant catalyst, along with the increasingly clear impacts of ecological harm on people, especially the poorest, in motivating the Churches to take a relatively strong policy stance in the debate, especially in relation to global warming. It has also given a renewed voice to at least some environmentalist groups and individuals who can now speak more confidently of the moral dimension, even if they have to do so vicariously through the Church, for example, 'Changing climate: changing creation', a publication of some Australian Church groups and the Australian Conservation Foundation.

The global Anglican Communion is the international policy body for the Church but as noted earlier, its role is primarily advisory. It includes a body called the Anglican Communion Environmental Network (ACEN), which at the time of writing was chaired by Australian Anglican Bishop George Browning. This group held its yearly meeting in Canberra in April 2005 and produced what appears to be its first significant policy document in the form of a "Statement to the Anglican Communion"[105]. The Statement was officially noted and in June 2005, the Anglican Consultative Council, a major policy-making body of the Anglican Communion, endorsed its recommendations.

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[105] http://www.melbourne.anglican.com.au/environment/downloads/pdf/ACENstatement%20May05.pdf

I have reproduced the minutes of the Councils meeting[106] because of their significance for Anglican Church ecological policy:

> "The Anglican Consultative Council notes the Statement to the Anglican Communion from the ACEN, and endorses its recommendation that all Anglicans be encouraged to:
>
> - recognise that global climatic change is real and that we are contributing to the despoiling of creation;
> - commend initiatives that address the moral transformation needed for environmentally sustainable economic practices such as the Contraction and Convergence process championed by the Archbishop of Canterbury;
> - understand that, for the sake of future generations and the good of God's creation, those of us in the rich nations need to be ready to make sacrifices in the level of comfort and luxury we have come to enjoy;
> - expect mission, vision and value statements to contain commitment to environmental responsibility at all levels of church activity;
> - educate all church members about the Christian mandate to care for creation;
> - work on these issues ecumenically and with all faith communities and people of good will everywhere;
> - ensure that the voices of women, indigenous peoples and youth are heard;
> - press government, industry and civil society on the moral imperative of taking practical steps towards building sustainable communities.
>
> Asks Provinces to take the following steps urgently:
>
> - include environmental education as an integral part of all theological training[107];
> - take targeted and specific actions to assess and reduce our environmental footprint, particularly greenhouse gas emissions. Such actions could include energy and resource audits, land management, just trading and purchasing, socially and ethically responsible investment;
> - promote and commit ourselves to use renewable energy wherever possible;
> - revise our liturgies and our calendar and lectionaries in ways that more fully reflect the role and work of God as Creator;

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[106] http://www.anglicancommunion.org/acns/articles/39/75/acns3998.cfm

[107] It is unclear whether this refers specifically to the training of clergy or to theological training in general. If it refers to the former, it remains that there are no compulsory ecotheological or 'environmental' courses for trainee clergy amongst any of the three largest denominations in Australia.

- press for urgent initiation of discussions, which should include all nations, leading to a just and effective development beyond the Kyoto Protocol,;
- support the work of the World Council of Churches Climate Change Action Group;
- bring before governments the imperative to use all means, including legislation and removal of subsidies, to reduce greenhouse gases."

The above represents a significant advancement in the ecological policy of the international Anglican Church and forms the framework for related policy statements in Australia. In terms of the criteria that I have established for my analysis of Church policy, the Anglican Consultative Council's statement is ecologically literate and grounded; goes beyond rhetoric and 'motherhood statements' whilst providing an appropriate level of detail; and it represents a 'whole of Church' approach that is both top-down and potentially bottom-up in relation to policy refinement and implementation.

7.3 The national context – organisational structure

This section addresses national denominational structures to provide important context for the Churches' ecological policy-making and the effect that organisational divisions have on their ability to implement policy. In each of the following chapters dealing with the policies and praxis of each denomination, I discuss the bodies established by the Churches to formulate and promulgate their ecological policies.

7.3.1 The Catholic Church of Australia

As discussed earlier, the Catholic Church of Australia is the most populous Australian denomination in terms of both affiliation and membership. It is the largest religious institution in the nation and has a large number of component organisations with varying degrees of autonomy. The following quote is included because it is useful for understanding the nature of the Catholic Church as an organisation within Australia:

> "The Catholic Church in Australia is not a single organisation. Instead, it helps to think of it as a large community of more than five million people, which, like other communities of such magnitude, is itself made up of very many smaller groups. Like groups in the Australian community as a whole, some of these Catholic groups belong to clearly defined structures with definite lines of authority, while others have a much looser relationship to the central structure. The Catholic Church operates on a principle of devolution of authority[108], so that organisations within the Church have varying degrees of autonomy and are responsible for their own finance and

[108] An aspect of the broader notion of subsidiarity.

> governance. …The structural relationships between these groups are very complex, and it is not a simple matter to describe them.
>
> Church structures can be considered to be of two types: those which relate to dioceses, and those that transcend dioceses. The Australian Catholic Bishops' Conference, as well as Catholic religious orders and lay organisations, are of the latter type. The work of Catholic organisations in education, social welfare, social justice, development, health care and so on involves both dimensions -- the diocesan and the transdiocesan -- and also involves organisations ranging from national commissions to local parish groups" (Dixon, 2004).

I obtained further very useful organisational information from the website of the Catholic Diocese of Maitland/Newcastle[109]:

> "In Australia, there are 32 dioceses in union with the pope. The Church defines a diocese as 'a portion of the people of God, which is entrusted to a bishop' or, as 'a community of Christ's faithful in communion of faith and sacraments with their bishop[110].' A diocese usually has a defined territory and comprises all the Catholics who live there: such is the case with 28 of the Australian dioceses. However, there are also four dioceses covering the whole country: one each for those who belong to the Ukrainian, Maronite and Melkite rites and one for those who are serving in the Australian Defence Forces[111]. The bishop 'governs the particular Church (diocese) entrusted to him with legislative, executive and judicial power, in accordance with the law.' The last phrase is important: not only are some matters regularly reserved to the pope, but in other matters the rights and responsibilities of individuals or groups within the Church are legally defined[112].
>
> In addition to his governing office, the bishop is his diocese's chief teacher of doctrine and leader of public worship. A bishop's involvement in the activities and institutions in his diocese is, in some instances, no more than consent and encouragement; in others, advice and guidance; and, in others, full ownership and direction. Dioceses are divided into parishes, each headed by a parish priest, appointed by and accountable to the bishop. A parish is 'a certain community of Christ's faithful, stably established within a particular Church'. Like dioceses, parishes are usually territorial, but need not be. According to Church law, a parish is a juridical person and can own and operate property and institutions. In Australia, most parish property is owned by a diocesan body recognised in state law. For more information visit the website of the Catholic Bishops of Australia."

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[109] http://www.mn.catholic.org.au/about/ourfaith.htm

[110] Bishops of both the Catholic and Anglican traditions are empowered under the doctrine of apostolic succession. At their consecration, they are deemed to inherit the 'powers' of the biblical apostles. This has implications for the extent and nature of their ecclesiastical authority.

[111] This chapter deals only with the territorial dioceses and with transdiocesan bodies that have addressed ecological policy and praxis.

[112] Such legislation is termed 'Canon Law'.

Dixon, 2004, 2005, provides further organisational information, along with some history and demographics.

Writing on the topic of the political structure of the Catholic Church, Murray, 2006, notes that one's conclusion as to the Church's political nature and functional structure depends on how you see it: If you see the Pope alone, the Church is an "absolute monarchy". When you see the bishops working with the Pope, "it appears as a monarchy with an active nobility or aristocracy. When bishops are seen in their own right and with authority in their own dioceses, it appears as a tiered monarchy. It is clearly, then, a complex entity in which tensions calling for adjustment are likely to arise." In Australia, a subset of those tensions can be encountered in much of the work of former Catholic priest, Dr Paul Collins (for example, 1995; 2000; 2004; 2007), and some of the publications of the reformist Catholic group, Catalyst for Renewal, especially its founder, Rev. Dr. Michael Whelan (for example, 2006b; 2006a).

7.3.1.1 Catholic Earthcare Australia

The Catholic Church of Australia established Catholic Earthcare Australia (CEA) in 2002 to address the call of then Pope John Paul II for an 'ecological conversion' of the Church. CEA is a transdiocesan and centralised body that functions as a specialist subcommittee of the Australian Catholic Bishops Conference (ACBC) within its Justice & Service Commission. It is now based in Canberra, presumably at least in part to reflect its national role and perhaps so that it can be closer to the nation's seat of political power. I discuss in detail the origins, nature, and activities of CEA in the following chapter.

7.3.1.2 Diocesan social and ecological justice bodies

At the diocesan level, the Catholic Church has a variety of bodies that address ecological concerns. Because of the prior existence of variously named social justice bodies, and the latter addition of ecological concerns to the Catholic worldview, many of the Catholic diocesan bodies that address ecological matters do so together with conventional social justice. Some of the Catholic diocesan bodies have names that do not immediately reveal that ecological concerns are now within their ambit. For example, some retain names such as the Commission for Justice, Development & Peace. Others have specifically added 'Ecology' to the bodies' names, and one example is closer to the Anglican approach, having a name that reflects its focus on ecological matters, though almost exclusively through education.

The Catholic approach at the diocesan level contrasts that of the emerging Anglican approach. The Anglicans tend to establish bodies that solely or at least primarily address ecological concerns, though these need not operate outside the notion of ecojustice. This may be because Anglican dioceses do not appear to have had a structure oriented towards social justice

concerns. Thus, they have created new bodies to deal with emergent ecological justice matters, rather than adding ecological justice to existing social justice structures.

7.3.2 The Anglican Church of Australia

The Anglican Church is the second most populous denomination in Australia, with ~3.7 million affiliates (ABS, 2007). The structure of the Anglican Church is similar to that of the Catholic Church. The primary holders of institutional power are the bishops, each of whom governs a diocese. Dioceses are divided into parishes, which are groupings of individual churches. The term 'congregation' is used variously to refer to a particular organisation within the church, for example a Religious Order, but also to a group who attend a particular church. "Archbishops are diocesan bishops with additional responsibilities as their particular diocese provides leadership for the province, or group of dioceses within a particular state of Australia. They are otherwise known as the Metropolitan" (Blombery, 2004) and are usually based in a capital city. Archbishops sometimes have 'auxiliary' bishops to aid them or to work in specific fields such as the defence forces.

There is not an Anglican equivalent to the cardinal of the Catholic tradition. However, unlike the Catholic Church of Australia, which is governed by the Australian Catholic Bishops Council, the Anglican Church has a single national leader termed the 'Primate' who presides over the National Synod. As of 2006, the Anglican Primate was Phillip Aspinall, Archbishop of Brisbane. Due to recent changes in procedures and to ongoing debate[113] about the proper role of the Primate, this appointment now has a relatively short fixed term of office – a situation very similar to the role of the national President of the UCA.

In strict administrative terms, the Primate is largely a ceremonial position, yet increasingly the position involves being the national spokesman for the Church, particularly in terms of dealing with media interest and tensions within the international Anglican Communion. The General Synod has been asked to consider making the position of Primate a full-time role, potentially based in Canberra, rather than the current situation where the Primate is also required to continue serving as the head of his (arch)diocese. The Primate does not have authority over his fellow bishops, at least not in the context of ecological policy – a field that remains outside the scope of current Church law.

The Anglican Church, originating from the Protestant Reformation, operates in a somewhat more democratic manner than does the Catholic Church, though it is by no means as

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[113] See for e.g. http://www.anglican.org.au/docs/B3A7ivAppPrimacy.pdf which described the modern role of the Primate and various attempts to modify that role – most of which appear to have failed, largely due to diocesan and regional rivalries and an inherent conservatism in the Church.

democratic as the Uniting Church and is still a hierarchical theocracy. Some environmentalist Anglican voices indicated to me that they see this as a significant factor in the relative ecological policy stance and actions of these denominations. I suggest that the greater autonomy of bishops within Anglicanism is a barrier to ecological reforms at the national level and to the presentation of a consistent public position.

The autonomy of bishops is such that each has virtually independent control over ecological policy and praxis matters. Because of this autonomy, one could expect to see considerable variation between the dioceses' ecological statements and actions, as these would largely depend on the orientation of each bishop and on other regional and local change agents within the Church.

7.3.2.1 Environment Working Group

As of March 2007, the Anglican Church uses an Environment Working Group as its national ecological policy body. I discuss the origins and functions of the Group in Chapter 9. Whilst CEA's staff and budget are small, the national Anglican Environment Working Group has neither staff nor a substantive budget. Such a situation is even worse than the norm described by Millikan, 1981, p104: "The church departments which deal with these (justice) matters are typically understaffed, overworked and constrained by financial difficulties." Despite its self-nominated agenda being relatively broad, the Working Group has been effectively restricted to providing very limited policy advice to the Church and it has no ability to implement policy outside its own very limited operations.

The Working Group fits the standard bureaucratic mould of the small and marginalised, under-resourced 'subcommittee' of interested individuals that allows the Church-proper to claim that it is doing something whilst simultaneously doing little or nothing at the national level. Nonetheless, the Working Group was responsible for the production of the only national Anglican ecological policy document and for getting the General Assembly to call on the Federal Government to sign the Kyoto Protocol. I discuss these achievements in Chapter 9.

7.3.2.2 Diocesan Environment Commissions

Environment Commissions or similarly named bodies are sometimes, though rarely present at the diocesan level. These bodies only have authority at that level and only exercise that authority with the approval of the resident (arch)bishop. There is not a formal standard for their structure, functions or terms of reference, though most are a variation on the model pioneered in the Diocese of Canberra & Goulburn. Environment Commissions also exist in the archdioceses of Adelaide and Melbourne, and the dioceses of Newcastle and Grafton. The Commissions generally formulate policy and provide advice to their bishop, other diocesan bodies, parishes,

and potentially to the national Environment Working Group, though there is no formal connection between diocesan bodies and the Working Group.

Because they are closer to the level at which most operational policy is implemented, Diocesan Environment Commissions can have a direct role in driving praxis at the diocese and parish level, as long as they have the support of their bishop. For example, a Commission can recommend and gain support for a policy that requires all buildings and renovations in the diocese to meet particular standards for energy and water use efficiency. A Commission can also make a policy recommending that all electricity purchased by the diocese be 'green power'. However, in contrast to new buildings and renovations which are largely funded by and require the formal consent of a diocesan authority, the purchasing of electricity within each parish is the responsibility of each parish council, and as a result, it appears that they cannot be required to buy 'green power', they can only be encouraged to do so.

The situation is different in parts of the diocesan organisation controlled by diocesan bodies, for example aged care facilities. In such circumstances, the diocesan authorities can decide on issues such as energy management. Such complex structures are based on what is ultimately a Catholic Church principle of subsidiarity: namely, that authority should be vested at the lowest level of the structure that it sensibly can be[114]. Thus, parish councils control the local churches and related structures, but the diocese controls facilities that operate beyond the parish scale, such as aged care facilities. Subsidiarity poses a serious constraint to the ability of Diocesan Environment Commissions to convert their policies into diocese-wide praxis.

The structure of the Anglican Church is such that a diocesan Environment Commission can, with the support of its bishop, formulate and implement a wide range of substantive ecological policies that may have no formal connection with other ecological policies and praxis within the national Church. This means that where there is a progressive Commission and bishop, policy and praxis can be far ahead of and can even lead national developments. Indeed, as is revealed in Chapter 9, it was the work of one or two of the first Diocesan Environment Commissions that pushed the General Synod of the Anglican Church to form its Environment Working Group.

With very little ecological policy-making at the national level, and with the administrative implications of the Anglican Church's structure, it is not surprising that most ecological policy-making and praxis is seen at the diocesan level. However, as is discussed in the chapter dealing with Anglican policy and praxis, both such activities are very patchy in their occurrence at the

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[114] Subsidiarity and its implications for the Churches' implementation of ecological policy is discussed further in section 11.1.4.

national scale. This is to be expected given the extent of theological diversity and even conflict within the Anglican Church of Australia, which is increasingly dominated by the conservative, Evangelical, growing, and large Archdiocese of Sydney[115]. Virtually all other parts of the Anglican tradition in Australia are in steep decline and face problems with an ageing membership and clergy, deficits of clergy, closures and amalgamations of churches and parishes, and financial difficulties, especially at the parish level (see for example, Bouma, 2006).

7.3.3 The Uniting Church of Australia

The Uniting Church in Australia (UCA) formed in 1977 through the merger of the Congregational Union, Methodist, and ~75% of the Presbyterian denominations. It is the third most populous denomination in Australia behind the Catholic and the Anglican Churches. As of 2001, it had ~300,000 members and 1.3 million claimed associates (people who list their religious affiliation as 'Uniting Church' in the 2001 national census) (ABS, 2001; Bellamy & Castle, 2004). By 2006 its affiliates had declined to ~1.14 million (ABS, 2007).

In terms of weekly church attendance figures from 2001, the UCA still rates as third largest but only just ahead of the Baptist and the Assemblies of God denominations (Bellamy & Castle, 2004). The UCA has a far smaller number of members and claimed associates than either the Anglican or Catholic Churches but its weekly attendance figures from 2001 were relatively close to those for the Anglican Church in absolute terms and much higher than the Anglican Church in relative terms (ABS, 2001; Bellamy & Castle, 2004; Brighton *et al.*, 2004; Bellamy, 2005). Of the three largest denominations ranked by membership and claimed associates, the UCA has experienced and is predicted to experience the most dramatic rate of loss of members and associates (ABS, 2001; Bellamy & Castle, 2004; Brighton *et al.*, 2004; Bellamy, 2005; Bouma, 2006).

The Church's Internet home page[116] states that the UCA has 48 schools and >20,000 employees engaged in community service work. As such, it is a significant institution, even by corporate standards. It further notes that the UCA "has long taken a role in the political arena, encouraging moral, social and ethical integrity…has been at the forefront of Aboriginal rights issues… and has taken a stand on environmental issues…" (the inference being that this was a progressive stance).

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[115] For further comment on the orientation and influence of the 'Sydney Anglicans' see for e.g. Tacey, 2000; Brighton *et al.*, 2004; Carnley, 2004. Some commentators regard Sydney Anglicans as wholly uncharacteristic of the denomination in Australia and there is some talk of a potential split that would see the Sydney Anglicans form something like an Evangelical Anglican Church, similar in some ways to forms of Anglicanism seen in the USA and in Africa.

[116] http://www.uca.org.au/ or http://www.unitingchurch.org.au/

The UCA's highest decision-making structure is its National Assembly[117]. The National Assembly brings together the State/Territory-based organisations termed 'synods'. 'Synod' is a term also used in the Catholic and Anglican Churches but in that context it simply means 'meeting' and can take place at the diocesan, State/Territory, or national level. In the UCA, 'synod' refers to a particular organisational structure. The UCA divides Australia into 6 synods. Northern Synod encompasses all of the Northern Territory, a portion of northern South Australia and the northernmost section of Western Australia. Victoria and Tasmania are now covered under a composite synod based in Melbourne, though this amalgamation is relatively recent. The ACT is and apparently always was within the NSW Synod. South Australia, Western Australia and Queensland have their own synods whose boundaries are similar to or the same as those of each state.

Below the level of the synods are presbyteries, which are regional groups of churches – akin to a version of the Catholic and Anglican dioceses, or parishes, depending on the presbytery's size. For example, the Northern Synod comprises two very large presbyteries that are at least equal in area to the largest Anglican or Catholic dioceses. Because of its orientation towards greater autonomy for its indigenous members, one of the two Northern Synod presbyteries covers the whole area of the Synod but relates only to indigenous congregations and ministries[118]. Similarly, the Synod of South Australia only has the one presbytery that covers the same area. Yet in highly urbanised areas such as Sydney, presbyteries are numerous and far smaller. Presbyteries are comprised of individual churches, congregations, patrols and missions. In some remote and sparsely settled areas, there are no churches and no congregations, but the Church maintains a roving presence through its 'patrol staff' attached to a unit called Frontier Services[119].

7.3.3.1 UnitingJustice

In March 2003, the Uniting Church established UnitingJustice[120] as its national body that jointly addresses "social and ecological justice and peace". UnitingJustice is a reworking of earlier administrative structures that placed ecological concerns under the former Assembly Social Responsibility & Justice Committee. UnitingJustice is a body of the Church's National Assembly – an arrangement that equates to the placement of CEA as a body of the Catholic Church's Bishops Conference. The National Assembly placed 'ecological justice' matters within UnitingJustice but specifically under the domain of a subsidiary Task Group. As of

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[117] http://assembly.uca.org.au/home/
[118] See the Congregations link at http://ns.uca.org.au/
[119] See for e.g. the Presbyteries link at http://ns.uca.org.au/
[120] http://nat.uca.org.au/unitingjustice

23/03/06, the organisation's website does not describe the structure, specific functions or resources of this Task Group.

UnitingJustice Australia's official mandate is to:

- "Pursue the most effective strategies for the realisation of the mission;
- Identify critical issues of national and international significance and develop a considered position on these;
- Participate in public debate;
- Advocate on national policy issues;
- Educate, inform and resource the church, to engage in actions for social and ecological justice and peace;
- Act on issues of injustice within the Church; and
- Advise Assembly, ASC, the President and the General Secretary."

The decision not to have separate bodies for ecological and social justice matters is consistent with the theology of 'ecojustice', in which it is recognised that, at least at a coarse policy level, social and ecological justice are interlinked. This organisational structure sets the UCA's approach apart from that of the Catholic and Anglican Churches, which maintain separate bodies for dealing with these nominal fields. Whilst keeping social and ecological justice concerns under the one organisation has potential benefits in terms of promoting a more holistic approach, it also means that scarce resources such as staff are shared between these two fields.

It also remains evident that despite combining the nominal fields of social and ecological justice, the organisation and the Church still treat them as substantially separate matters, only occasionally interconnecting them and then, mainly in the case of more obvious interactions such as the clearing of rainforest and resultant water pollution in 'developing' nations. However, I am not aware of any arm of government in Australia that manages to fully integrate the bureaucratic domains of 'environment' and 'welfare' or social policy in general. Tackling the requirements of ecojustice on its own terms requires addressing anthropocentrism and some deep philosophical, political and administrative divisions that extend well beyond any of the Churches.

UnitingJustice provides and implements ecological policy but only has advisory power outside its own domain unless specifically empowered by the National Assembly to which it is answerable. It does not have the power to direct lower administrative levels such as the state-level Synods or parts thereof.

As of March 2006, the UnitingJustice website provided a central repository of the denomination's ecological policies in the form of position papers, national assembly resolutions,

resources for congregations, and submissions[121]. However, access to this material via the denomination's home page is not so direct and requires either knowledge of the structures and functions within the Church, or the use of the internal search engine. There is no direct link to UnitingJustice from the home page, despite the fact that links are provided to two other national Church organisations.

7.3.3.2 Synod and presbytery bodies

Similar to the Anglican Church, the UCA has a small number of ecological policy and praxis bodies at the sub-national level, with the primary example being the Earth Team that operates in the Synod of Victoria/Tasmania and its minor derivative in the Synod of New South Wales. Only the Victorian/Tasmanian Earth Team had any substantial on-line presence or recognition in publicly available Synod documents during the period of this research. It has a part-time staff member based in Melbourne and is administratively part of the Synod's Justice and International Mission section. Smaller scale presbytery (the equivalent of a diocese) or individual church bodies concerned with ecological policy and praxis may exist but lack a readily detected on-line presence.

The state-based Synod structure of the UCA may be an important structural difference to the other denominations in relation to the formulation and implementation of ecological policy. UCA Synods are essentially far larger versions of the diocesan administration seen in the Catholic and Anglican Churches. The Catholic and Anglican Churches also have synods but these are little more than state and national gatherings of the diocesan leadership. In contrast, UCA Synods are substantive administrative units that effectively replace, at a state level, the functions of Catholic and Anglican dioceses.

UCA Synods have more resources, including staff, and they are not answerable to a single senior clergyman the equivalent of a bishop. Instead, the Synods are headed by an elected Moderator backed by an extensive administrative hierarchy (at least in the eastern States). Moderators have fixed terms rather than lifelong tenure.

In contrast to the diocesan structures of the Catholic and Anglican Churches, UCA Synods represent a far more modern, democratic and secular structure, arguably with a lesser theological orientation and a greater administrative focus. The managerial models of Torry, 2005 p176, would place the UCA Synods closer to the 'utilitarian/bureaucratic' end of the spectrum, with the dioceses of the Catholic and Anglican Churches being at the 'normative/traditional' end.

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[121] http://nat.uca.org.au/unitingjustice/cherishingcreation/environmentaljustice/index.htm

The Synod structure is likely to be a significant factor in the existence and endurance of the Earth Team – a body unlikely to exist at a diocesan level, in part due to scale. Earth Team is also apparently unique amongst the three denominations in that it is dominated by younger (<40 years) people and an informal, action-oriented agenda. Again, it has no power to implement ecological policies outside its own operations and can only advise other levels of the Church. Its activities include functioning as an advisory and education body but only on an invitation basis. I discuss the Earth Team further in Chapter 10.

7.4 Summary

Each denomination has a different structure in relation to ecological policy formulation and implementation. None has core institutional ecological policy bodies that also have the power to enact or enforce policy outside their own operations. This is not a problem unique to the Church. Somewhat similar situations exist in most forms of Australian government. Even where large and relatively powerful 'environment departments' exist, they are always subsumed by more established and powerful aspects of administration and government such as finance, and some areas of operations are effectively or completely beyond their reach, for example, the activities of the defence force. Similar situations can be expected in the business world, with 'environment departments' generally being structurally marginalised – they can produce PR-winning policy documents and can provide annual 'state of the environment' reports, but few if any would have the power to significantly alter the way that the firm operates.

The situation in the Churches reflects the situation in ecological policy and praxis across most of society's institutions. Ecological concerns are rarely given the administrative force and resources necessary to drive whole-of-institution reform – they are usually a negotiable and peripheral extra.

A key structural limitation to the Churches' ability to convert their national policies into institution-wide praxis is the fact that most of the power to enact policy is at the diocesan or synod level. These bodies are virtually autonomous and able to ignore national denominational policy, even where this clearly conflicts with the official theological position of the Church and its leadership.

The gap between denominational ecotheology and its related policies is not filled by the enactment of Canon Law or its equivalent. Despite popular notions of the Churches being strongly hierarchical and ‘top-down’, at least in the context of national ecological policy this is not functionally the case. This is in part because the hierarchies are yet to make ecological policies administratively enforceable. This contrasts with other more traditional areas of theology and policy such as finance, and more recently, child protection.

Nonetheless, all three of the subject denominations have produced ecological policies, and all three demonstrate ecological praxis to varying extents and in different ways. Even though the vast majority of their policies are externally directed and voluntary, there are still substantial instances of praxis responding to and perhaps even informing ecological policies. I address these in the following denominational chapters.

Chapter 8: Catholic Church ecological policy & praxis

8.1 Introduction

Because of the large volume of material generated by my research into the ecological policies and praxis of the three subject denominations, I present this chapter and the following chapter as summaries. My research initially generated 20-30,000 word chapters for each of the three denominations, however in part because of space limitations and some key differences between the denominations I chose to condense the chapters dealing with the two older Churches. Most of the policies referred to are available on-line through the hyperlinks provided in the text or in footnotes.

Throughout this chapter and its two companions relating to the other subject denominations, I first summarise their national policies, followed by any related national praxis. The latter is rare because most of the national bodies are focussed on policy-making and because most praxis occurs at or below the diocesan (Catholic and Anglican) or Synod (Uniting) level. I then summarise my findings relating to diocesan policy and praxis, occasionally extending down to the parish level. In part because of the volume of research involved and the level of difficulty in obtaining the information, this thesis has not focused on policy and praxis at or below the parish level.

8.2 National policy and praxis

Whilst modern Catholic environmentalism and related policy dates back to the late 1970s in terms of input from the Vatican, *official* Australian Catholic Church ecological policy first emerged in 1991 but was not followed-up until 2001 when ecological concerns were again raised but in a broader social justice context. In 2002, the Church-proper released the second specifically ecological policy document, this time with more of an Australian focus than the more internationally oriented publication from 1991. The timing of these two statements appears to have been largely driven by the writings of Pope John Paul II and his call for an “ecological conversion”. The Australian Catholic Social Justice Council (ACSJC) also produced publications dealing directly and indirectly with ecological issues (Kelly, 1995; Gormly, 2000) but these are not official Church policy statements and they are not addressed here.

8.2.1.1 'Christians and their duty towards Nature'

The ACSJC prepared this publication for the Bishops' Committee for Justice, Development & Peace in 1991. In this case, the document is official Church policy rather than just a publication of the ACSJC. Goosen, 2000 p207, briefly reviews this document (of 15 pages) and notes that it was intended "to invite all Christians, Catholics in particular, to reflect on the truth that their responsibility within creation and their duty towards nature and the Creator are an essential part of their faith." He concludes that it is "very much a Church document" dependent on mainly papal or Vatican material with little secular input and little ecumenical input. He comments that "The section on The Australian Scene is very brief" further suggesting that whilst it is an Australian Catholic publication, it is essentially a work of the Vatican rather than being an initiative of the Australian bishops. Having read the document, I concur with Goosen's views, noting that it appears to have been stimulated by the late Pope's 1990 World Peace Day message 'Peace with God the Creator, Peace with all Creation'. It makes extensive references to and arguably relies on that publication, though it does add a small amount of specifically Australian and other broader material.

Whilst it contains some obvious anthropocentric and instrumental orientations, overall this ACSJC publication is a very positive response to the profound challenges raised by Pope John Paul II's call for 'ecological conversion'. Earth is deemed 'good' but then the things that are specified as being good are "shelter, food and clothing" – an instrumental perspective. The "beauty" of Nature is praised but this is followed by a statement that "resources" are to be "cared for and replenished". The notion of beauty in this context hints at the possibility of Nature having inherent worth but the perspective is ultimately anthropocentric as is evidenced by numerous other related comments about the value of Nature to humans. The conventional stewardship orientation is promoted. The approach is not anthropoexclusive as all other creatures are afforded moral considerability, though this is always subsumed by human needs as humans are clearly deemed to be of greater worth, being made in the image of God.

The document is essentially an endorsement of the Pope's World Peace Day message but it raises issues of the Church being late to respond to the ecocrisis and its' having:

> "no fund of accumulated wisdom to use in answering questions which past generations have not asked. Nor do we claim that, in searching for an expression of our christian [sic] duty to care for created things, the Pope has found complete answers to all questions. Other issues need to be addressed, such as the effects of large populations upon the earth's resources, and an enlightened christian [sic] response to this question" p13.

8.2.1.2 Social Justice Sunday Statement 2001

The next official Church document[122] relating to ecological policy did not emerge until ten years after the ACSJC's issue-specific publication on Christian's responsibility towards Nature. The ACBC, via the ACSJC releases an annual statement entitled 'Social Justice Sunday'. From the year 2000 onwards, these can be viewed on the ACSJC website[123], and at least some are available on the ACBC's site. [124] The 2001 Statement was entitled 'A just and peaceful land: rural and regional Australia in 2001'.

Whilst it is primarily about rural social welfare, the Statement contains some recognition that ecological concerns are relevant to rural health and broader Catholic policy, though the connection between social welfare and ecological welfare is not specifically articulated in this document (for more on this topic refer to Coates, 2003). The document clearly positions the Catholic Church as relating to ecological concerns through the concept of stewardship. This is a perspective that has been criticised by ecotheologians, philosophers and ecologists as anthropocentric and often utilitarian, and one which has been superseded to some extent by the concept of custodianship, which is argued to be more ecologically sound (Nash, 1990; Collins, 1995; Nasr, 1996; Berry, 1999; Conradie, 2005; John, 2005). The form of stewardship used in the Statement is clearly anthropocentric if not anthropoexclusive. It is also utilitarian, seeing Nature as producing "goods" for human use, with no reference to any intrinsic worth that such "goods" may have or their value for other beings and the ecosystem.

A strong agrarianism[125] is evident in this Statement. John, 2005, discusses agrarianism and the stewardship approach to Nature. He rightly criticises this approach in part because it holds that "agriculture is a divine fiat", with no, or at best little regard to its ecological impacts. The agrarianism of Western Christianity is clearly related to the origins and development of the faith in agricultural societies that predate both the modern knowledge of associated ecological impacts, and modern technology that allows agriculture to occur in forms that were inconceivable until relatively recently. Agrarianism is also a component of the Eurocentric orientation in Western Christianity.

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[122] In 2000 the ACSJC published 'Our quest for ecological integrity' (Gormly, 2000) but this is not official Church policy or even necessarily an indication of it. It is not a publication of the ACBC.
[123] http://www.socialjustice.catholic.org.au/content/publications/documentation/documentation_sjs01.html
[124] http://www.acbc.catholic.org.au/bc/jdep/200109260.htm
[125] The problem for the Church's agrarianism is that farming, especially in 'developed' nations, is often highly industrialised, specialised and corporatised, rather than being a labour-intensive occupation of the peasantry and which was then seen to bring people closer to God through their contact with Nature (though that contact was largely if not entirely exploitative and productivist). Agrarianism was then contrasted with industrialism (see for example Quinn, 1940). Today, agriculture is often simply industrialism of land and food production. McDonagh, 1990 p181 criticises the unquestioned agrarianism of earlier Catholic statements relating to the ecocrisis.

The Social Justice Sunday Statement 2001 is typical of Western Christian anthropocentrism. It adopts a position very similar to that held by various farmer lobbies and can be explained as a 'wise use' approach within a utilitarian 'natural resource management' worldview.

8.2.1.3 Social Justice Sunday Statement 2002

This Statement is the first to deal principally with "the environmental challenge".[126] It is relatively lengthy and detailed, and addresses the theological context in which the Church has adopted an environmentalist stance. The Statement provides some background on the nexus between ecological harm and social justice/human health; the valuable insight provided by indigenous peoples' spiritual relationship with Creation; the movement towards 'ecological conversion'; positive examples of action to address environmental problems at various levels, including examples of how Catholic institutions are taking action; and suggestions for how to put ecological policies into practice.

In contrast to the SJS 2001 Statement, the ecotheology of the 2002 Statement leans more towards the theocentric/biocentric approach. The rapid change of orientation is perhaps indicative of different authorship and a different intended readership. Whilst the Statement is relatively progressive by Western Christian standards (and strongly contrasts with conservative fundamentalist theology), there remains evidence of, or at least the suggestion of, underlying anthropocentrism (subordinate to theocentrism) and utilitarianism in the wording "…to use them (the gifts of creation) in accord with the will of God…". This may be simply a result of a lack of awareness of how such texts might be interpreted from a philosophical perspective. However, such an approach is generally consistent with mainstream Catholic ecotheology and indeed Western Christian ecotheology; namely that the relationship to Nature must be principally theocentric (i.e. Creation is valued only because it is a divine product – it is not afforded intrinsic value). The notion of stewardship is the means by which such ontology is converted to praxis.

The Statement claims to be part of a process whereby the Church is not just directing others to reduce their ecological impact but is also looking at its own actions. To back this claim, the Church notes that it established a new high-level body called Catholic Earthcare Australia and that it is conducting "environmental audits" of Church facilities (discussed later in this chapter). Various examples are given of parts of the Church undertaking ecologically driven praxis. Many of the examples are school-based and there is little evidence of systemic reorganisation to address the deeper demands of the ecological crisis.

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[126] http://www.catholicearthcareoz.net/socialjustice.html

The discussion about personal impacts and choices relating to the ecocrisis includes the conclusion that whilst individual efforts are essential, systemic structural change is needed and should be facilitated. The following strong statements of an overtly political and interventionist nature are made:

> "Politicians and public servants can do much to protect and rejuvenate our ecosystems and natural resources. Stronger environmental protection legislation, accelerated research into safe and renewable energy sources, further education in ecological responsibility, programs to address pressing environmental issues such as global warming, land clearing, salination (sic) and the sustainable management of natural resources are all needed. Retraining and new employment opportunities are needed for workers displaced by such changes. When we vote in local, state or federal elections, individuals and community groups can encourage, support and challenge governments by assessing the environmental policies of the different candidates.
>
> Consumers and traders can promote environmentally healthy practices by exercising their right of choice and advising a business of the reason for their decision. Shareholders, too, should use their votes responsibly on corporate resolutions and the election of board members. Those in leadership and managerial roles, from family firms to transnational corporations, are encouraged to demonstrate ethical business practices and good corporate governance."

Such language is remarkably strong for a mainstream Western Christian Church, particularly in an ecological context. The above two paragraphs could readily be encountered in the policy platform of most secular environmental groups. Indeed, a later section of the Statement reads, "Our country owes a great debt to those who have for decades campaigned to protect our unique woodlands, rangelands and forests, and to the men, women and children who quietly go about preserving our biodiversity and protecting our heritage." This amounts to a Church endorsement of at least a part of the secular environmental movement, a situation which reflects the extent to which the Church, or at least substantial and authoritative components of it, has come to appreciate the environmentalist cause.

8.2.1.4 Social Justice Statement 2005

This Statement is entitled 'Jesus, Light for the World: Living the Gospel Today' and includes minor aspects that address ecojustice. The main content relevant to this thesis is the Statement's tackling of consumerism; waste generation and recycling; resource use inequities; reliance on finite resources; energy consumption; and the personal and societal effects of materialism. Later in that section, it asks, "If all of creation is God's gift, then where in our homes, parishes, schools, workplaces and communities can we shine a light on the way we build, buy, use and discard things?" Whilst this is clearly indicative of a positive intention, the question does not place the institutional Church in the spotlight in terms of its own ecological responsibilities. "Parishes" are mentioned but not the higher levels of the Church such as

dioceses, or any of its corporate arms. Emphasis is instead somewhat externalised, for example, it essentially asks 'what are *you* going to do?' whilst neglecting the issue of 'what *we* (the Church) are going to do?' This is a situation typical of most Church ecological policies and proclamations.

8.2.2 Catholic Earthcare Australia (CEA)

In December 2000, the ACBC responded to Pope John Paul II's call for ecological reform of the Church by adding responsibility for ecology to the mandate of the Bishops' Committee for Justice, Development and Peace, adding Ecology to its title[127].

In 2002, the ACBC established Catholic Earthcare Australia (CEA) as its 'environment department' in response to the call by Pope John Paul II for an 'ecological conversion' of the Church. CEA has an Advisory Council inclusive of religious and secular environmental expertise, and which was under the jurisdiction of the Bishops' Committee for Justice, Development, Ecology and Peace[128]. That Committee was later renamed and reorganised as the Commission for Justice and Service. CEA was mandated to "safeguard creation, promote the importance of living more sustainably, and provide a voice for the victims of environmental degradation." Dixon, 2005 p 37, describes the operation of CEA: "Through research, education and networking, CEA assists people to respond to Pope John Paul II's call for an 'ecological conversion'."

Because its focus is exclusively on ecological policy and praxis (including education), and it has its own staff, office and budget (that has been used to employ project-based staff), CEA has been able to produce a body of policy that is substantial, clearly defined and readily accessible in various forms. It is also notable that it has achieved this in a relatively short time when compared to the achievements of the Uniting Church, which began its ecological policy formulation in 1977 and yet still lacks most of the issue specific national policies that have been produced by CEA.

8.2.2.1 Internet connectivity

CEA has its own website[129] that it keeps up-to-date and that it apparently sees as a major portal for disseminating its message, though it is poorly linked to the Church's denominational Internet home page. It also operates an extensive email list for promoting its events and products.

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[127] http://www.acbc.catholic.org.au/bc/jdep/index.asp accessed 28/01/05
[128] The associated media release can be viewed at http://www.acbc.catholic.org.au/bc/jdep/200205147.htm
[129] see www.catholicearthcareoz.net

When I first conducted research for this aspect of the thesis, it was not possible to go to each denominational home page and find a direct link to each of the Church's ecological policies. Finding any ecological policies was often a convoluted process that required some prior knowledge of Church administrative structures. For example, even with the relatively large on-line presence of CEA, ecological content was not readily obtainable from the Catholic Church home page[130] in 2004 and 2005. One had to link to the ACBC website to find ecological policies and to find CEA's home page. This was pointed out to CEA in 2005 and yet when the Catholic website was revised, as of March 2006, the only search term that when used on the home page, would reveal the link to CEA, was 'ecological'. No other relevant search terms, such as 'ecology' or 'environment' or 'environmental', revealed that link. This is despite CEA being a body of the ACBC as noted on the Council's website and which has a link from the denominational home page. In contrast, the international home page of the Orthodox Church has a direct link to 'Ecological Activities'[131].

8.2.2.2 Organisational constraints

Whilst CEA can produce substantive policy, it has no institutional power to implement it other than in how it operates its own affairs. For example, whilst it might produce a policy strongly favouring the institutional adoption of recycled paper for office use, it has no directive authority in terms of purchasing decisions made at the diocesan (regional) or other institutional levels. Most of the institutional power rests with the semi-autonomous bishops, who are in effect regional managers with powers within the Church that are perhaps equivalent to those of a State Premier or Territory Chief Minister.

In terms of Church politics, CEA is in a relatively strong position in that forty out of the forty-three Australian Catholic bishops are on its governing council, a situation seen as indicative of majority support for its existence and activities (Bishop Toohey. pers. comm., 2005). However, even if all forty of the member bishops agree to a particular policy, each is responsible for implementing it in his own diocese, particularly where it relates to land and infrastructure management. There is no apparent mechanism that would require the three non-member bishops to abide by a policy decision made by CEA. Only if CEA policy were adopted as Canon Law, would there be a mechanism for enforcing it. Actual enforcement is another matter again.

The full collective of forty-three bishops meeting as the ACBC has persuasive power over its member bishops but still cannot require them to implement ecological policy. A majority

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[130] http://www.catholic.org.au
[131] http://www.ec-patr.gr/ecology.php?lang=en

decision can only formulate and state what the Australian Catholic Church policy is on an issue. Implementation remains primarily at the discretion of each bishop. However, cross-diocesan institutions such as the Catholic Education Office or Caritas Australia (the Church's international aid agency) can be directed by the Bishops Conference (or the relevant Committee) as they are not within the control of an individual bishop. CEA cannot direct the actions of a Church organisation. Only the Bishops Conference has this power.

8.2.2.3 Emphasis on education

CEA's approach to ecological policy is heavily weighted towards education. This is unsurprising given that there is no mechanism for institutional compliance, and the overarching paradigm is one of offering resources for voluntary action. Furthermore, the educational focus is substantially, but not exclusively, on younger people via the Catholic education system, which exists mainly in the form of primary and high schools. This is an approach consistent with that outside the Churches and is arguably a form of generational 'buck-passing'.

When secular 'environmental education' arose in the 1970s, it operated from a belief that training children would lead to them becoming ecologically literate and ecologically responsible adults: in effect - 'change the minds of the children and you'll change the world' (for example, Stapp, 1970). Teaching children to be ecologically literate is an important goal but it becomes problematic when it is prioritised over other methods of ecojustice related reforms. It is arguably seen as far easier to create ecological literacy in school children than it is to undertake the more challenging task of educating adults and reforming their institutions. This is much the same philosophy that underpins mainstream religious education in general, yet Tacey, 2000, claims that >90% of Catholic secondary school students cease identifying as Catholics within a year of leaving school, a view broadly supported by Dixon, 2005. This suggests that placing so much hope and emphasis on the ecological education of school children is not an example of so-called 'evidence-based policy'[132].

The so-called Generation X[133] and to a greater extent, Generation Y[134], were both subject to official 'environmental education' programs in their schooling yet most of the officially recognised 'environmental indicators' used in local, State and Federal 'State of the Environment' reports over several years show that the majority of parameters have worsened and continue to do so. Clearly, ecological literacy (knowledge) does not necessarily lead to ecologically sound behaviours (Harris & Dearn, 1994 p188), nor to institutional and systemic social change.

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[132] As opposed to policy that is based on ideology or false assumptions.
[133] Generally understood to be people born in the 1960s and 1970s.
[134] Generally understood to be people born in the 1980s and 1990s.

Rote learning of ‘environmental facts’ and regurgitating politically correct and supposedly normative ‘environmental values’ to pass exams is about as useful for achieving genuine ecosocial change as it is for ensuring that students at Catholic high schools become devout and lifelong adherents of that faith. As psychologist, Abraham Maslow,[135] is often quoted as saying: “To the man who only has a hammer, everything he encounters begins to look like a nail.” Thus, to the Catholic Church, education (in the institutional sense) is always their answer[136]. This is clearly not a phenomenon restricted to Catholicism or to Christianity.

Knowing the ‘facts’ and the jargon relating to ecological issues does not guarantee that students will attach appropriate moral value to the issues (Harris & Dearn, 1994 p188) – values that sustain attitudes and behaviours that run contrary to the dominant paradigm of our consumerist culture. Students still want the latest mobile phones even when this means the old phone gets thrown away (or perhaps partially recycled) and the new one involves mining rare elements from the Congo under situations that cause severe ecological and social harm (see Hayes, 2002 re the impacts of tantalum mining in the DRC. It is also briefly mentioned by McGuigan, 2005).

8.2.2.4 The future of CEA

CEA was headed by a Chief Executive Officer, Col Brown, a former environmental lawyer. Bishop Toohey of the Diocese of Wilcannia-Forbes initially chaired it. Bishop Toohey resigned from that role in 2006 but was still listed as the Chair on the ACBC website in early 2007. The former deputy chairman, Archbishop Bathersby, appears to be acting in his place, at least in an interim manner as the CEA website did not name the chairman as of February 2007.

As of February 2007, CEA had been relocated for at least the fourth time in its brief history. It is now located in Canberra within the diocesan offices. The relocation was apparently responsible for the departure of the CEO Col Brown, leaving one part-time, home-based staff member to deal with administrative matters on an interim basis. CEA only ever had two permanent staff, but did engage a number of contract workers to assist with projects such as organising conferences and maintaining its website.

The business manager of the Australian Catholic Bishops’ Conference confirmed to me that CEA’s organisational and staffing future would be revised in early 2007. CEA’s website did not indicate a resolution of that process as of mid-2007.

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[135] Abraham Harold Maslow (1908-1970).

[136] In an email to me in relation to my research, Kate Mannix, a Catholic commentator and facilitator of the 2006 ecumenical statement ‘Common belief: Australia’s faith communities on climate change’ (Appendix 1, s11.6.1), commented that “The Church is very wedded to the notion of itself as ‘Teacher’ and the world is the thing which exists to be ‘'taught’” (Mannix, pers. comm., 16/09/06).

A member of CEA's Advisory Council informed me that CEA "barely keeps its head above water". Bishop Toohey confirmed that the organisation's resources were severely limited due to a low level of funding. However, he believed this to be a wider issue well beyond CEA, citing the oft-heard view that the Church is 'asset rich but cash poor'. Given the strength of the ecotheology used to justify CEA's existence and actions and the Church's associated rhetoric, it seems inconsistent to find that CEA was never adequately funded or staffed. This apparent shortage of funds is in stark contrast to the large sums of money that the Catholic Church is able to find for major capital works programs such as the construction of aged care facilities and schools, even allowing for the substantial government subsidies that are associated with such projects.

Despite its low level of resources and some considerable organisational constraints, in its first five years, CEA has produced the vast bulk of Catholic ecological policy and has driven a considerable amount of praxis, directly and indirectly. I discuss a subset of its policy publications below.

8.2.2.5 'The garden planet' (video)

'The Garden Planet' is a VHS videocassette production that whilst undated, appears to be contemporaneous with the launch of CEA, i.e. 2002. A theme of the video, which has an education and awareness orientation, is the biblical notion of Earth as The Garden of Eden. There are ecological problems associated with using this concept because gardens are inherently anthropogenic and utilitarian, even if aesthetic pleasure, not food production is the core objective. The concept of an ecosystem or the planet as a garden or 'metagarden' is deeply flawed and is critiqued by some ecotheologians, though it does not attract a lot of attention as few scholars would see it as other than a constrained metaphor, rather than as a valid literal understanding of Earth. The Church's use of 'the garden' metaphor in this video is related to the earlier-mentioned problem of the agrarian orientation of Western Christianity and this is not unique to Catholicism.

The video is not a formal policy and is best seen as an education resource, though the decision to produce it, and the 'policies' within the production are still relevant here. CEA distributed the video to all Catholic schools and parishes. I do not review it in detail.

The first edition of the CEA Newsletter noted, "a follow-up video called Cool Schools is planned". Presumably, this links into the Churches' involvement in the Cool Communities Project run by secular Conservation Councils, particularly in Brisbane where the Church was far more involved in this national scheme than it was elsewhere. Cool Communities was about reducing individual and collective greenhouse gas emissions. Cool Schools will likely link with the 'environmental audits' promoted by CEA (these are discussed later in this section).

8.2.2.6 'The grains of life'

This is an earlier CEA publication on CD that again is not a policy statement but is primarily a school-oriented education and liturgical resource. Its focus appears to be on matters relating to the ecological and social costs of food production. It was a response to the International Year of Rice. I do not review it here.

8.2.2.7 'Freshwater is sacred water'

This publication is another school-focused education resource produced on CD to coincide with the annual Earth Day festivities. As a primarily educational rather than policy resource, it is not reviewed here.

8.2.2.8 'Let the many coastlands be glad'

This is a 'Pastoral Letter' from the bishops of Queensland that they signed on World Oceans Day 2004. It was released in August 2004 along with a media statement[137] and it calls "for a renewed effort to safeguard the wonder of creation that is The Great Barrier Reef." It is the first issue-specific public ecological policy statement of the Church. Whilst it is restricted in scope to Queensland, it was produced by CEA, and was distributed nationally and so is treated as national policy.

As an ecologist, I found it most interesting that in listing the bishops that endorsed this document and the later publication, 'The Gift of Water', their dioceses are described by officially recognised bioregions and, in the case of 'The Gift of Water', also by water catchments. 'Let the many coastlands be glad' is a phrase of Biblical origin.

The document takes the form of a 28 page, glossy A4 booklet with numerous photographs and is also available on-line[138]. The associated media release contains the following statement, with quotes taken from the Pastoral Letter:

> "Care for the environment and a keener ecological awareness have become key moral issues for the Christian conscience. Not only is the Reef a precious ecosystem *in itself*, but also an integral part of the one *web of planetary life* that connects us all – the *human species and all species* of the land and sea, rainforest and reef, mountains, plains and inland desert."…

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[137] http://www.acbc.catholic.org.au/bc/jdep/2004050815.htm
[138] http://www.catholicearthcareoz.net/pdf/ReefFullBooklet.pdf

> The letter pointed to several significant issues that must be addressed to ensure the survival, the diversity, the beauty and the integrity of the Reef. These issues included the threats of sediment run-off from the land, sewage outflow, deteriorating water quality and over-fishing as well as problems associated with climate change, in particular coral bleaching and rising sea levels.
>
> "Protection of the Reef is a common cause for the *common good*. It is promoted most effectively through active co-operation, up to date information, and healthy debate on unresolved issues. "The Church desires to contribute to the public dialogue by explaining how its ecological and social justice teachings serve to safeguard the integrity of creation, promote the common good and protect the health and well being of both *human and non-human communities*." (My emphasis)

Clearly, this document moves away from the anthropocentrism and anthropoexclusivism of the SJS Statement 2001, demonstrating an awareness of the connectedness of human and non-human ecology, and even recognising that the Reef has intrinsic worth. Like the SJS Statement 2002, it raises scientific concerns and links these with social issues consistent with the ecojustice approach. Here, the "common good" is not just a matter of human instrumental concerns – "human and non-human communities" are considered.

This shift in the underlying theology may simply be a result of different authorship but could also have been influenced by the growing number of publications that point out the problems with anthropocentric theology. The document lists the contributors, showing that the principal drafter was a member of the CEA Advisory Council but that others include academics, government environment officers, a theologian, and an "environmentalist". This more inclusive approach to policy-making is a feature of CEA and contrasts with the earlier statements that are essentially the work of bishops or committees thereof.

The Acknowledgements section does not state that the document's creation was prompted by the intervention of WWF Australia and the Queensland Conservation Council (Col Brown, pers. comm. 01/05). It wrongly gives the impression that it was an initiative of the Church or at least of CEA and/or some of the bishops of Queensland.

'Let the many coastlands be glad' also contains the following strong quote: "It is the task of the State to provide for the defence and preservation of common goods such as the natural and human environment, which cannot be safeguarded simply by market forces" (Pope John Paul II, *Centesimus Annus*). Such a view is clearly in stark contrast to the dominant economic paradigm of Western society, in which The Market has been elevated to a semi-divine force seen by economic rationalists as inherently benign or even benevolent and which is considered virtually sacrosanct (see for example Nurnberger, 1996; Cox, 1999; Frank, 2000). For such devotees of The Market, the concept of State intervention or 'regulation' is heretical because it interferes with the notionally 'pure' workings of The Market. In this regard, the Church is

pitting itself against a central tenet of present-day Western society and against much of its party politics. This is not a new orientation for the Catholic Church, which normally expresses similar views in the context of social justice.

In commenting on the threat of global climate change, the document notes that in September 2002, the Australian Catholic Bishops and the 14 member Churches of the National Council of Churches, issued a statement urging the Federal Government to ratify the Kyoto Protocol. It follows this with a call for reduced consumerism, noting that "no matter what technological breakthroughs or redistributions (of resources) occur", a Western level of resource consumption cannot be provided to the current global population:

> "We are living beyond our environmental capacity and we have to face the hard issues of radically changing our habits, reducing our consumption of everything that is not renewable, and reusing and recycling what we have. We are, in conscience, required to ask where our consumer goods have come from, where our food is grown or where its water is taken from or goes to, or indeed how much is used. Our investments should support enterprises that make ecologically sound decisions and not those whose activities damage our ecosystems."

The document encourages readers to take individual and collective action and provides contacts to Catholic organisations able to provide advice on issues such as "recycling, waste management and prudent energy and water use" as well as how to undertake ecological audits. It concludes with a theological discussion aimed at re-emphasising the relevance, indeed the necessity for Catholics to support the ecological cause. It provides a useful list of references.

The document notes the many contributions to reef conservation that have been made by various industry sectors, government agencies and programs, school groups, environmental groups and individuals. It also described the instrumental value of the Reef in terms of income from tourism and its potential to yield new compounds with 'therapeutic properties'.

8.2.2.9 'The gift of water'

'The gift of water' is an 18 page, glossy A4 publication aimed at a general Christian audience but with a distinct rural focus which is appropriate given the nature of land use and ecological problems in the Murray-Darling Basin. It was officially launched on the Murray River at Echuca in October 2004. The launch was publicised in a media release.[139] The document was endorsed by bishops with dioceses in the Murray-Darling Basin and is a national policy with national backing through CEA and its overseeing bishops. I was told that the

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[139] http://www.acbc.catholic.org.au/bc/jdep/2004111014.htm

document was not readily endorsed by all of the bishops of the Basin (Bishop Toohey, pers. comm., 2005).

Authorship is again a collective process, with Fr Denis Edwards (a renown Lutheran ecotheologian) listed as the principal author. Others credited with acting as "consultants" in the preparation of the Statement include members of the Murray-Darling Association, the CEO of Earthcare, a monk, a nun, and a NSW departmental officer.

Most of the document contains a mix of background information and theological contextualisation of the ecological problems that the document seeks to address. It advocates a series of practical responses to the problems. However, the suggestions are very broad and lack any detail or quantum. They are essentially just commitments to proposals such as re-establishing 'environmental flows' in the catchment; curtailing "unsustainable" use of water, particularly further increases in irrigation; the reduction of salinity and nutrient loads; and the removal of invasive exotic species. The document does not purport to be an expert publication so one would not expect to see it making particularly detailed technical recommendations. 'The gift of water' is primarily symbolic policy as the Church has little practical influence on the management of the Murray-Darling Basin.

The short section of the document entitled, 'Rural communities' acknowledges some of the roles and significance of farming communities in the Basin. In a similar vein to the SJS 2001 Statement, 'The gift of water' contains the platitudinous, unsupported and highly contentious statement that, "We recognise that many of them (i.e. farmers) have long led the way in care for the land and for the health of the rivers". The statement is naïve or more likely motivated by a concern not to offend rural Catholics who might sense in the document, an element of 'farmer bashing' within the guise of Church-backed environmentalism. It may also be a relic of Catholic agrarianism.

The document includes statements related to water use efficiency and water trading schemes. It expresses strong concern about the social equity implications that trading schemes might have, namely the risk that smaller family farms might be outbid for water allocations by urban centres that are able to pay more. There is also commentary about the obligations facing urban water users in the context of concern about rural/urban equity.

The theological orientation of the document is not specifically anthropocentric. However, a strong productivism[140] runs through the text. This is not surprising given the nature of land use (extensive agriculture) that dominates the Basin. A notable aspect is that the document

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[140] An ideology in which the goal is the maximisation of productivity – in this case, agricultural.

recognises the conflict between economic rationalist approaches to managing the Basin (as a resource for profit), and broader "needs of human communities" as well as the "ecological needs of the whole system". However, the stewardship ethic and a degree of agrarianism are still evident in the document's theology. Stewardship is not emphasised in a way that reinforces its anthropocentric aspects. Instead, the word "trustee" is also used, linked to the idea of "the integrity of God's creation". Anthropocentrism or at least utilitarianism is specifically challenged by the statement "God's creatures represent the Trinity. They are not simply there for human use, but have their own dignity, value and integrity." This is backed by later biblical references and metaphors relating to the value of water in otherwise often dry landscapes.

The theological dimensions of the document include evidence of the 'moral turn' seen in environmentalism generally, particularly in relation to anthropogenic climate change. Key aspects of this include noting, "human beings have a moral duty towards the natural world. They do not have absolute rights over nature…(they) have God-given responsibilities towards other creatures…the use of the gift of water… is a matter of conscience, of right or wrong action before God." This effectively amounts to the notion of "ecological sin" as was raised very prominently by the Archbishop of Canterbury (Williams, 2005). Notions of interconnectedness are addressed via statements from Pope John Paul II including "…we cannot interfere in one area of the ecosystem without paying due attention to both the consequences of such interference in other areas and to the wellbeing of future generations."

'The gift of water' is the second of CEA's issue-specific ecological policy publications. It is well written and makes its case using a mix of mainstream science and what is increasingly mainstream institutional Catholic ecotheology. Environmentalists are acknowledged as those who were walking the path of 'ecological conversion' before the Church sought to do the same. This publication is a good example of Catholic environmentalism and the way this builds on mainstream secular environmentalism by deepening the moral and spiritual dimension.

8.2.2.10 'Towards environmental futures' (audit CD)

This publication was produced for CEA by Fr Paul Lucas, a renowned Catholic environmentalist and educator. It is a CD-ROM-based PowerPoint presentation intended to permit users to undertake an 'environmental audit'. The target users are school and church groups who want to evaluate their ecological impacts (or a subset thereof) for the purposes of strategically reducing them. The concept of a Church-driven 'environmental audit' originates from the UK-based Eco-Congregation group[141], which operates as a consultancy. It licenses its

[141] http://www.ecocongregation.org/

audit scheme to other religious organisations and describes it as an "ecumenical environmental toolkit (which is) encouraging churches to weave creation care into their life and mission".

In Australia, it appears that Eco-Congregation's scheme was first adopted in a form amended for local conditions, by the Environment Commission of the Anglican Diocese of Canberra & Goulburn. The UCA National Assembly claims to have devised something similar back in the 1980s, though it appears not to have been adopted or at least maintained, as there is no equivalent product in the UCA at present. The UCA's Earth Team uses a version of the Eco-Congregation product.

During 2005, various draft versions and an associated questionnaire were available on the CEA website. The final product was released at the CEA national conference on climate change in Canberra during November 2006. The audit's stated aims are to:

- "Identify and affirm their existing environmental practices / ministry / spirituality;
- Develop environmental futures by prioritising what needs to be done to live more sustainably with respect to our heritage;
- Identify supportive resources;
- Network with other churches and environmental agencies to promote ecological conversion in our world."

The Introduction begins with a series of orienting principles, which includes the statement: "But we cannot speak out on environmental matters if we have not got our own house in order! And starting to get our house in order, by our actions within each parish, each school, each agency and as a diocese is what this audit is about." It is notable that the audit does not purport to be about auditing and reforming the whole Church. Instead, it is about various parts of the Church opting to undertake the process so that they might reform their operations. The audit is completely voluntary, is not overseen by nor is it reportable to any agency.

The body of the audit is a *pro forma* of check boxes under three headings: "have done", "consider" and "not a priority". These are applied to an extensive range of issues ranging from general property-based planning and management, to the use of specific technologies for minimising ecological impact, for example energy and water efficiency devices and techniques. It includes topics such as ethical investment and purchasing, including minimising embodied energy by purchasing locally produced goods, waste minimisation (from reduced consumption through to reuse and recycling), ecologically responsible landscaping, and even the management of contaminated sites. A small Land Care section raises issues of identifying and conserving or "developing" (meaning enhancing or making the most of) remnant flora and fauna habitat, along with pest plant and animal control. Built heritage matters are given considerable emphasis,

which is unsurprising given that many Church properties are old and of at least some cultural heritage significance.

The audit then asks about the extent of liturgical focus on ecological matters, and includes questions such as how often the organisation involves members with worship in natural environments through activities such as prayer walks, and the extent to which devotional songs have an environmentalist orientation. It even mentions purchasing organic bread and wine for ceremonial purposes. Other questions cover the accessibility of ecological education resources and the pursuit of ecologically oriented activities for different age groups. Whilst education of children is the focus, some attention is given to youth activities and to adult education.

Scattered through the document are ecologically related quotes. Notably, these include a quote from the Koran, an Arabic and a Chinese proverb, as well as numerous quotes from the Bible, Pope John Paul II, and Catholic ecotheologians.

Perhaps the author's attempt to add a global or internationalist aspect to the product is a factor in its use of a significant number of North American images (scenes include a black bear, a bald eagle, several images of the Grand Canyon, snow-clad coniferous forests, etc.). Given that Australian flora, fauna and landscape images are freely available via the Internet and government agencies, the use of obviously non-indigenous images seems a little odd and arguably insensitive. When the audit CD was first made public in a presentation at the CEA climate change conference, the non-indigenous images raised considerable bewilderment in at least some of the audience, especially given that most, if not all of the images were used in a context where there seemed no point in using anything other than Australian imagery.

Having addressed at some length the scope for liturgical and other educational opportunities that have an ecological orientation, the audit then focuses on personal lifestyle. It encourages users to apply the audit outside the Church by investigating their own impacts and how they might reduce them. This section includes a question about support for "eco-justice or eco-action groups". Notably it does not distinguish between secular and religious environmentalist groups. This is consistent with other Catholic teachings that praise the environmental lobby. Users are encouraged to interact with various ecologically oriented organisations including the ACF, Environment Centres, The Wilderness Society and Friends of the Earth. Other groups mentioned include Landcare, catchment management bodies, Clean-up Australia, LETS (which is a cashless bartering movement) and ethical credit unions. The final section deals with the international context, and it too encourages support for groups such as WWF, A Rocha (a Catholic environmental welfare organisation), and Christian charity organisations such as World Vision.

CEA's audit resource has the potential to generate real reductions in the ecological impact of Catholic organisations and individuals. It also has some potential for broader benefits and it includes what amounts to an outreach agenda in that users are encouraged to engage with the wider community and expound the benefits of the audit process and its outcomes. It is not a tokenistic response, is relatively comprehensive in its scope, especially when one considers the extensive resources provided in its appendices, and it contains genuinely useful and effective advice about the reduction of ecological impacts. Unlike similar products available through secular environmentalist groups and through some government agencies, CEA's audit is driven by a religious agenda linked to ecological science. I believe this makes it a more powerful tool for reform.

However, as noted earlier, the audit process is voluntary, not reportable and whilst it is supported by CEA, there is no notion of it having any institutional enforceability. Parts of the Church can choose to undertake the audit or not. How they choose to respond to it is at their discretion, subject to any external legal obligations. The audit is also not a regular event and does not have the same function as the 'state of the environment' reports published regularly by various arms of government and by some corporations. However, there is no reason that parts of the Church could not make the audit and the reporting of its results and responses a regular and even a public product.

It is also within the scope of a bishop to ban the audit process within his diocese or to block implementation of any of the recommendations arising from it. This is not known to have occurred, nor do I consider it likely, however a Catholic bishop is reported to have banned the distribution of a published article (in Catholic media) relating to the failure of the Church in general to engage in municipal recycling schemes (Mannix, pers. comm., 2006 citing Norden, 2004). The article pointed out that at least in the Diocese of Wollongong, parishes have total discretion as to whether they participate in municipal recycling[142]. The Diocesan officer interviewed notes that he had "no idea" what the parishes were doing in this regard. Norden, as a member of the Wollongong Diocesan Social Justice Council, reports that in 2003 he suggested a waste audit be done for the Diocese. He comments, "Even though environmental audits are recommended by the Bishops' conference, they just looked at me. The audit never happened." The CEO of Earthcare was also asked to comment and noted, "We have no power to instruct…

[142] Because the Churches are exempt from local government taxes ('rates'), they aren't automatically provided with recycling bins and related information. They have to opt-in to such schemes and presumably have to pay the local government for bins and collection, or they can appoint a separate - commercial provider. In discussions on this with a Uniting Church Minister, I was told that it was apparently common practice to purchase a commercial rubbish removal service that did not involve separation of recyclables. His church had only recently begun to consider sorting its rubbish and participating in the municipal recycling scheme.

What individual parishes and schools do is a matter of conscience" (Col Brown cited in Norden, 2004). The article contrasts the situation in Wollongong with that in Cairns, where a Catholic school was winning government awards for its waste management initiatives. CEA's 'environmental audit' process remains only as useful as bishops and other powerbrokers within the Church allow it to be.

In one of the document's appendices, it is noted that CEA can provide a more detailed audit process if desired, or it can undertake the audit and provide advice for a fee. This appears to be a unique role within the subject denominations other than for the activities of the UCA's Earth Team (Victoria) which provides informal advice of this nature at the request of church groups in and around Melbourne. Neither CEA nor other official bodies of the Catholic Church have 'environment officers' to provide such a service. Presumably, CEA would use professional auditors or perhaps appropriately skilled members of the Catholic community to carry out fee-for-service audits.

8.2.2.11 'Climate change: our responsibility to sustain God's Earth'

This "position paper" was launched at the CEA national conference on climate change in Canberra during November 2005. It is produced in a similar style to the earlier 'Gift of Water', being a glossy B5-size booklet that is also available on-line (text only).[143] The cover note states that the document is printed in Australia on recycled paper. The publication is endorsed by the then Bishops' Committee for Justice Development Ecology and Peace.[144]

The principal drafter is Fr Charles Rue, a prominent Columban[145] environmentalist who started the on-line Faith & Ecology Network, and who has written particularly strongly on the Catholic response to genetically modified organism technology. Other noted contributors include members of the CEA Advisory Committee, one of whom is amongst two people who are listed in the documents as academic experts on climate change.

The cover of the booklet contains a large number of links relating to "climate change and the environment". These are in three categories: church websites; climate change websites (government, NGOs and media); and education websites. NGO websites include those of peak environmentalist groups such as the ACF and WWF.

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[143] http://www.catholicearthcareoz.net/POSITION_PAPER.html

[144] The wording of the endorsement page suggested that perhaps not all of the Committee members endorsed the document. However, the revamped Commission that is responsible for CEA has only six members, and the list of bishops endorsing the climate change statement also amounts to six. I have assumed that all of the members endorsed it.

[145] Columbans are a male religious order within Catholicism.

The Introduction to the booklet immediately asserts the existence of anthropogenic climate change and that the phenomenon "raises serious moral and spiritual questions… and calls for a change in our way of life." It states that a "resolute" response by Catholics to climate change is "an essential part of their faith commitment…" Responses recommended include addressing the cause of the problem and addressing impacts on society. The Catholic Church in Australia had previously adopted the view that anthropogenic climate change was a real phenomenon and one that warranted strong action. Along with other Churches, it had called for the federal government to sign the Kyoto Protocol. Its 2005 publication builds on this previous position and takes an even stronger stance.

In a noticeably growing spirit of ecumenism and indeed general solidarity, the document offers cooperation "to all spiritual and secular leaders… knowing that the Earth is our common home." It notes that the Church wants to learn from informed scientists and that it wants to work with all of the community in addressing the problem and its impacts. Research undertaken for this thesis confirms that there is growing collaboration between not only the Catholic Church and broader environmentalism, but between other denominations and other faiths as well.[146]

The next section is entitled 'Earth our home' and is primarily theological. It expresses an ecotheology that merges Scripture and science. The Catholic Church in Australia is consistent in its use of science as a major source of evidence to formulate or at least bolster its ecological policies. The interconnectedness revealed by ecology is mentioned and explained in a religious context. A key theological statement is that "the Earth is the Lord's". This is then connected to the problem of human pride and hard-heartedness, both of which are seen as factors in a societal or perhaps human tendency to 'meddle' with Nature without addressing the ethics of doing so. The notion of interconnectedness is extended to indicate that all of Creation is to be considered, not just humans.

The third section, 'Warnings from the scientific community', again cites substantial scientific evidence as to the nature of climate change and its causes. The Precautionary Principle is advocated, noting, "Its application in science, law and politics is a minimal requirement if wisdom and prudence are our values." This section is followed by additional scientific predictions of the impacts of climate change. This includes raising impacts on humans and non-

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[146] Members of the State and Territory Conservation Councils and official representatives of Greenpeace were amongst the professional environmentalists I met or saw at CEA's climate change conference. The Uniting Church through UnitingJustice is similarly engaged with secular environmentalist organisations though on a smaller scale. I have not encountered comparable engagement between the Anglican Church and environmental groups other than in isolated cases at or below the diocesan level. The absence of a national Anglican ecological organisation other than an internal committee is perhaps a factor in this situation.

humans. Solutions are said to include but not be restricted to technological advances in areas such as energy production.

The main theological section of the document is entitled 'A moral and spiritual response to global warming'. It notes that ecological concerns are now part of the official core set of beliefs of the Catholic faith, citing several quotes from the Catholic Catechism[147] and the later Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church to bolster this claim.

Some of the quotes include some standard and increasingly outdated anthropocentric perspectives that CEA has since abandoned. For example, Earth is referred to as a gift to the whole of mankind, and man's [sic] domination of Nature is not challenged but simply seen as not being absolute. It is said to be conditional upon the need for concern about the "quality of life of his neighbour, including generations to come; it requires a religious respect for the integrity of creation." It is unclear from the latter example whether the concept of neighbour extends to non-human creatures as is suggested by the reference to the integrity of Creation.

The more recent quotes from the Compendium move beyond the sexist language of the Catechism (other than for the on-going reference to God as male) yet maintain other problematic concepts such as humans as gardeners and cultivators of Creation's goods, though it does include the newer term, 'custodians' rather than the older 'stewards'. Utilitarianism and anthropocentrism remain, though again it is ameliorated or perhaps confused by references to the "common good of the whole of creation", though with no notion as to when perceived human interests can justly dominate those of non-human Nature.

The following section of the publication is entitled 'Ethical principles for the environment' and provides additionally detailed theological guidance. It draws on the 1990 World Day of Peace Message of Pope John Paul II. The principles are considerably better resolved than some of the theological advice given in preceding sections of the document:

- Creation is seen as having intrinsic worth;
- Creation is seen to be suffering from human abuse and it is a Christian vocation to ameliorate and ultimately end that suffering;
- consumerism is opposed with "restraint, penance and self imposed limitations" seen as virtuous;
- human rights are specifically tied to and inclusive of ecological justice;
- aspects of genetic engineering are seen as of concern;

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[147] The Catechism is essentially the credo document of the international Catholic Church.

- militarism is opposed;
- politicians are obliged to address the common good including ecological dimensions;
- issues of global inequity are tied to addressing ecological problems (for example, the poor can often least afford ecological reforms); and
- intergenerational equity is again mentioned but without any reference to generations of beings other than humans.

The next section of the position paper is entitled 'The Australian Government's State of the Environment Report'. It briefly addresses the need for government intervention in 'the market' to protect ecological and social values; the need for intergovernmental collaboration; increased legislative protection of Creation; the importance of investing ethically; and that "ultimately, economic profit is secondary to ecologically sustainable living".

The subsequent section, 'Our responsibility to the early victims of climate change', specifically connects global inequities in lifestyle and material consumption with global warming and the inequalities associated with its already evident impact on poor island nations.

The document concludes with a religious statement relating to the value of hope in dealing with global ecological challenges. It adds that the 'ecological conversion' that is necessary to restore harmony between human actions and the rest of Creation is essentially about a change of heart (i.e. it is an emotional rather than simply a nominally rational shift that is needed). Catholics are called on to lead by example in making the necessary changes to behaviours.

CEA's 'Climate change' publication makes clear the Catholic Church of Australia's official position on this issue. It is a position much the same as that of mainstream environmental organisations, though it lacks the technical detail of such groups' equivalent policy statements. It is not a technical document but draws on science to underpin its primarily religious (moral) basis for concern and its call for action. In the latter regard, its stance is in conflict with that of the Howard Government, though the document is in no way party political. The theology behind the stance remains somewhat muddled, mixing older deeply anthropocentric views with some more recent and theo/bio/ecocentric approaches.

It remains that whilst the document is official policy, it is not binding on any member or part of the Church. It is relatively easy to produce such a document because it has no operational function – it is entirely advisory. Even senior clergy who are known to be so-called 'climate change sceptics' will be largely untroubled by such a policy as they can choose to ignore it completely.

To date, the Catholic Church in Australia is yet to convert this or indeed its other ecological policies into operational plans that are then implemented. The only substantive national response has been to create CEA and to allow it to issue non-binding policies and advice. However, a somewhat different situation exists at or below the diocesan level, where the majority of operational decisions are made.

8.3 Summary of research on Catholic diocesan policy & praxis

The amount of documentation and analysis of diocesan and related ecological policies and praxis generated by my research is far too large to be included in the thesis in full. Consequently, I provide only a relatively brief summary here.

Of the 28 Catholic territorial dioceses in Australia, 26 had websites during 2006, with another having a site under construction in 2007. Of these, only seven had substantial and original ecological content within the diocese's site or within linked sites such as those operated by diocesan bodies such as justice and education offices and committees. By 'original' content, I mean material other than simply linking to CEA's site or to statements by the Pope or other extradiocesan bodies. Those seven diocesan websites are included in the following section. Four other diocesan websites are included because they warrant discussion due to the diocese (if not its website) containing notable examples of praxis or because the websites reveal some possible explanations for the apparent absence of ecological policy and praxis in some regions.

Some websites were clearly years out of date. Sites ranged from the professional and complex, to the very basic and amateur. Most did not have even basic linkages such as to CEA's website, whilst others included large arrays of internal and external links to ecological content. A small number of Catholic diocesan websites revealed the existence of diocesan bodies that did or might address ecological concerns, specifically or as part of a broader justice agenda.

8.3.1 Archdiocese of Sydney

There was not a clear correlation between the size of the population within the diocese and it having a website with substantial ecological content or the existence of ecological policies, structures and praxis. For example, the large Archdiocese of Sydney, whilst it had what I considered to be substantial ecological content, did not have any policy content nor evidence of praxis or structures to address ecological concerns. It only rated as having substantial content because it contained several letters from the infamous and controversial Cardinal Pell (the Archbishop of the diocese) and some articles by a Rev. Fisher that related to ecological matters.

Unsurprisingly, the material from Cardinal Pell was anti-environmentalist and can be summed up by his dismissal of anthropogenic climate change as a "scary story for grown-ups" (essentially on the theological basis that God wouldn't do such a nasty thing to us and all previous such 'scares' like the Cold War, never amounted to Armageddon). In contrast, Rev. Fisher's articles put ecological concerns on par with the Church's more traditional concern for social justice. Given the Cardinal's views, it is unsurprising that the diocesan website does not indicate any positive organisational response to ecological concerns. Cardinal Pell is one of three out of forty-three bishops who oppose the existence of Catholic Earthcare Australia (Bishop Toohey, pers. comm., 2005).

In an article published in the newsletter of the reformist Catholic organisation, Catalyst for Renewal, Fr Peter Maher, a parish priest in the Archdiocese of Sydney makes some very relevant observations that appear indicative of the Archdiocese's general orientation, inclusive of ecological issues:

> "Sydney diocese comes late to a Pastoral Plan but better late than never they say. However, is it? There is no mention anywhere in the 30 page draft document of Aborigines, ecumenism, other faiths, climate change or gays and lesbians just to mention a few glaring omissions in a plan for evangelisation… The poor and marginalised are mentioned in the platitudinous tones of social welfare, concentrating more on setting up structures and getting the words right… than providing a practical and hard hitting critique for justice in civil society" (Maher, 2007).

8.3.2 Archdiocese of Perth

Somewhat similar to the situation in Sydney, the website of the Archdiocese of Perth had no apparent ecological content other than for the writing of its clearly relatively elderly and very conservative Archbishop. His writings occasionally touched on ecological issues but never in a positive way. His discussion of population management in Australia did not even mention ecological constraints. The Archdiocese's 10 Year Plan did not mention ecological considerations.

Overall, the tone was that which I would have expected to encounter fifty years ago – a lot of moralising (but not about ecological issues), total anthropoexclusivism, and the highest concern given to the preservation of the Church as an institution. Despite this, I note that CEA held a conference on climate change in Perth during 2006, so at least the Archbishop did not block such an event, as he would have been entitled to do. An attendee of the conference described the event to me as "a very low-key affair, only about 50 registrants and no media. I think (this was) a 'softly-softly' approach by Catholic Earthcare to try to get the WA Catholic Education Office on side. It seemed to be informative rather than a 'call to arms'" (Castleden, pers. comm., 10/06).

8.3.3 Archdiocese of Brisbane

In contrast, whilst the website of the Archdiocese of Brisbane had no ecological content other than a media release from CEA after the 2005 climate change conference, it did link to the diocese's Justice & Peace Commission website, in which an abundance of substantial content was found on its CREATE (Christians Respecting Earth And The Environment)[148] page. This included information about a major collaboration between peak environmentalist groups, the Commission, and the former Australian Greenhouse Office (a government agency). The website also had a calendar of global ecologically related events and festivities, numerous links to ecological information and organisations, Christian ecotheology and spirituality, and a publication called 'Hot tips for cool solutions' that addresses practical measures for minimising contributions to climate change.

The Archdiocese of Brisbane's Justice & Peace Commission is also notable in that it has a full-time paid Executive Officer, though the website notes that volunteers mainly do the Commission's work. Whilst the Commission's scope extends beyond environmentalism, it does note that since 2002, it has made "climate justice" a central focus. The term refers to the concept of ecojustice but more specifically to addressing the causes and impacts of climate change, with particular concern given to the effects on Pacific island nations. In March 2007, the Commission cosponsored a conference on climate change. The flyer described the event as "A conference for Catholics and other people of faith to consider the evidence for climate change and its impacts; explore the biblical, theological and spiritual dimensions of a Christian response; (and) learn about practical ways to take the urgent action required in various dimensions of our lives."

I corresponded with a member of the Commission and he commented that insufficient funding was a problem, particularly in relation to the Commission not having direct control of its website, which is hosted by the University of Queensland. Despite the limitations that he raised, the Commission's achievements stood out amongst those of other Catholic dioceses and are amongst the more substantial of all of the subject denominations.

8.3.3.1 Earth Link

Earth Link[149] is a "collaborative ministry sponsored by the Sisters of Mercy." It is based in rural southeast Queensland and whilst it is within the Archdiocese of Brisbane, it does not appear to have any formal links with it. The project operates from a property, 'Four Winds', which serves as a retreat and education centre. The Sisters that operate it attempt to do so with

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[148] http://www.uq.net.au/cjpc/create.htm
[149] http://www.earth-link.org.au/

minimal ecological impact. At the time of writing, they were running a fund raising campaign to purchase and install a solar hot water heater. The group's website describes the project:

> "Earth Link provides an opportunity for people who are concerned about the future of Earth to reflect on their concern and move towards action. Earth Link has a particular emphasis on why we need to care for Earth, and also on the importance of beginning with our place, and then extending our concern outwards to regional and global concerns." Earth Link serves "People of all ages who are concerned about the future of Earth, including parents, grandparents, educators, helping professionals, environmentalists. Earth Link will be of special benefit to those who are interested in ecospirituality and sustainable living."

Earth Link publishes a e-newsletter, 'Earth Linking', which usually contains promotions for forthcoming events such as workshops, retreats, celebrations, protest gatherings (often operated by environmentalist groups), fieldtrips, and eco-arts festivals, to name a few.

If it was not for the occasional reference to Catholic teachings, Earth Link could easily be mistaken for a secular ecospiritual environmentalist project. It is very progressive in its teachings and seems to be based in the 'Creation Spirituality' of Matthew Fox (1983; 1984) and Thomas Berry (1988; 1999). It represents a future form of Christianity predicted and advocated by David Tacey (2003; 2007) and is commensurate with the 'Green Sisters' phenomenon documented in North America by Sarah McFarland Taylor (2002; 2005; 2007b; 2007a).

8.3.4 Diocese of Rockhampton

The regional and predominantly rural diocese of Rockhampton, also in Queensland, was notable as one the most apparently progressive non-metropolitan dioceses. It has a Diocesan Commission for Environmental Awareness, which as the name suggests, has a strong educative focus. The website of the Commission was out of date by at least a year but correspondence with a Commissioner, a nun of the Sisters of St Joseph, revealed that a lot of work was going on 'behind the scenes'. The Commission had organised conferences and workshops on ecological themes and intended to do so across this large rural area. Emphasis is given to the training aspect so that people are not only informed about the issues but given knowledge and skills relating to practical solutions and to further disseminating the message to other community members. A form of evangelical environmentalism was evident. Nuns seemed to play a major role in the work of the Commission, a situation similar to those described by McFarland Taylor, 2002, 2007b, a. Women were certainly dominant in the Commission's activities.

The Rockhampton Diocese's newsletter, 'The Review', had several articles addressing ecological matters including the power and ethics of consumer choice being linked to achieving ecojustice outcomes. Another article was about coastal 'development' threats, but extended into a critically minded discussion about the use and abuse of 'science' by would-be developers. A

very informed and presumably well-educated person evidently wrote it. The author concluded that those wanting to protect Creation need to exercise criticality in their assessment of 'development' proposals, and that the ultimate solution to the ecological crisis entails personal and societal metanoia. Such a perspective accords with my earlier described view.

8.3.5 Diocese of Townsville

A perhaps comparable regional Queensland diocese is Townsville, the diocesan website of which contained a link to CEA's website as well as an Environment Links page with hyperlinks to primarily international websites. I noted an extract from an article by the bishop in the diocese's Catholic News in which he wrote that voters should consider ecological issues when voting in the 2004 federal election. The same edition of Catholic News noted that >$10 million of construction and renovation of Church infrastructure was underway that year. Ecological dimensions of those works were not mentioned. Such expenditure stands in extreme contrast to the often-heard argument that the Church cannot spend more money on ecological concerns because it is 'asset rich but cash poor'.

8.3.6 Diocese of Maitland/Newcastle

The larger regional diocese of Maitland/Newcastle in NSW has a Social Justice Commission but the website did not reveal any ecological policies. Links were provided to CEA and to its climate change statement from 2005. None of the listed Advisory Groups of the bishop related to ecological matters. Despite these limitations, the diocese's 'Aurora' e-zine had a significant volume of substantial ecological content covering topics such as:

- education programs;
- the very progressive lifestyle of two nuns who were setting up a minimum impact demonstration house and garden;
- issues relating to climate change and the connection between so-called 'climate sceptics' and big business;
- practical ways to reduce one's contribution to climate change;
- some joint funding of Landcare works by the Catholic and Anglican diocese who share a fund for such ecumenical actions; and
- a story of nuns encouraging families and communities to engage in collective tree planting.

There was no evidence of substantial institutional reforms in this diocese. Nuns, keen volunteers, and school groups drove most of the praxis. I saw no evidence of ecological policy

and praxis being enacted as part of the core business of the organisation. Things were happening but they were largely peripheral and optional, rather than being at the centre of operations.

8.3.7 Diocese of Broome

The remote rural diocese of Broome in far NW Western Australia was relatively rare as a low population area, far from metropolitan centres and from 'alternative lifestyle' areas, yet it had a modest amount of ecological content on its website. The diocese has a Justice, Ecology & Peace Office. Its content included an article calling for independent ecological input into any assessment of proposed large-scale intercatchment water transfers (from the tropics to Perth). It went so far as to say that commercial interests should be excluded from the evaluation process and that demand management was essential, rather than simply increasing water supply. It was very uncommon to see such an orientation emerging from rural and regional areas.

8.3.8 Diocese of Sale

The above situation in Broome is in stark contrast to that in the rural diocese of Sale in Victoria where dominant land uses and employment include coal mining and electricity generation, forestry and agriculture. That website had no ecological content and its newsletter was supported by advertisements for products that most environmentalists would cringe at, for example, large fuel-inefficient 4WD passenger vehicles. Its home page featured an image of a coal-fired power station and various rural scenes and industries typical of the region. No comment was made about the associated ecological issues.

8.3.9 Archdiocese of Hobart

Emerging from the politically and culturally divided state of Tasmania is an outstanding example of diocesan policy-making in the context of the very controversial issue of native and related plantation forestry. It also revealed a substantial organisational structure dealing with 'justice' issues that I did not detect in other dioceses.

The Archdiocese of Hobart governs all of Tasmania. Its website revealed the existence of a Tasmanian Catholic Justice & Peace Commission[150] that has its own Internet domain[151]. The Commission states that it has a policy advisory role to the Archbishop and the broader Tasmanian Catholic community. Its formal aims and objectives are provided on a related website[152]. Each parish is said to have a "justice contact" appointed by the Archbishop. The

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[150] http://www.hobart.catholic.org.au/commission-justice-peace.htm
[151] http://www.tasjustice.org/
[152] http://www.liturgyhelp.com/lithelp/pub/3/para.asp?dept=507164&id=aus_hoba_18084&type=1

contact receives regular literature from the Commission and is expected to promote and disseminate it. There are also several Local Justice Networks which are grass roots groups supported by the Commission. The Commission produces a regular newsletter and the scope of the Commission, despite its ambiguous title, includes ecological issues.

The Commission sought to clarify and ideally to progress discourse relating to the forestry debate and to address the associated hostility and division. Tasmania has the highest vote for The Greens of any State or Territory (~18%), yet it also has the largest and most controversial state-backed corporate logging operations that include on going logging and clearing of old growth forest and temperate rainforest. Various Church groups and representatives have previously entered the debate including via national media events where they called for greater consideration of the ecological and related spiritual values of forests, rather than the current situation where corporate profits and employment are seen to be the main drivers of a notoriously corrupt, subsidised and state-protected forestry industry.

The Commission embarked on this process by researching 'the facts' from a variety of sources, trying to discern The Truth based on its notionally 'rational' and 'unemotional' assessment of the cold hard scientific and economic data. Unsurprisingly, this approach failed to produce the desired result. The Commission bemoaned the fact the government regulators would not supply requested information or that such data was said to be unavailable or was excessively censored. The Commission encountered similar problems with getting information from forestry firms, and complained about some of the responses it received from peak environmentalist groups and The Greens. The Commission concluded that it couldn't determine 'the facts' because data wasn't provided or was clearly biased (both in technical and 'emotional' ways), but that irrespective of this problem, it was very concerned with the situation simply because it couldn't get the information that it saw as necessary for anyone to make a 'rational' decision about the issues.

Whilst it is evidently muddled about issues of scientific objectivity, scientific certainty, the philosophy and scope of 'rational' economics, and it maintains the false dichotomy of emotion and rationality, the Commission nonetheless made a conclusion consistent with its concern for ecojustice[153]. However, it did fail to substantially progress the issue, being restricted by its methodology to concluding that one should be suspicious when regulators and authorities withhold or claim not to have vital information, and when the regulator and the regulated parties operate largely beyond public scrutiny.

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[153] http://www.liturgyhelp.com/lithelp/images/cust/aus_hoba_18084/FinalForestry.pdf

Criticisms aside, the Commission's endeavour is unique in the Catholic realm, being matched only by a related project undertaken by the UCA Synod of Victoria & Tasmania in its attempts to formulate a response to the forestry debate in both States. I also found a paper that addressed the issue of logging in Melbourne's water catchments on an Anglican website, but the paper was not a formal institutional publication. I found no other Catholic diocesan attempts to address such a controversial issue. Most appear to leave such matters to CEA or more often *appear* to have no *official* concern for ecological matters at all. At the time of writing, CEA had not specifically addressed the issues of the forestry debate.

8.3.10 Diocese of Lismore

The Diocese of Lismore would not have rated a mention in my research were it not for the particular example of praxis discussed below. A visit to the Diocese's professional and up-to-date website suggests that the Church, or at least this part of it, has nothing to do with ecological concerns. The site has a search engine but none of the standard search terms revealed any ecological content. A manual search of the site's structure generated the same result. This is odd given that the Lismore area of northern coastal NSW is a well-known centre for 'alternative lifestyles'. Notably, I did find significant ecological content in the Anglican Diocese of Grafton, which overlaps with the Catholic Diocese of Lismore. Despite the lack of ecological content on the Diocese's website, the Diocese is home to a notable example of Catholic ecological praxis. This is discussed over-page.

8.3.10.1 Marian Grove Retirement Village

This example came to my attention after I published a small article about my research in the newsletter of the Threatened Species Network. The Village's manager emailed me in reply to that article and informed me that this Church-owned and operated facility is a declared Wildlife Refuge under NSW law, and that residents engage in various ecologically-minded projects such as monitoring the site's fauna, and constructing habitat boxes for threatened local species. Construction of the site was noted as having included the conservation of a wetland and associated bushland, though there was no mention of the extent to which other habitat may have been destroyed or compromised. The Village has its own Bushcare group (a version of the wider Landcare movement) and has a bush regeneration program. Whilst this example is apparently unique in the Catholic Church, my research indicated that less intensive schemes may be operating in some other Church facilities, particularly schools.

It is unclear what the full range of motivations for the ecological aspects of management at Marian Grove Village were and are, but the Manager stated that the approach was intended to be consistent with the call for 'ecological conversion' made by Pope John Paul II and supported by CEA. It is entirely likely that some of the activities were mandated as conditions of

development consent by local and/or state government authorities and/or were offered voluntarily to offset what may have been substantial clearing or detrimental modification of what are now known to be endangered ecological communities (coastal wetland and swamp forest) containing endangered flora and fauna species.

To further explore the scope of the site's ecological praxis, I asked the Village Manager whether he and the diocese had considered protecting the remnant habitat in a more formal and binding manner than under the largely symbolic status of a Wildlife Refuge. This would entail the relevant areas being formally mapped, described and placed under a binding management plan and legal covenant that can only be reversed with the consent of the Minister for Environment. My proposal was dismissed as something that was not open to consideration, though a clear explanation as to why was not provided.

8.3.11 Archdiocese of Canberra & Goulburn

I searched the website[154] of this Archdiocese on 27/06/06. No ecological content was apparent on the homepage or from any of the drop-down links accessed from its menu bar. No internal search facility was available. Given the Churches' common practice of including ecological matters within the domain of social justice, I first searched the internal link to 'Services we provide – Social Justice'[155]. The page initially reads like a conventional anthropocentric social justice agenda but towards the end, it mentions a broader agenda inclusive of "the sacredness of God's creation, stressing the importance of humankind's trusteeship of the earth and its resources and urging appropriate action for their preservation." The two links provided at the end of that page related to standard social justice concerns. My strong impression was that ecological concerns had been simply 'tacked on' to a standard anthropocentric orientation with little or no concept of the implications of ecojustice.

The Archdiocese's website has a large media archive extending from June 2006 to July 2003. I scanned this for ecological content by reading article titles and descriptions. A short article headed "Paradise restored", describes the renovations of St Clements Retreat at Galong in rural NSW. It includes reference to the property's role as an "environmental sanctuary" but makes no other comment on ecological issues associated with the site. I discuss this property in the following section. Despite a large volume of content in the media archive, I encountered no other ecological content, with the closest to this being an article about a collective call for rain to end the drought.

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[154] http://www.cangoul.catholic.org.au/
[155] http://www.cangoul.catholic.org.au/services/justice.htm

The Archdiocese's calendar webpage provides a list of events in and around the region. I did not search each month for ecological content but went straight to June to see if World Environment Day/Creation Sunday was mentioned, as this event would be the one most likely to appear on a Catholic Church event calendar. No such event was mentioned in the calendar.

Two on-line fora were provided under the 'Your Say' link. These were topics set up by the website administrator to encourage dialogue. The most relevant forum topic was entitled "The future of the world and the Church is in our hands". There were no postings on this forum or on the other forum topic that related to outcomes of a Synod discussion.

The website has an archive of the Archdiocese's newsletter, 'Catholic Voice' that I searched from June 2006 back to April 2005, after which searching became slower and less effective because of differences in archive structure. I saw no ecological content during this search, though the descriptions of articles may not have been a good indicator as to whether any such content was present.

The website has a link to a Synod page that I searched for ecological content. The page seemed out-of-date and appeared to contain little content in general. No ecological content was evident.

The site contains profile pages for its senior clergy, Archbishop Francis Carroll (then recently retired), his replacement, Archbishop Mark Coleridge, and Bishop Patrick Power. Bishop Power's page states, "He is currently secretary of the Committee for Justice, Development, Ecology and Peace and a member of the Australian Social Justice Council". This is a reference to the Bishops' Committee of the ACBC prior to its restructure in mid-2006. Archbishop Carroll's page lists some of his Committee roles but does not note that he served as Deputy Chair of CEA. Archbishop Coleridge's page is of a different structure to those of his colleagues and is primarily an introduction of himself to the Archdiocese. It does not mention any ecological issues or give any hints of his orientation in this regard.

I was surprised to find that the Archdiocese of Canberra & Goulburn's website contained so little ecological content and nothing of any substance. My surprise was due to my understanding that both Archbishop Carroll and Bishop Power were strong advocates of CEA and the Church's ecological reformation in general. Perhaps the website simply does not represent their views or the policies and activities relating to ecological issues. It is possible that as the site does provide links to CEA, the Dioceses approach is to emphasise CEA's role as the Church's primary administrative vehicle for implementation ecological reforms, rather than tackling such things at the diocesan level.

8.3.11.1 St Clements Retreat, Galong

As noted above, the diocese's website described this property as an "environmental sanctuary". Through my discussions with CEA, and more productively through a colleague in the ANU's Human Ecology Forum, I was able to gain access to St Clements. The property is a former monastery that, with the decline of its membership to only two elderly Brothers, had started to diversify into an ecumenical and potentially multifaith retreat.

St Clements was also in the process of becoming a 'greener' retreat centre to the extent that it already had a Landcare plan in place because of interest from some local environmentalists and the support of the Rector (i.e. the religious brother in charge of the site). The site covers 800 acres, most of which is leased for cropping and grazing, in an area suffering the effects of over-clearing and related salinisation. The Landcare plan specified extensive revegetation of the property and identified three small areas of remnant vegetation for protection. However, these were not the basis of the retreat's claimed "environmental sanctuary" values. These were very limited, and related mostly to the parklike and largely exotic gardens, and to a spring-fed dam and a watercourse lined with willows.

Having learnt how relatively 'green' the Rector was I explored the possibility of him agreeing to my examining the remnant vegetation with a view to obtaining government-funded protection for it. He agreed, and I organised a survey of the largest remnant with the assistance of the regional branch of the Australian Native Plant Society, of which I was a member. That survey identified a new record and a range extension for an endangered plant species, as well as locating a vulnerable bird species, and confirming that the bushland, albeit badly degraded, was a legally recognised endangered plant community. This information was enough to attract officers of the then NSW Department of Environment to conduct another inspection of the bushland with me. They were inspecting the area with a view to determining how best they could protect it, to the extent that the Rector might permit this.

The second inspection located another plant species and population of significance in the second-largest remnant of native vegetation. The Department agreed that the whole property could be designated a Wildlife Refuge, and that two of the three identified remnant patches could be covered by a perpetual and binding conservation covenant. Both arrangements would provide formal management plans and some financial and other advice to assist the Rector in conserving these habitats. The Rector agreed to these proposals and it is my understanding that the process to formally protect these areas may be completed in late 2007.

During the process of discussing the proposed conservation measures with the Rector and his second-in-command, a senior Brother, an interesting conversation occurred. When the Department's staff pointed out their intention for formal protection of the larger of the two areas

of remnant vegetation would mean the exclusion of livestock and other farming activities, the Brother objected vehemently. He made it very clear that he viewed land as only of value if it was able to be 'used', i.e. exploited for economic gain – as this was clearly God's intention. This view may be linked to the fact that the former monastery had long used its large rural holding to be relatively self-sufficient and more recently, income from leasing the land to neighbouring farmers was the former monastery's major source of revenue. However, as noted earlier in this chapter, such agrarianism is strongly evident in Catholicism.

The Rector overruled his colleague's objections, accepting very readily the advice of the Department's ecologist in relation to the exclusion of grazing. In earlier discussions with the Rector, I learnt that he had undergone something of an 'ecological conversion', and he cited the teachings of the late Pope John Paul II as highly influential in this regard. He was committed to enacting such a 'conversion' in the management of the retreat centre and its grounds. This extended to a phased conversion of the agricultural lands to 'organic' production, along with carrying out the extensive revegetation recommended in the Landcare plan. Renovations of the buildings within the retreat centre were also occurring with some regard to minimising their energy and water requirements. The retreat also operated a minibus that could transport visitors to and from the local railway station, though it was clear that most patrons drove to this relatively remote location, making any claims of 'sustainability' dubious at best. Nonetheless, the Rector's commitments and achievements are substantial, especially given their scale and the very considerable cost of some of the works.

St Clements represents a rare but valuable insight into how the ecological policies of the Church can be and are being applied at the fringes of the organisation. It is also an example of where institutional Church policy tends to occur after the actual 'ecological conversion' at the grass-roots level. The Rector, having undergone his 'ecological conversion', was able to pursue all manner of 'greening' projects because he is largely autonomous and not constrained by the bureaucracy of the diocese. He chose to seek the bishop's approval for the formal protection of the remnant vegetation areas, but it was clear that this was done more out of courtesy rather than strict administrative necessary. I doubt that any objections from the bishop would have stood in the Rector's way. My understanding is that religious Orders are able to operate almost independently of the diocese and this is seen as a key factor in their being able to undertake ecological works of greater extent and depth, and in a far faster manner than generally occurs in the diocese (see for example McFarland Taylor, 2002, 2007b, a).

8.4 Summary and conclusions

CEA is the Catholic Church's recently formed issue-specific national body to formulate and promulgate ecological policies, and to promote praxis. Officially, it was created in response to the call for 'ecological conversion' made by the late Pope John Paul II. However, there was also substantial bottom-up support and lobbying for such an outcome (J. Schooneveldt, pers. comm., 08/07). Prior to CEA's formation, the Church had produced a very small number of ecological policies, both specific and general. These often include ecological concerns as a component of social justice, with the social dimension being emphasised. Anthropocentrism and agrarianism is evident.

CEA has produced a substantial range of ecological policy statements and associated educational material in a relatively short time, but as a result of it being relocated to Canberra and in need of replacement staff, its generation of policy appears to have stalled during 2007. Somewhat akin to 'environment departments' in government and corporate realms, CEA appears to have been chronically underfunded and understaffed, and as a result its staff, particularly the former CEO, appear to have been overworked. Such circumstances are described matters by Millikan, 1981 p104, as typical in relation to the Churches' commitment to social justice issues. Whilst CEA has produced quite a lot of policies during its first four years, most of them substantial, I doubt that this would have been sustainable in terms of staff and budgetary resources.

Some of CEA's policies are relatively issue-specific, for example the management of the Murray-Darling Basin and the Great Barrier Reef, and the challenge of addressing climate change. The latter is a particularly strong theme in the recent work of CEA, which until its staffing crisis in 2007, was running a series of state-based conferences and workshops about the Church's position on climate change. The policies of CEA are evidence that the Church has not simply adopted a single broad-brush ecological policy that fails to address specific issues. However, most of its policies are symbolic and externally directed. Internally directed policies and operational policies are very rare and very recent.

CEA's policy products tend to be prepared by specialist authors or panels of experts in relevant fields. They tend to be far less anthropocentric than the earlier policy produced by CEA's functional predecessors. In some instances, anthropocentrism is specifically disclaimed, with bio- and even ecocentrism (in a theocentric model) being promoted. However, anthropocentrism is still evident even in documents that argue for a theo-ecocentric approach. This appears to be a result of multiple authorship, the input of editors and reviewers, or confusion on the part of the author(s).

CEA's role is primarily educative and it has no powers to enforce or even monitor compliance with the policies that it produces on behalf of the ACBC. CEA does not have any formal mechanism in place for determining the extent to which its policies are adopted. This in part explains its focus on externally directed and largely symbolic policies. It is not empowered to make and enforce policies that affect the Church's own operations.

Evidence gathered for this chapter reveals that CEA's policies are being adopted in some parts of the Church, though it is often unclear whether the praxis was driven by the policy or whether it arose independently. In some circumstances, it is evident that the praxis or the intent to enact it was already underway before CEA existed. CEA and its policies have certainly lent weight to existing ecological praxis activities in the Church but the extent to which praxis has been facilitated or encouraged by CEA remains unknown.

Ecological policy and praxis remains an optional extra at the diocesan level, and I have not found any evidence of it being implemented as 'core business' within a diocese. Ecological policy and praxis is patchy to the extent that I encountered it through my research methods. There are some excellent examples of praxis in a very small number of dioceses, but the extradiocesan religious orders, particularly nuns, appear to be leaders in this regard[156], a finding consistent with the work of McFarland Taylor, 2002, 2007b, a. The centralised role of CEA in policy-making, ecological education, and the provision of tools such as its "environmental audit CD" may be a factor in the apparently poor rate of ecological policy-making and praxis at the diocese level. This may be because the parishes and transdiocesan organisations go direct to CEA, bypassing, at least to some extent, the dioceses.

There is not a consistent national approach, in part due to the autonomy of bishops. Some parts of the Catholic Church, including some prominent leaders, remain effectively and/or overtly opposed to environmentalism, whilst other parts and some leaders take a very progressive view but appear not to have converted that view into meaningful action.

At present, implementation of ecological policy generated by CEA largely relies on the influence of critical change agents operating at relatively low levels of the Church hierarchy, rather than on any substantive institutional mechanisms. Where there are effective change agents operating within the Church, some examples of significant ecological policy and praxis can be observed, but they are not 'top-down' in their origin. These include the work of the Sydney Catholic Education Office through its Earthcare Project. This endeavour resulted in numerous office-based ecological audits, the development of 'environmental management systems' leading to reduced ecological impacts through resource efficiencies, and the

[156] Not all of the examples of ecological praxis by religious orders could be presented in this chapter.

establishment of ethical purchasing requirements (Australian Catholic Bishops Conference, 2002).

The challenge would appear to be the enactment of an institution-wide mechanism to achieve similar results to the Earthcare Project across the full spectrum of the denomination's operations. This would require a change to long-standing organisational structures and the related issue of power and authority within the Church. It would also potentially conflict with the deeply held notion of organisational subsidiarity and with the doctrine of conscience, i.e. that individuals have to make up their own minds as to how they act – they cannot be required to do so. The latter is a contested doctrine in some parts of the Church that feel they should be able to impose 'Church' policy on Catholics, under threat of excommunication. Such views are restricted to issues such as homosexuality and abortion. The Church would also need to put considerably more resources into the training of clergy and staff, into CEA, and would likely need to mandate the establishment of equivalent bodies in each diocese and major transdiocesan or extradiocesan organisation. At present, the Church's structure and its long-standing emphasis on anthropocentric concerns impede its ability to convert its ecological theology into ecological policies and praxis.

Chapter 9: Anglican Church ecological policy & praxis

9.1 Introduction

I adopt a slightly different approach to my presentation and analysis of Anglican ecological policy and praxis than that used for the Catholic Church. A major reason for this is that the Anglican tradition is far behind the Catholic tradition in dealing with ecological issues at a national level. The Anglican Church lacks an equivalent to Catholic Earthcare Australia and subsequently does not have the same form and volume of ecological policy. However, the Anglican tradition has a greater depth of response at the diocese level, perhaps in part because of what it lacks nationally. Consequently, this chapter provides a larger section on diocesan responses and a smaller section for the national response. I was also able to document some research at the parish level within two Anglican dioceses, unlike in the chapter dealing with the Catholic response.

9.2 The national website

The national Anglican website[157] has been revised since research for this section of the thesis commenced in 2004. As of March 2006, it had been altered such that what little ecological policy content is available was more accessible, though it was not as apparent and accessible as it could be. This remained the case in February 2007.

The website organises the main body of ecological policy (small as it is) under the heading 'Social Issues'. This is consistent with normative Western Christian theology, which retains a hierarchy of 'God, Man, Nature'[158], such that 'the environment' is a social issue because the non-human world is subordinate to 'Man' [sic]. The only document available under 'Social Issues – Environment' is 'Green by Grace', which is discussed later in this chapter. It is not listed under the 'Students' Page' link.

Under the website's 'Theology, Liturgy, and Professional Standards' section, the documents that are available relate to administrative and conventionally conceived social justice concerns, with no notion of Church professionals having any ecological standards to meet. The home page contains a profile and link to a document entitled 'State of the Family 2005'. There is no 'State of the Environment' report or any similar publication. This is again consistent with

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[157] http://www.anglican.org.au
[158] See for e.g. Callicott & Ames, 1989 p3-4.

the often bemoaned anthropocentrism of Western Christianity and its Churches, of which Protestantism is frequently said to be the most recalcitrant (Breuilly & Palmer, 1992).

9.3 National Environment Working Group

In 2005, the Australian Anglican Church's website contained a page relating to ecological concerns[159] under its 'Governance' and 'Working Groups' pages. This revealed that the Church in Australia deals with ecological issues through an Environment Working Group, which is one of several dealing with particular themes, others including Child Protection and Refugees. I extracted much of the following information on the Australian Anglican Church's position from the Environment Working Group's website as of 2007[160].

The Environment Working Group was established in October 2001 by Resolution 01/01 of the General Synod (the Church's national governance body). It is notable that this Resolution specified that the Group was to include representatives of the Church's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Council. The Group was constituted to "advise… on sustainable environmental practices." A year later, the Standing Committee of the General Synod required the Group to provide "advice to the Standing Committee and to the Primate on the matter of encouraging the Federal Government to sign the agreement to the Kyoto Protocol." I discuss this issue later in this section. The Group responded to its constituting Resolution by proposing to:

- "develop a short (4 x A4 page) statement about the theological basis of a Christian approach to the environment, which specifically addresses the indigenous perspectives;
- establish a way of collating and making available information about environmental activities which dioceses, parishes and Anglican organisations are involved in. This will include liturgical resources (e.g. for Environment Day each year), practical advice (e.g. on recycling), activities (e.g. field days, conferences), and Anglican environmental groups (e.g. WA EcoCare, Canberra-Goulburn and Grafton's Environment Commissions)."

The response reveals that two diocesan Environment Commissions precede the formation of the National Working Group. I investigated the reference to WA EcoCare and found that the group appeared to be largely defunct as of 2005. From what little information was available (none of it on-line), it appears that EcoCare was a very small group whose work was relatively narrow in scope and was restricted to a small area of southwest Western Australia.

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[159] http://www.anglican.org.au/governance.cfm?SID=22&SSID=75&PID=132
[160] http://www.anglican.org.au/governance.cfm?SID=22&SSID=75

The newly formed Working Group noted that its first priority was the presentation of the Anglican theological "basis for environmental concern" as this "needs to be stated clearly so that its advice to the church on developing sustainable environmental practices might be received appropriately. At the very least, the Group believes that a debate on the theological issues about the environment needs to be stimulated." This indicates that in 2001, the Anglican Church of Australia lacked a nationally accepted ecotheology, let alone anything resembling ecological policy or praxis. Again, at the diocese level, policies and praxis were already underway. This is evident in that when the Group met for the first time in July 2002, it:

- "considered reports from diocesan groups in Canberra & Goulburn, Western Australia and Grafton;
- received a theological statement for environmental concern by Bishop George Browning (Canberra & Goulburn);
- welcomed the contribution of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island speakers who emphasised the necessity of taking into account the role of their spirituality and close affinity with the land."

Apparently, a small but influential diocesan team prompted or at least facilitated the national Anglican response. This contrasts with the response of the Catholic Church in Australia, which appears to have been driven by the call for an 'ecological conversion' by Pope John Paul II. The situation in the Uniting Church is somewhat less clear, as its National Assembly has produced statements of ecological relevance in some form since the Church's unification in 1977. Though again, the strongest operational policies and praxis come from the Synod level – roughly the equivalent of the dioceses.

The first meeting of the Anglican Environment Working Group reports that it highlighted the need for:

- "developing a sound theological basis for environmental concern that can inform and encourage us, and to give a means of responding both to cynical and extreme non-Christian views;
- practical advice, concerning environmental management and inclusion in worship through liturgy;
- the church to speak out on environmental matters and to take action within its diocesan and school structures; and
- encouraging city people to identify with the issues of rural parishes."

There is no reference to any proposed structural arrangements that might best achieve the above aims, even though at roughly the same time, the Catholic Church was publicly launching its response in the form of CEA.

9.3.1 The Kyoto Protocol

In 2003, as required by the General Synod, the Environment Working group submitted a response to the issue of the Kyoto Protocol (discussed below) and a draft theological and related policy document entitled Green by Grace (also discussed separately below). It also sought:

> - "to continue working to collate information on practical steps which individual Anglicans, parishes and church organisations can take towards sustainable environmental practices, and
> - to maintain and foster links with world-wide Christian environmental networks, and
> - to arrange seminars in several regional centres to discuss environmental issues and their practical and theological implications with local Christians. This would have particular reference to the issues of water management."

Due to its length, I do not provide the full text of the Working Group's response to the issue of whether the Australian Government should sign the Kyoto Protocol. It is available on the national Anglican website[161]. Key points arising from the Group's submission include:

- concern about the Church getting mired in the associated politics;
- the need to transcend that concern because the debate about the Kyoto Protocol is "also a serious social and moral issue about how the world as a whole approaches global environmental problems";
- "greed, selfishness and exploitation of global resources underlie this and other environmental issues";
- an awareness of the connection between scientific opinions, funding sources and scientific peer pressure;
- the Church lacks the scientific expertise to make a decision on what it views as a still contentious and technical scientific question as to whether global climate change is real and whether it is caused by certain human activities. Consequently it can't determine its position purely on technical grounds;
- in light of scientific uncertainty and some obvious ethical and practical arguments relating to fossil fuel dependency, "it is both ethical and practical to apply the precautionary principle and support a more environmentally conscious global community" (even though we may not be certain about the reality and mechanism of climate change);

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[161] http://www.anglican.org.au/docs/Sign_the_Kyoto_Protocol.doc

- "There is widespread community concern" about ecological issues…. (The subtext of which is that if the Church is to be socially relevant, it has to respond positively to that concern);
- the need for the Church to lead by example, noting that some members are already doing so;
- the Working Group isn't united in its position on the priority given to addressing climate change. One member referred to earlier in the context of the Archdiocese of Sydney believes that "the greenhouse debate is an obsession of wealthy societies not needing to focus on basic matters such as food and water supply"; and
- "On balance it is clear that the majority of the Working Group would prefer to see the Protocol signed, not necessarily because we are convinced of the technical detail or the primacy of the issue in environmental problems. But we believe it is imperative to acknowledge the sinfulness of, and to take specific action to lessen, current exploitation and consumption."

The General Synod accepted the proposition in the above report and wrote to the Australian Government, asking that it sign the Kyoto Protocol. It received a response in July 2003, though the Synod report does not discuss this. However, I know that the Australian Government continues to reject signing the Protocol, which came into force in late 2004 after the Russian Government became a signatory.

As of 2007, the Working Group's website contains a link following-on from its work on the Kyoto Protocol debate. Notably, the link is not to further material in the Australian Anglican realm, but to the progressive and forthright position of the Archbishop of Canterbury and to a Church of England website that "looks at how Anglicans in the UK might address this issue by reducing their environmental 'footprint'[162]." The associated website is an example of what could be replicated in Australia was there sufficient commitment from the General Synod.

9.3.2 The Working Group since 2004

In 2004, the General Synod received a report from the Working Group and agreed to the Group's reappointment for a further 3 years. It asked the Group "to collate information on practical steps which individual Anglicans, parishes and church organisations can take towards sustainable environmental practices, and to make that information available on the General Synod website." It also asked the Group "to maintain and foster links with world-wide Christian environmental networks." The latter was addressed in part at the 2005 meeting of the

[162] http://www.shrinkingthefootprint.cofe.anglican.org/

international Anglican Communion Environment Network (ACEN) in Canberra, at which Bishop Browning was appointed the Network's chairperson. There is no evidence of other networking occurring.

The Group's website notes that in 2005, General Synod agreed to continue providing Internet space for the Group's material, with a focus on "practical steps for churches and individuals to promote environmental sustainability". As of February 2007, that information did not appear to exist on the Group's site other than for the recent link to the aforementioned site operated by the Church of England. In addition, General Synod provided a maximum budget of $5400 for the Working Group's participation in the then forthcoming meeting of the ACEN. It also agreed to "support the Environment Working Group in requesting information from dioceses about whether the dioceses currently include, or would be prepared to include, environmental concerns in their criteria for choosing ethical investments…" The results of that research were not available on-line in February 2007. Notably, the Uniting Church and at least some of its Synods have already addressed the issue of ecological dimensions to their investment portfolios. The matter is also mentioned as part of the work of the Environment Commission of the Anglican Archdiocese of Melbourne and is addressed to some extent in the Catholic realm.

Subsequently, there appears to have been very little activity, let alone further development of policy and praxis by the Working Group, though this may be a result of the Group's website not listing any developments since 2005. However, the link to the Group's page via the 'Social Issues' and the renamed 'Energy, Environment and Climate Change' links notes that in 2006 "Anglicans joined with other 16 faith traditions and the Climate Institute to release 'Common Belief: Australia's Faith Communities on Climate Change'."[163] That statement is correct but does not tell the whole story. The Anglican contribution did not come from the Environment Working Group, the Primate or the General Synod, but from Bishop Browning writing under the auspices of the ACEN – an international body. In effect, there was no official national Anglican contribution to this publication. This is not entirely surprising given the publicly available[164] views of the Working Group's chairperson, who believes that:

> "Global warming is an issue that only well-off democratic countries can afford to make a fuss about. The third world has far more pressing issues, issues of sustaining life. The greenhouse effect is really peripheral to Australia's environmental concerns. What does it really matter if Australia's ski fields shrink?"

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[163] See Appendix 1.
[164] http://www.sydneyanglicans.net/socialissues/435a/

I attended a meeting of the Environment Working Group in Canberra in 2005 and did not come away inspired by its progress or what I perceived its potential to be. The meeting was under-attended, with barely enough attendees for the Group to function. I noted that the Group had no staff, no office and no resources other than perhaps some borrowed administrative support to compile minutes and organise meetings. The General Synod may have paid for members' travel costs, as it is one of its official bodies. It was little more than a shell of an organisation and clearly relies primarily, if not entirely, on volunteer labour.

Compared to the productivity of CEA, which was constituted at roughly the same time, the Anglican Environment Working Group has been relatively unproductive. Its primary outcome is the document 'Green by Grace', which is reviewed later in this section. To my knowledge, it has not produced any other policies or policy-related material other than the advice and recommendation that lead to the General Synod calling for the Federal Government to sign the Kyoto Protocol. With no staff, and not even the resources to construct and operate its own website akin to that of CEA, it cannot fulfil the networking and central resource role that it envisaged for itself in 2001. At the Group's meeting in 2005, the hosting Bishop, George Browning[165], mentioned plans to form a body equivalent to CEA but as of mid-2007, this had not occurred.

In addition to a lack of resources and a small and widely spread volunteer membership, the Group faces potentially on-going disharmony arising from the strongly different views of its Chairperson. This may be a factor in the Group's relative lack of success and it is unclear how the Group, if it is still functional as of 2007, proposes to deal with this. Perhaps the fact that the Chairperson is a Sydney Anglican and that the Archdiocese of Sydney now has its own form of a non-operational 'environment policy' may allow the Group's internal dynamics to progress.

In discussions that I had with members of various diocesan environment commissions, I was given the clear understanding that they had little or no faith in the ability of the Working Group to achieve its aims, let alone match those of CEA, which are themselves very limited in terms of operational policy. Instead of directing energy toward improving the effectiveness of the clearly struggling Working Group, Environment Commission members seemed to feel it was more useful to get on with the job of ecological reform at the diocesan level. They often noted that they had enough trouble with their own constraints in terms of funding and a widespread lack of interest from parish priests, so trying to shift things at the national level was beyond their agendas. I note that even in the Diocese of Grafton, only two parishes were fully

[165] It is notable that despite being a national and international leader in Anglican ecological policy and praxis, Bishop Browning is not an official member of the Environment Working Group.

participating in the outcomes from the Environment Commission's policies. A Commission member in the Diocese of Canberra & Goulburn reported a similar situation.

9.3.3 'Green by Grace'

As of March 2006, the national Anglican website suggests that the Church does not have an official institutional ecological policy. This was still the impression given in February 2007. This situation contrasts with the websites of the other subject denominations, both of which provide collections of both broad and issue-specific ecological policy documents. The Anglican website's ecological policy content is restricted to the Working Group's advice on the Kyoto Protocol and the primarily theological document 'Green by Grace', which was prepared by the Environment Working Group for the 2004 National Synod.

In 2005, the Anglican home page contained a link to 'Green by Grace' under the heading 'Theology, Liturgy, and Professional Standards Resources', suggesting that the Church saw the document as a theological rather than a policy resource. Yet in 2007, the document was only available via the Environment Working Group's page. 'Green by Grace' is certainly a primarily theological work, but has a very small final section on praxis. It is not a directive operational policy and is perhaps best considered, in secular governance terms, as a 'white paper' i.e. the background material that usually precedes formal policy. As such, it indicates that the Anglican Church of Australia is still bridging the gap between a very recent (2004) ecotheological shift and its manifestation as institutional ecological policy at a national level.

'Green by Grace' was substantially prepared by Bishop George Browning, a leader of environmental reform in the Anglican Church, assisted by Jeff Sturman[166] and Deborah Guess[167]. As a primarily theological rather than policy document, it is beyond the scope of this thesis to undertake a detailed analysis of it. I provide only a brief assessment of it below.

'Green by Grace' addresses popular secular perceptions about Christianity's ecological credentials that are consistent with the work and widespread misinterpretations of the work of Lynn White Jr., (1967). It specifically refutes White's assessment that the 'dominion' interpretation of key text within Genesis is orthodox, and instead argues for the stewardship interpretation, citing other biblical texts to support this. Some of the texts used are agrarian and

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[166] Dr Jeff Sturman is a Senior Lecturer in the field of environmental engineering (particularly relating to water) at the School of Environmental Science, Murdoch University, Western Australia. Fellow Anglican environmentalist and member of the Environment Working Group, Dr Catherine Baudains is also an academic in that School.

[167] Deborah Guess was then a recent postgraduate in Christian ecotheology from Monash University. She has been highly influential in the ecological policy and praxis developments in the Anglican Archdiocese of Melbourne. As of 2007, she is a PhD candidate addressing an aspect of Anglican ecotheology.

uphold the long-standing but subsumed and obscured tradition of Christian stewardship grounded in an agrarian view of Nature. It does not address the issues that arise from the concept of agrarian-based stewardship, particularly anthropocentrism, instrumentalism, productivism and utilitarianism. However, it does address the long-standing criticism of Christianity (and indeed other religions) for its emphasis on the transcendent realm at the expense of the physical world (after Collins, 1995). It places works to "manage the resources of the earth" in the same realm as proselytising and working to alleviate human suffering, noting that such work is about striving towards a goal that cannot be reached until the foretold divine intervention occurs to complete such work.

'Green by Grace' addresses the claim that modern society and the dominant Western and Christian culture is uniquely to blame for the extent of ecological harm. It points out that historical non-Christian civilisations have also caused great harm, and that indeed modern non-Christian nations continue to cause great degradation. It does not state this to downplay the ecocrisis.

Despite evidence of an anthropocentric and instrumentalist theology, the document claims to be otherwise and asserts that it uses a theocentric basis for its position, i.e. that addressing the ecological crisis is a moral obligation because Creation was made by God and is therefore sacred, making it a sin to abuse it.

It also refutes the 'all beings are equal' argument of Peter Singer, which it labels as utilitarian and open to abuse, lacking a "clear standard of right and wrong". It rejects both ecocentrism and pantheism as inconsistent with Christian theology. It briefly describes panentheism as per Barbour, 1990, and de Chardin (1881-1955), but doesn't take a position for or against this. It advocates acceptance of the concept of 'ecologically sustainable development', particularly the precepts of intergenerational equity and the precautionary principle, noting that these must be addressed theocentrically, not instrumentally.

The section entitled "Some practical responses by Australian Anglican churches", whilst very short, is the closest that the document comes to being operational policy, though in this case it is purely advisory and has no institutional force. It includes:

- "The energy and water audits undertaken by the Diocese of Canberra & Goulburn. The diocesan Environment Commission works also with the Australian Centre for Christianity and Culture, and Catholic Earthcare Australia, arranging seminars on topics such as global warming;
- The conferences on spirituality and ecology in the Diocese of Grafton;
- Melbourne diocesan synod's decision to set up an Environment Commission;
- The grass-roots action of WA Eco-Care in communities dedicated to sustainable living;

- The Australian Anglican Church's participation in the world-wide Anglican Communion Environmental Network;
- The greening of church space using endemic[168] [sic] plants."

The document then provides a suggested reading list.

Despite its philosophical problems, 'Green by Grace' is a leap forward for the Australian Anglican Church. It has the potential to empower significant positive ecological outcomes in the Church were its full potential to be realised through operational policy and praxis. I explore the latter at the diocesan level in the following section.

9.4 Diocesan policy and praxis

The Anglican Church of Australia has 23 dioceses, all of which had websites during 2005-6. Of these, eight contained substantial ecological content. Again, 'substantial' content refers to original material rather than simply linking to external sites. However, more often than not, there was either no content or substantial content, with only a very small number of sites falling in-between.

The standout Anglican diocese is that of Canberra & Goulburn. It appears to have been the first to publish substantial ecological content and furthermore, appears to have been the inspiration for the small number of dioceses who have followed. It is even cited by CEA in relation to the development of its ecological audit program – something apparently pioneered, revived or first implemented[169] in Australia by the Anglican Diocese of Canberra & Goulburn. I provide a detailed review of this Diocese's ecological policies and praxis later in this chapter.

9.4.1 Archdiocese of Melbourne

Another notable diocese is that of Melbourne. When its website was first reviewed in 2005, it had substantial ecological content but of a limited and largely non-institutional nature. I accessed ecological content from the home page under the headings 'Issues' and 'Environment'. The Diocese had a Social Responsibilities Committee and there were two related articles under the 'Environment' category. The first, written by a Committee member, is a substantial paper about the impacts of forestry operations in general, but more specifically on Melbourne's potable water catchments. The paper proposes a ban on logging in that area because of various

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[168] The reference is clearly to indigenous plants not those that are restricted to the site or its environs. 'Indigenous' and 'endemic' are commonly confused in this context, even by relevant professionals.
[169] In 1993, the Uniting Church NSW Synod passed a resolution calling for the development and implementation of regular, semi-independently assessed, ecological audits across all levels of the Church from parish to Synod. However, nothing appears to have come of this.

ecological and public interest concerns. The Committee endorsed that recommendation. The other article is a call for the Federal Government to support signing and implementation of the Kyoto Protocol. There is a third article in which the Committee's newsletter discusses the need for ethical investment, however, ecological concerns are not specifically mentioned and are only addressed obliquely.

When revisited in 2006, the website of the Anglican Diocese of Melbourne had been significantly updated and rearranged. Ecological content was now accessible from the home page via 'Resources' and 'Environment', with the volume of content, original and external, increasing dramatically. Its Social Responsibilities Committee had apparently seen its ecological concerns moved to a new Diocesan Environment Committee, a term apparently pioneered in the Diocese of Canberra & Goulburn. Similar to that diocese's site, Melbourne's website now included tips on energy and water conservation, organic gardening, 'green' cleaning products, waste reduction, transport options, and targeted the provision of "practical environmental solutions for parishes and individuals." Deborah Guess, the author of the earlier paper on logging in Melbourne's water supply catchments, made a major contribution to the new website.

The revised Melbourne website also contains details on why and how to perform an environmental audit[170], again aimed mainly but not exclusively at parishes. The justification for conducting an audit comes in part from the official statements of the Anglican Communion Environment Network. The audit process is a revised version of the Eco-Congregation's audit reworked for Australian conditions by the Environment Commission of the Diocese of Canberra & Goulburn, subsequently reworked by CEA. The audit is very practically oriented and focused on reducing impacts and providing solutions to associated problems. It is broad in its scope but not so broad as to be tokenistic.

A key feature of the revised website and the new Environment Commission is the publicly available Diocesan Environment Policy[171]. The policy has the headings:

- Background (defines 'sustainability' but in an apparently anthropoexclusive way);
- Theology ('matter matters' and ecological concern is said to be part of the core Christian values – see over page);
- Principles ("God created humankind as part of an interdependent world of organisms and the natural processes and resources that sustain them; We have a responsibility to look

[170] http://www.melbourne.anglican.com.au/environment/downloads/pdf/EnergyAudits.pdf
[171] http://www.melbourne.anglican.com.au/environment/policy.html

after God's creation; The mission of the Church now takes place in a time of planetary environmental crisis; This crisis has a spiritual basis, and is a consequence of neglect of the environment, and of an economic past dominated by greed and over-consumption; The solution to the environmental crisis will involve transforming heart and will, attitudes and action, and the way human institutions work. These principles impact on all aspects of the life of the Diocese.");

- Actions (comprehensive approach to impact prevention and minimisation through all levels of the diocese); and
- Implementation (including education, building codes, and an independent review of the Environment Policy within 3 years).

The Diocese's Environment Policy is one of the few Church ecological policy responses that is operational rather than purely symbolic. It has clearly been influenced by the earlier policy emanating from the Environment Commission in the Diocese of Canberra & Goulburn but adds its own variations. The operational aspects include setting up the Committee as a formal and permanent body; intervening in decision-making that has ecological implications; providing education and support resources; having its policy independently reviewed to see that it is both sound and effective; and changing the diocesan building code to address ecological issues.

Despite the substantial positive developments seen on the Melbourne Diocese's website, its 'What Anglicans believe' page does not include mention of ecological concerns. This is perhaps indicative of the gradual process of reform that is going on in the Churches. Core statements of belief and associated values have largely remained unchanged for many, even though in most cases, the official position has at least mentioned ecological issues. In the Anglican case, the international Communion's 'Five marks of mission' contains a statement that is overtly related to ecological concerns. Yet very few dioceses in Australia, let alone the parish churches, reflect this addition of what amounts to environmentalism in their statements of core values. Perhaps in the case of Melbourne, this difference is simply a result of the core belief webpage not being updated to reflect recent changes in values.

In contrast to Melbourne and Canberra & Goulburn, the websites of the dioceses of Perth, Adelaide, Tasmania, and Northern Territory contained little or no ecological content. Tasmania's website contained only one item of relevance in the form of an article by an academic economist on the topic of 'consumerism'. The focus was on social justice aspects, not ecological or ecojustice concerns. The Northern Territory website has no original ecological content but did have some off-site links to US sites, some with an ecojustice focus.

9.4.2 Archdiocese of Perth

Perth's website had no ecological content in 2005 other than a review of its Rural Feedback Project in which ecological issues were touched on from a farmer's perspective. There was no diocesan policy content. Only in 2006 did the website change to reflect official changes in the Anglican Communion's orientation, adding, "strive to safeguard the integrity of creation and to sustain and renew the life of the earth" to its list of core values.

Perth's website also had a link to an external business called 'Church Resources' that functions as a bulk purchasing supplier of various goods and services. That website included a range of products and services that are clearly well outside the scope of 'environmentally friendly', though it did proclaim the ecological merits of buying 'recycled' copying paper. The site operates primarily on the theme of "saving money for ministry" but has not made the connection between the products and services it promotes and sells, and the impact on the Church's official ministry to Creation.

9.4.3 Archdiocese of Adelaide

The website of the Archdiocese of Adelaide contained no policy material or indications of organisational responses. However, it had some promotional material for an ecotheology conference in 2004, and an article about an "environmentally friendly spiritual garden" built at a parish church. The site also had a link to the Anglican Ministry Development Centre that is affiliated with Flinders University. The Centre's website[172] had some ecological content, though it was relatively cryptic and mainly of a theological or very symbolic policy nature[173]. When I viewed the website during late March 2005, the home page[174] was dominated by a flier for the Ecospirituality 2005 program that involves fieldtrips to various inland properties and reserves. This is a venture of the remote rural diocese of Willochra, which covers most of South Australia. It involves an annual series of ecumenical though primarily Protestant-oriented fieldtrips for the purposes of building Christian ecospirituality amongst adherents. The diocese of Willochra's website only contains ecological content related to this matter. No policy material was present.

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[172] http://www.ministry-development.org/main/about.html
[173] http://www.ministry-development.org/main/intentions.html
[174] http://www.ministry-development.org/index.html

9.4.4 Archdiocese of Brisbane

In 2005, the Diocese of Brisbane's website had no ecological content. Some such content was added when the site was rebuilt in 2006. The Archbishop of Brisbane is also the current Primate of the Anglican Church of Australia. The website contained a statement by him as Archbishop on the topic of water conservation and management. It is broad and general but includes an ecotheological aspect and recommends that we 'change our ways' and 'cease endless production'. Perhaps picking up on a central tenet in the ecotheology of Fr. Denis Edwards (Edwards, 1992, 2001), the Archbishop calls for humans to rest themselves and to rest the Earth. Despite his well-argued position, the website did not indicate the existence of any diocesan policy or praxis in response to ecological concerns.

9.4.5 Diocese of Newcastle

Whilst many of the metropolitan and State / Territory dioceses' websites yielded little content of substance, the diocesan website of the regional centre of Newcastle in NSW was more productive. In a situation similar to that of Melbourne, it had no substantial ecological content when first visited in 2005, yet in 2006, the site had been rebuilt and a Diocesan Environment Commission had been formed. The Commission's website has a large number of external links to ecologically related content from local groups through all three tiers of government agencies up to national ecumenical projects such as Seasons of Creation. It also links the Catholic sites for CEA and CREATE. Again, similar to the Commissions of Melbourne and Canberra & Goulburn, and almost certainly influenced by the latter, Newcastle's Commission provides practical advice and advocacy on ecological impact reduction; suggestions for liturgy and activities to celebrate the official Creation Sunday event; a reiteration of Eco-Congregations' environmental audit process; recycling; and its campaign to rid the area of plastic shopping bags. It also links to ecological content in back-issues of the Diocese's newsletter, 'Anglican Encounter', some of which were read and found to contain a lot of information and practical advice.

The Diocese of Newcastle's Environment Commission specifically includes promoting 'sustainable environmental practices' in the diocese and it cites the international Lambeth Conference to bolster its orientation. It has both an education and action agenda, but its parish audits are still voluntary, though the Commission makes clear its intention that all parishes eventually complete the process, even if the Commission has to do the audit for them. Again, with clear influence from similar work done in Canberra & Goulburn, the Commission raises theological problems that need to be overcome if ecological actions are to be addressed, namely the problem of anthropocentrism in the Church. The position of leading by example, also a strong theme in the work of the Commission in Canberra & Goulburn, is reiterated.

9.4.5.1 Parish of Gosford

Whilst I have largely kept my Internet-based research of Church policy and praxis above the parish level, I have occasionally ventured down to this level of detail either to 'test the waters' or because a specific issue came to my attention. In this case, it was the latter in the parish of Gosford, the southernmost parish of the Diocese of Newcastle. My attention was drawn to this parish because of its on-line public endorsement of a document called The Ourimbah Protocol. The document appears to be a community-based response to conflict arising from forestry activities in the region. However, further investigation, which later included my dialoguing with a representative of the Wilderness Society's Newcastle office, confirmed that the Protocol is a public relations venture of NSW Forests, the government forestry agency. The Protocol claims to have the support of environment groups and local Aboriginal people but investigation confirmed that this claim was specious at best. According to the Wilderness Society, none of the peak environmentalist groups locally or at a State level supported the Protocol. The Society also claimed that NSW Forests' local Aboriginal cultural heritage officer resigned partly because contractors employed by the agency repeatedly and illegally destroyed sites he had identified as significant. That officer was a member of the local tribe.

The parish's endorsement of the Protocol is an example of substantial ecological and political naivety within the Church, an aspect commented on by King, 2002. Furthermore, the letter written by the Wilderness Society (Dunn, 2004) revealed that the parish officials and apparently even some at the diocesan level, had consistently refused to discuss the matter with a representative of the Society, a problem that arguably needs to be addressed in the broader context if the Churches are to maximise the effectiveness of their ecological ministry[175]. This issue relates to on going, though slowly dissolving tensions between the nominally secular environmental movement and the Churches, particularly the more conservative and elitist Anglican Church.

Despite the above-mentioned controversy, the Parish of Gosford's website also listed two ecologically related projects. One involved salvaging and rebuilding bicycles for distribution to the poor and for use on the Newcastle University campus. The other related to the Church's support for what amount to informal workshops promoting and building local Aboriginal ecospirituality.

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[175] By this I refer to the Churches' teaching of their ecological theology and encouragement of related praxis beyond their own ranks, something that is particularly strong in the Catholic approach.

9.4.6 Diocese of Grafton

Another regional centre with a diocesan website containing substantial ecological content is the northern NSW area of Grafton. The area includes some of the well-known 'alternate lifestyle' regions as well as a large agricultural industry. In 2005, the main website had no ecological content but a thorough search revealed that the diocese did have an Environment Commission. When checked again in 2006, the Commission's web pages linked directly to the home page. The main body of ecological content on-line took the form of numerous articles by the Commission in the diocese's monthly newsletter, The North Coast Anglican. These include topics such as reducing the use of plastic shopping bags, water conservation, recycling, ethical seafood purchasing, ecotheology, promoting positive actions taken by people, and the requirement for personal action to address the ecological crisis (i.e. not just government and corporate action).

A particularly notable article relates to an award scheme called 'Re-weaving the tapestry' – a reference to the 'tapestry of life' or the 'web of Creation'. The award is an annual collaboration between the Diocesan Environment Commission, the local branch of the National Parks Association of NSW (a state-wide not-for-profit environmentalist organisation based in Sydney), and the Clarence Valley Conservation Coalition. The award recognises people who have made significant contributions to ecological protection and restoration, particularly the latter. Such collaboration represents an emergent phenomenon that offers considerable hope in broadening and deepening the environmental movement by bridging the secular/religious and perhaps some of the progressive/conservative divide.

The Diocese of Grafton's Environment Commission proved to have a lot more praxis and a growing body of largely informal policy than was evident on its website. After engaging with two Commissioners by email, I received a large dossier containing copies of the Commission's articles in The North Coast Anglican along with other publications and evidence of collaborations with secular environmentalist groups. Some of the contributors to the dossier included comments about proposed works to be undertaken by the Commission. I present some of the results of my communication with Commission members below.

In an email dialogue with one of the Diocesan Environment Commissioners, I received the following explanation of the 'state of play' in the Commission's work:

> "In the Anglican Diocese of Grafton we have a very new Commission for the Environment and our current priorities are education via our Diocesan newspaper; introducing the UK (environmental audit) initiative called (becoming an) Eco-congregation, which some parishes have taken up; and joining with 'secular' environment groups to host climate change seminars. We are looking at some practical issues such as the Bishop's car and the travelling he does - do we convert to LPG, or plant trees throughout the Diocese to off-set the greenhouse gas emissions? We are also investigating the use of Green Energy throughout the Diocese. At a parish level, we have done some extensive revegetation work on some of our own land here in Grafton. There is very little natural rainforest left on the North Coast region of NSW, and as we had quite a lot of land on the Clarence River, we have planted over 600 indigenous rainforest trees over the last 6 years. They are growing beautifully." (Rosie Catt, pers. comm., 03/05/2005)

In a follow-up email, Ms Catt noted that she and another Commissioner (the Registrar's wife) were planning to travel to the UK to investigate the work of the Eco-Congregations consultancy group, with a view to introducing at least some of its projects into the diocese and into Australia more generally. I asked whether they intended to offset the greenhouse gas emissions of their flight to the UK and received the following reply:

> "Rest assured we already have considered offsetting our air travel! We also decided at Synod last weekend to 'Greenfleet'[176] as many Diocesan cars as possible. Our Cathedral already uses, and the Registry is about to convert to, Green energy." (Rosie Catt, pers. comm., 26/05/2005)

In later emails, some further details of ecological works in the diocese were provided:

> "Our own Cathedral have [sic] been in the process of regenerating a riverbank with indigenous rainforest trees and are now looking to extend this area of revegetation. The (Cathedral) Parish itself is following the UK Eco congregation model, as is the Parish of Kempsey." "We also have a Diocesan camp site in Ballina, which (as many Diocesan camp sites are) is rather a difficult issue of whether to keep/sell/develop! However, there has been some rather major work done by the Landcare group around the site and the local Council seems to think there may be some significant flora varieties involved." (Rosie Catt, pers. comm., 26/05/2005)

Further to the above email exchange, I received a longer email from the Diocesan Registrar (roughly the equivalent of a company secretary and manager). This was in the context of my making enquiries about the Diocese's land management practices as an aspect of my assessment of their policy and praxis. I had mentioned that the diocese is home to an order of the Little

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[176] Greenfleet was one of the earlier and to my knowledge is still the largest provider of carbon off-sets for vehicle emissions.

Brothers of St Francis. Associated off-site web pages[177] reveal that the 'monastery' is sited on a large bushland property and that the buildings and other operations are constructed and managed to have minimal ecological impacts. I had asked Ms Catt whether the Brothers might be interested in formally protecting the bushland via a government support scheme. I received a response from the Dioceses' Registrar:

> "…As Rosie has indicated to you we have very limited natural areas with any meaningful conservation areas. The Little Brothers do, I believe, manage sympathetically to nature, but to what level of specific concern I do not know, but will now start to find out. The Gunundi Conference Centre site is in a coastal preservation area and may have a R&T[178] plant, but the amount of natural cover is very limited, really a strip around the outside of the about 1.5ha site. However, we do provide a buffer and extend the edge a little. We have a small piece of rainforest scrub near Nimbin, managed by the local Landcare Group, but I have never sought proper particulars of that site. I will now.
>
> A number of small sites have been protected by chance - the boggy end of a school site at Port Macquarie, a riparian strip behind a building development that we undertook, the planting Rosie referred to, habitat trees on some church sites etc.
>
> Having said that my belief is that one area of natural land management that we might be able to do something with is a series of small blocks of land which we have in a variety of different parts of the Northern Rivers which were originally intended to be church or graveyard sites. For whatever reason these sites were not proceeded with and are still on our books, none are in high density areas, but they are often in cleared landscapes. It is my hope that we will identify each of these sites, assess them for their natural values, and if suitable fence them to protect them or if cleared, plant them to ensure that in a hundred years time there will be mature trees with some habitat values if not high conservation values. If possible I'd like to see us do some plantings which a [sic] sympathetic to some of the threatened *Lepidoptera*.[179] We will also as a Diocese move on (the) provision of nest boxes, as well as the energy and vehicle issues." (Rev. Pat Comben, Registrar, pers. comm., 27/05/2005).

The above exchanges provide some valuable information not available from the Diocese's or the Commission's web pages. They show a commitment to further researching how the Diocese might best respond to ecological policy matters; a relatively comprehensive approach to policy and praxis; and the value of specialist knowledge. The naturalist background of the

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[177] http://www.franciscanhermitage.org/

[178] Meaning rare or threatened, presumably in the context of the CSIRO's Rare Or Threatened Australian Plants codes.

[179] *Lepidoptera* include butterflies and moths. The Registrar, Rev. Pat Comben, apparently has expertise in entomology, hence his particular interest in restoring habitat for threatened butterflies of the region. He is also a former Labor Party Minister for Environment in Queensland and is featured in an article in the SMH (Sept 9-10, 2006) in relation to the discovery and naming of a new species of spider named *Habronestes diocesegrafton* by the Australian Museum.

Registrar is clearly useful for his ability to understand the opportunities for work such as protecting remnant vegetation and for replanting schemes. I also noted a comment in the Commission's newsletter that a young priest with a degree in environmental science was one of three who successfully lobbied for the creation of the Commission. It is rare enough to have a young priest, let alone one who is qualified in environmental science. This may be a significant influence in the diocese.

Ms Catt had earlier cited the work of the Environment Commission of the Diocese of Canberra & Goulburn as a source of inspiration and as a model for the work of the Commission in Grafton. Information sharing within and between the denominations is clearly important in furthering ecological policy and praxis developments and in reducing the likelihood of repeated 'reinventions of the wheel'.

I also note the significant involvement of Commissioners in a local environmentalist coalition. Such interaction helps to enlarge the Church's knowledge base for improving ecological policy and praxis. I have not observed the same sort of interactivity between Commission members and the environmentalist groups, even naturalist groups.

9.4.7 Archdiocese of Sydney

The 'Sydney Anglicans' are known primarily for their evangelical and morally conservative orientation and are regarded by some as so different to the rest of Australian Anglicanism as to warrant recognition as a different denomination[180]. Rumours of a split in Australian Anglicanism abound. For all of the usually negative commentary about 'Sydney Anglicans', it is notable that they are the only diocese in the nation to be growing in members.

The above context is important in considering my assessment of the Archdiocese's website in terms of ecological policy and praxis. The website was up-to-date, very large and complex, and was evidently professionally constructed and maintained.

The website included commercial advertisements and offered space to advertisers. This was the only Church website that I encountered that included and offered commercial advertising, though I did see the same practice in at least one diocesan newsletter elsewhere.

The website contained a vast amount of highly corporate material relating to Church business, mainly in terms of property sales and acquisitions, and related fiscal matters. Much of the site looked and read like what I would expect to find on the website of a large national and secular for-profit corporation. Economic rationalism and corporate culture were pervasive, and

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[180] See for e.g. Tacey, 2000; Brighton *et al.*, 2004; Carnley, 2004.

in much of the site, I wondered whether all but the specifically religious aspects of the Church had been deliberately corporatised to maximise financial returns. None of the business matters or formal reports of the Archdiocese gave any regard to ecological or ecotheological considerations.

In 2005, the website displayed some articles relevant to ecological concerns but none of these related to institutional policy or praxis. I found two articles under the links 'Culture' and 'Social Issues'. There was no category for ecological issues in any form. This is consistent with the long-standing allegation that Western Christianity is anthropoexclusive or at least anthropocentric. The articles were interesting but were presented in the context of a media forum where the diocese provided a vast array of articles, internally and externally derived, but none of the few that dealt with ecological matters even hinted at an institutional response.

Both of the internally derived articles were critical of secular environmentalism. The first article[181] was nothing short of a rant that compared modern environmentalism to the Nazis! It was not anti-environmentalism *per se*, just completely opposed to secular environmentalism as morally wrong, dangerous and deficient, especially in the political manifestation of The Greens. It advocated a form of Christian environmentalism but did not provide any details as to how it might operate.

The second article[182] was much longer and less polemical. It also demonstrated a strong anthropoexclusivism and productivism in its discussion of the stewardship model. It was an excellent example of propaganda via its failure to disclose some key facts about the academic at the centre of the article, whose views fall within the realms of pseudoscience and demonstrate problems with the narrowness of academic disciplinarity when tackling global ecological issues.

The second article is particularly instructive as an example of one of the key challenges confronting Christian environmentalism – namely the lack of adequate, sound knowledge within the Churches on which to base ecological policy and praxis decisions. The article puts up a retired academic with a background barely relevant to global climate change, as an expert in this field and indeed on environmentalism. She happens to be a Sydney Anglican who at the time held a position on the Anglican National Environment Working Group, though this was not disclosed. She was presented as an expert despite the fact that her views on global climate change are contrary to the vast body of scientists and indeed of world religions. The basis for her position was apparently a version of the standard (often exclusive) emphasis on a very narrow and fragmented view of human welfare – well motivated but badly informed.

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[181] http://www.sydneyanglicans.net/socialissues/436a/
[182] http://www.sydneyanglicans.net/socialissues/435a/

Unless it adequately informs itself, Christian environmentalism risks selectively adopting advice from 'experts' whose views sit relatively comfortably with entrenched dogmatic positions within the Churches, even when that advice is technically poor and lacks credibility in the public domain. How can an ecologically naïve Church determine from whom it should seek 'expert' advice when it wants to inform itself about complex ecological issues so that it can formulate a response? In the case of the Sydney Anglicans, it seems that they determine expertise by whether or not the views of the 'expert' are politically acceptable within the bounds of the local interpretation of the faith. Insiders are certainly preferred as is evident in the later formulation of the Archdiocese's 'environment policy'.

Given the highly conservative orientation of the Archdiocese of Sydney, it is unlikely to retain or attract ecological / environmentalist expertise amongst its members, so it will have to make do with whatever knowledge remains in its ranks or it will have to look outside the institution for advice. Unlike the operation of CEA, whose Advisory Council includes external expertise, Sydney Anglicans seem to have restricted their 'expert' advice to within their own ranks. The situation in Sydney contrasts with that in the Anglican Diocese of Grafton where Environment Commission members are active in and engage with the regional environmentalist movement outside the Church and where there is apparently some internal expertise, even if its scope is relatively narrow. They are also clearly prepared to seek expertise outside the diocese, for example by travelling to research the work of the UK's Eco-congregations group, by engaging with other dioceses (Catholic and Anglican) and by asking me to assist them by forwarding key results from my Internet research.

In addition to the two articles mentioned above, the Archdiocese's website contained several other items related to ecological matters. These were only located by using the internal search engine and key search terms. The first of these articles stood in stark contrast to one accessed via the 'Social Issues' page. It was a link to a SMH article[183] featuring the views of progressive US commentator of religion, Bill Moyers, who bemoaned the rise of the religious right and the associated negative ecological policies and outcomes.

The second article[184] was a somewhat scholarly work by an academic writing in the field of ecotheology and advocating a positive Christian response to the ecological crisis. It was followed by a broader theological article[185] that touched on ecological concerns and concluded that from his perspective, Christianity and environmentalism are inherently linked.

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[183] http://www.smh.com.au/text/articles/2005/03/08/1110160822380.html
[184] http://www.sydneyanglicans.net/indepth/whose_garden/
[185] http://www.sydneyanglicans.net/culture/thinking/383a/

The latter two articles were from the UK. The first relates to the work of McGrath, 2003, and his strongly argued view that religion is not inherently antithetical to science. McGrath makes a strong ecotheological and philosophical case for Christian environmentalism. The final article was about a media statement by the Bishop of Liverpool in which he advocated urgent and effective Christian environmentalism. He said, "We cannot carry on consuming as we are, and cannot carry on treating the Earth as we are, without realising that what we sow we will reap".

When revisited on 30/05/06, the internal search engine of the Archdiocese's website produced a much larger list of content with some ecological relevance. There was more content available than can sensibly be reviewed here so I have concentrated on only the most significant findings. Most of the content was in the form of links to off-site media stories. There was very little original internal content. The most important was a brief report about what seemed to be the first formal policy or at least advisory document of the Archdiocese on ecological matters[186]. This was apparently published in 2005 and is entitled, 'Environment: a Christian response'. The publication was not available for download but a link was provided to a theological bookstore from which it can be purchased cheaply. A small introductory abstract from the booklet was provided.

There are two associated articles that indicate the publication is intended to bring Sydney Anglicans up to date with environmentalism, both outside and inside the Church, and to advise them on "the kind of environmental thinking (that) we think makes the most sense". One of the articles mentions the ecumenical collaboration with the ACF that produced the Changing Climate – Changing Creation brochure and it contains a link to this document on the NCCA website. I discuss 'Environment: a Christian response' below:

9.4.7.1 'Environment: a Christian response'

This publication by Cameron, 2005 is not an operational policy document. It is as a theological exploration and justification for Christian, or more specifically, conservative evangelical Anglican concern about the ecological crisis. The author is an academic in the Anglican Church's Moore Theological College within the Archdiocese. The document was written for the Archdiocese's Social Issues Executive. It did not have an Environment Commission at that time. Its placement of ecological concerns under 'social issues' is consistent with the traditional anthropocentrism of Western Christianity (see John, 2005), and is not a phenomenon unique to Anglicanism or the Sydney Anglicans.

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[186] http://www.sydneyanglicans.net/mission/resources/environment_a_christian_response/

The document develops a conservative ecotheology that is deeply anthropocentric, utilitarian and ecologically naïve. It adopts a hierarchical theocentric model that specifically claims to avoid anthropocentrism. However, the model still leaves humanity at the top of its hierarchy, above all else but God. It propounds a version of the increasingly outdated stewardship model that other parts of Christianity have developed, reviewed and since abandoned.

The document promotes a version of Christian environmentalism as theologically and morally sound. It addresses some political aspects overtly and encourages readers to become fully informed about the orientation and policies of political parties, noting that they all claim some degree of environmentalism. It notes that what amounts to economic fundamentalism is morally wrong but that what it sees as misanthropic environmentalism is also wrong – essentially two ends of the spectrum. It encourages readers to act locally and to think globally but notes that the latter is very challenging because of the scale and complexity of the issues and the limited extent to which an individual can address them. It promotes self-education on a range of ecological issues and suggests some topics to focus on.

For the purposes of this thesis, the key point arising from the work of Cameron, 2005, is that it is not an institutional operational policy. The praxis dimensions that it raises are opt-in aspects for readers to consider as individuals. It does not talk about the Archdiocese's organisational response to the issues that it raises. Whilst it is the largest ecotheological policy document that any Anglican diocese in Australia appears to have produced, it is very much a first step in the process of institutional policy development. The fact that there was already a national and international Anglican policy on ecological matters seems to have been inadequate for the Sydney Anglicans, who also appear to have had no regard to the established ecological policies and praxis occurring in other Anglican dioceses in Australia.

9.4.8 Diocese of Canberra & Goulburn

This was the first diocesan website that I investigated. I visited it before I had considered the Internet-based assessment of Church ecological policy and praxis used in this thesis. It came to my attention through the locally and sometimes nationally prominent environmentalist stance of its bishop, George Browning, whom I first encountered when he presented a paper at a seminar in April 2004 (see Browning, 2004). Bishop Browning clearly took ecological policy well beyond symbolism and rhetoric, spending large sums of money (~$600,000) to reduce the ecological impact of church buildings and other operations. Hearing about those and related commitments and achievements motivated me to explore the extent to which such a 'greening' had occurred elsewhere in the mainstream Churches of Australia.

The Diocese of Canberra & Goulburn was apparently the first to establish an Environment Commission, doing so in 2001. This may be the first official body of the Anglican or Catholic Churches in Australia constituted specifically to deal with ecological policy and praxis. Earlier bodies in the Catholic and Uniting Churches certainly dealt with ecological concerns but only as part, usually a relatively small part, of bodies addressing conventional notions of social justice.

The Diocese's monthly Anglican News edition of February 2004[187] describes the formation of the Environment Commission. The motivation for forming the Commission came from relevant outcomes of the 1998 Lambeth Conference in the UK and the subsequent 2002 Anglican Congress on the Stewardship of Creation[188].

The Commission's objectives are "to promote Christian obligation to nurture and care for the environment at three levels: within the church as a community of faith; within the church as an institution; in the wider community as an influential party in the development of community and government attitudes and policies." It sees that a large part of its role is, "to support Christian people in the Diocese in their contemplation of environmental issues and what should be done about them - as individuals, as a church and as a nation; and to provide information to individuals, parishes and others in the church to enable Christian people to make informed decisions."

The policies and praxis of the Environment Commission are too many and too extensive to discuss in detail here. Most are documented to some extent on the Commission's website[189]. Following is a very condensed summary of some of the Commission's ecological policies and praxis, including selected formal statements made by Bishop Browning. I also briefly note some of the difficulties that the Commission is experiencing in pursuing its agenda across the diocese. I discuss such problems and some potential solutions in more detail in the summary chapter dealing with diocesan and synodal policy and praxis in the three subject denominations.

The Commission comprises lay people and clergy. The former includes various retired technical experts. It divides its work program into the fields of Energy, Education, Liturgy, Environmental Audit and Water. It publishes reports of its activities and proposals in the diocesan newsletter, with other articles also published on its website. The Commission's own website contains a large amount of original ecological content and was well ahead of all other dioceses (Anglican and Catholic) in this regard until relatively recently when it was perhaps

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[187] http://www.canberragoulburn.anglican.org/html/publications/anglicannews/200402Environment.htm
[188] It is unclear to me how an event in 2002 can have influenced the formation of the Commission in 2001 unless this occurred through knowledge in 2001 of what would be taking place at the 2002 event.
[189] http://www.pastornet.net.au/envcomm/

matched by the volume of content on the website of the Environment Commission of the Archdiocese of Melbourne.

By 2002, the Commission had produced and distributed within its domain a 'handy hints' package addressing easy ways to reduce one's ecological footprint (mainly in terms of water and energy use). It also produced and distributed related liturgical resources, established internal and external networks to support its ecological agenda, and commenced negotiations to obtain energy management contracts over diocesan assets. The energy contracts form part of an agenda to reduce energy use through retrofitting and improving the efficiency of its buildings, with the ultimate aim of switching its electrical usage to 'green power'.

The Commission was instrumental in enacting a particularly notable operational policy that requires all new building and substantial renovation work in the diocese to comply with best practice for energy and water conservation. This is a rare example of the diocese being in a position, because of funding and related governance rules, to impose an ecological policy on parishes and other diocesan bodies. In many other ecological policy situations, the diocese only recommends a particular approach. Yet in other policy areas such as financial accountability and child protection, compliance is mandatory and enforceable, including provision for the imposition of financial penalties.

Through 2003, the Commission further developed the ecotheological and ecclesiastical explanations for is work. Its Chair resigned, later followed by three other founding members, yet it did not collapse, and was able to recruit replacements. It notes its extensive use of email to communicate to its more distant members in order to reduce their need to travel to meetings (and quite probably as a necessary means of attracting and retaining members who would prefer not to travel). It attempted to operate a diocesan gathering on ecological matters but did not get sufficient interest from parishioners and priests. In response, it embarked on a five-year internal education program. It notes progress in establishing the aforementioned energy management contracts and details their benefits.

In 2004, Bishop Browning spoke at the 2004 synod meeting on the topic of 'The Church of the future should have environmental issues as core values'. This speech was later issued as a media release[190]. In summary, it makes very clear his view that environmentalism is a non-optional aspect of the Christian faith and that short-term political and alleged economic concerns are not valid reasons for failing to take significant national action to address the

[190] http://www.canberragoulburn.anglican.org/HTML/NEWS/mediarelease20040915environment.pdf

challenge – particularly that of climate change. He spoke further on this matter in an interview with ABC Radio National[191].

In 2005, the Commission was involved in the meeting of the international ACEN, which was held in Canberra. Global warming was a key theme. Bishop Browning was elected to the Chair of ACEN. The Diocese's St Barnabas Ministry Centre was awarded an ACT 'No Waste Award' for its outstanding example of waste minimisation through avoidance, reuse and recycling. It collects and sorts material placed in Anglicare charity bins. Members of the Commission published articles in the newsletter that deal with water management and the justification for switching to 'green power' electricity.

In 2006, Bishop Browning again wrote on issues of energy, this time in response to the Government's agenda of 'investigating' nuclear power. Bishop Browning advocated reducing energy consumption and increased use of renewable sources prior to considering nuclear power in Australia. However, he saw nuclear energy as useful and relevant in fast developing, currently fossil fuel-dependent nations. He later followed-up with an open letter to the federal Government and Opposition in which he called for strong and meaningful action to address climate change.

In late 2006, the Commission facilitated an "Interfaith action on climate change" entitled 'For the love of the world'[192]. Whilst it was reportedly well attended, the event was not publicised through any of the many faith and/or environment networks with which I am connected as part of my research. This suggests that attendees were mainly 'insiders'.

9.4.8.1 Environmental audit

A key initiative of the Environment Commission is its 'environmental audit' of the diocese. A questionnaire based on the design by the UK-based Eco-Congregation group had been distributed to all parishes[193]. The Commission appears to have been the first such body to import the Eco-Congregation audit resource, which has subsequently been adapted and adopted by other Anglican Environment Commissions and by Catholic Earthcare. In summary, the Commission received a response rate of ~30% to its audit questionnaire.

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[191] http://www.abc.net.au/rn/talks/brkfast/stories/s1407001.htm

[192] http://www.canberragoulburn.anglican.org/forloveoftheworld.htm

[193] http://www.pastornet.net.au/envcomm/Resources/Audit/Environmental%20Audit.pdf

It described the results on its website as:

> "…a very spotty report card. We treat some matters responsibly but others seem to have been missed almost entirely. For example, we support Christian development agencies but, unlike the Church in England, have little knowledge or interest in supporting fair trade. We use crockery rather than disposable cups but do not use green cleaning agents. We run adult education programs but do not consider Creation as a suitable topic for a course."

The Commission received what I consider a low response rate to its audit questionnaire given that the process was a formal request of the Commission as a diocesan agency. The Chairman of the Commission described to me some of the associated problems such as a lack of interest and knowledge amongst parish priests and parishioners. He noted that not only had most parishes failed to respond to the questionnaire, but that many were also failing to comply with regulatory financial reporting obligations, even though monetary penalties can be imposed by the diocese for non-compliance. This situation is consistent with that mentioned by Bouma, 2006 p97. Similar to its response to having to cancel its proposed diocesan gathering on ecological matters, the Commission committed to taking its 'environmental audit' process to the parishes through a series of regional meetings. It has made it clear that it wants to see all parishes audited at some stage and that there are sound theological and economic justifications for this.

9.5 Summary and conclusions

Of the three subject denominations, the Anglican Church of Australia has the least amount of ecological policy and has very little praxis at a national level. This is unsurprising given the relative theological and social conservatism of Australian Anglicanism and its growing dominance by American-style, ultraconservative Evangelicals from the large Archdiocese of Sydney. Australian Anglicanism takes a relatively strong stance when it comes to the interaction of Church and State, generally advocating a clear division between religion and politics. This tradition is contrasted by the overt and covert politicking of the Evangelical Anglicans (in favour of socially conservative policies), and by a vocal minority of Anglicans who see that their faith calls them to act by all means, including the political, in the interests of the poor, and more recently, of Creation.

Despite its weakness at the national level, a small number of Anglican dioceses are well developed in both policy and praxis, with at least one of these being a national interdenominational and perhaps even an international leader. Indeed, Catholic Earthcare Australia has drawn on the ecological policy and praxis of the leading Anglican diocese, as have some parts of the Uniting Church.

In contrast to the progressive policy and praxis seen in some of the many religious orders of Catholicism, there was little evidence of a similar phenomenon within Anglicanism. This is at least in part because of the far smaller number of orders and ordinates within Anglicanism.

Anglicanism in Australian is an increasingly divided Church and is also suffering particularly severely from a decline and 'greying' of its membership. Bouma, 2006, suggests that this is so severe that Anglicanism will be largely extinct across most of the nation within 20 years. Nonetheless, there are individual Anglicans, informal groups and formal ecclesiastical units such as diocesan environment commissions who are contributing to ecological reform within the Church and within broader society. The latter includes examples of diocesan environment commissions whose members interact officially with local-scale secular environmental organisations and with related bodies such as field naturalists' groups.

The challenges facing the Anglican Church and its members in converting ecotheology into policy and praxis are substantial. Many of these challenges are generic within Western society; some are common to large institutions; and some are generic to the Churches. However, at the national level Australian Anglicanism faces a particularly strong challenge in relation to the influence of the 'Sydney Anglicans' and the fact that a 'Sydney Anglican' and virtual 'climate change sceptic' chairs the Church's relatively ineffectual National Environment Commission.

It appears likely that as the Evangelical part of the Anglican Church is the only part that is growing, with the others literally dying out, the ecological stance of Anglicanism in Australia will be dominated by the Evangelical view. Whilst internationally the Evangelicals have been particularly slow to respond positively to ecological concerns, with the Australian Evangelicals being even slower, the strong Evangelical movement in the USA is now taking a very positive, though increasingly divided environmentalist stance. This suggests that there may be a 'trickle down' effect such that Australian Evangelicals within the Anglican Church and perhaps in other denominations will move beyond basic policy formulation and towards more specific policies and praxis.

Despite its constraints, it is the Anglican Church in Australia that has produced some of the strongest examples of regional (diocesan) ecological policy formulation and praxis, as well as having an international leader in Christian environmentalism (Bishop George Browning, Chair of the Anglican Communion Environment Network). This shows that a progressive ecological stance is not outside the scope of present-day Anglicanism. Indeed, some of its more vocal ecological reformists insist that authentic Anglicanism (and Christianity in general) demands of its adherents a genuine ecological commitment backed by meaningful action (see for example the recent works of the Archbishop of Canterbury, Rowan Williams; and Bishop George Browning).

Chapter 10: Uniting Church ecological policy & praxis

10.1 Introduction

This chapter is considerably larger than those that address ecological policy and praxis in the Catholic and Anglican Churches. The Uniting Church of Australia (UCA) has a history of ecological policy production that dates back to its inaugural National Assembly in 1977 (Stringer, 2000). The UCA's foundational document, The Basis of Union[194], a reference to the amalgamation of its component denominations, gave rise to its first public statement on ecological issues (John, 2005 p25-27). This put the UCA well ahead of any official recognition of the validity of ecological concerns by Anglicanism and Catholicism, and perhaps even by most of Australian society. This is consistent with the UCA being relatively progressive and activist when compared with Catholicism and particularly with Anglicanism. This longer history of ecological policy-making means that there is simply more policy to review within the UCA than in the other subject denominations.

Furthermore, the structure of the UCA is considerably different to those of the two older subject denominations. The nature of this structural difference, combined with the longer history of policy-making appears to have created a larger volume and greater depth of policy and praxis at the sub-national level. Consequently, even though the UCA is the youngest, the smallest, and the most rapidly diminishing of the subject denominations, there is more relevant material than there was for the two much larger and older denominations.

This chapter first addresses the ecological policies of the UCA at a national level. There has been essentially no praxis at that level, in part because the national governance body is removed from the 'on-ground' implementation of ecological policy. I then provide a more detailed review of Synod-level policy and praxis. Consistent with my approach to the Catholic and Anglican chapters I have not researched or presented other than a very small sample of material below the Synod level.

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[194] http://assembly.uca.org.au/basisofunion/Basis1992.htm

10.2 The National Assembly

The National Assembly is the central policy-making body of the UCA and has national doctrinal authority[195]. It has issued statements, proclamations, policies and resolutions that include reference to ecological issues, some specifically, and others more generally. Most of the ecological policy and related publications are made by a specialist body within the National Assembly such as the former Social Responsibility and Justice Commission. The name of the body responsible for matters that include ecological issues has changed over time. The most recent change was the renaming of the SR&JC to become UnitingJustice in 2003.

From early on, the National Assembly had a focus on a social justice agenda linked to Aboriginal reconciliation and the peace / anti-nuclear movement, and it made clear its view that religion and politics cannot be separated if social justice is to be provided. Whilst it shares the Protestant tradition with Anglicanism, the UCA's overtly political stance is very different to that taken by mainstream Anglicanism which even in its more progressive forms, fears crossing a perceived boundary between the Church and politics (see for example 'Green by Grace'[196]).

Even before I started research for this thesis, in my relative ignorance of the religious landscape of Australia, I still knew that the UCA was perceived to be the most progressive mainstream Church in the nation. Indeed, "In January 1983, in a cover story, the Bulletin magazine named the Uniting Church along with the Australian Broadcasting Corporation (ABC) and the Consumer Affairs Association as the bastions of radical left wing policies in Australia" (Stringer, 2000). However, a chronological analysis of national UCA ecological policy development from 1977 to 2003 (John, 2005) reveals that until relatively recently, whilst it was well ahead of the other Churches in ecological policy-making and some areas of praxis, the philosophical basis of its policies were deeply problematic and remained so for many years. For example, most of its environmentalist sentiment came from a profoundly anthropocentric, if not anthropoexclusive orientation (John, 2005). This led to conflicting rationalities and a lack of intellectual (and theological) rigour in its policies, and it arguably fuelled division within the Church. Given this underlying conflict, it is unsurprisingly that the Church "has failed to implement many of those (ecological policies) which call us as an organisation to action"[197].

There are also some parts of the Church that are clearly far to the Left of the present day political centre (see for example the Earth Team website discussed later in this chapter). However, as I have noted in Chapter 5, the Uniting Church is anything but united, and whilst its

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[195] For further information on the organisational structure of the UCA refer to Bentley & Hughes, 2004.
[196] http://www.anglican.org.au/docs/WG-Environment_Greenby%20Grace_.pdf
[197] National Assembly 2004, Statement on environmental justice – the 2004 Federal election.

National Assembly has generally projected a politically progressive approach, there are other influential parts of the UCA that are profoundly conservative in their theology and politics.

John, 2005 p16, notes that only the official policies of the Assembly have doctrinal authority, i.e. are binding. It is unclear to me whether they are simply morally binding or whether they can at least theoretically be enforced. The Assembly has issued official 'policies' relating to ecological matters, but none have been prescriptive and as such, are effectively unenforceable in any case. Indeed whilst they are technically policies and would have doctrinal authority, they function as no more than broad statements of belief and orientation.

As an example of how these statements are seen within the officialdom of the Church, the Assembly's website lists some of them under the heading "Important historical statements", whereas the more regulatory policies are listed under "Policies, Procedures, & Guidelines"[198]. None of the 'policies' that deal with ecological matters are listed under the latter heading. Until very recently, all such 'policies' were externally directed, i.e. they were about what other parties should do, or about what 'we' (the public including the Church) should do. They were not directed internally, i.e. towards ensuring that the institutional Church adopted and implemented the policy positions that were being advocated.

Despite the Assembly's seemingly advisory approach to matters of ecological policy, elements within the Church have perceived such statements as too authoritarian in what remains the contentious field of ecotheology and related doctrine (John, 2005). In response to objections of this nature, the Assembly moved away from making official policy statements dealing with ecological concerns. After the year 2000, the Assembly's approach shifted to advocating and providing education on ecological issues. Such educative materials do not have doctrinal authority (John, 2005 p 16) and are essentially an 'opt-in' resource for anyone who chooses to accept them. However, in late 2006, the Assembly's approach to ecological policy reverted to the more doctrinal orientation of some of the earlier statements. Yet, in a break with that earlier tradition, the latest statement acknowledged the inadequacy of earlier policies. It calls for specific action within the Church and it appears to be worded such that it could conceivably be enforced if deemed necessary.

In researching this thesis, I noticed that the Churches and at least some Christians with official roles in the churches tend to recoil at notions of enforcement, instead preferring the concept of moral persuasion. However, it is clear that the Churches do enforce some of their doctrines with the sort of institutional vigour that I argue should be employed in relation to ecological policies and praxis. For example, Catholic clergy cannot marry, and bishops,

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[198] http://assembly.uca.org.au/resources/index.htm#policies1

Catholic or Anglican, must be male. Similarly strong stances are taken in relation to homosexual clergy or even homosexual Christians in various denominations and parts thereof. Despite sometimes-strong protestations from some of the Christians who were participants in my research, I fail to see why a Church has accepted once an ecotheology, enforcement of related policies should have any less force than other Church policies and doctrines.

10.2.1 Statements and policies from 1977 to 2003

John (2005) provides a detailed history and commentary on National Assembly policies and Statements that deal with ecological issues in the period 1977 to 2003. Before encountering his work, I had reviewed National Assembly content of this nature and had formulated my own views on this material. I later found that John (2005) and I had reached the same conclusions, but that his insider[199] knowledge of the UCA, the National Assembly, and its policy-making processes gave him a depth of insight beyond that which I could otherwise provide.

Because of constraints on the volume of material that I can include in this thesis, and to avoid duplication of effort, I decided that I would not provide a review of National Assembly material from 1977-2003 as this has already been done by John (2005). Furthermore, our conclusions are much the same. Instead, I provide over page in Table 10.1, a summary of my view of John's findings in relation to each of the Assembly's relevant publications. The table includes material that was not addressed by John.

John's focus is mainly theological but despite what might appear to be a more esoteric or theoretical orientation, his work reveals some key institutional and praxiological matters. I discuss these more substantially in Chapter 11.

[199] Rev. Dr. Jason John is a UCA Minister who, in 2006, became the Church's first 'eco-minister'. He is based at Scots Church in Adelaide. His website is http://ecofaith.org/.

Table 10.1 Summary of UCA national ecological policies 1977-2003

Document[200]	**Orientation**
Basis of Union (1977)	The approach is deeply anthropoexclusive and productivist. Ecological concerns are understandably a minor component of this document, which is mainly about the formation of the united Church. Nonetheless, it represents a significant inclusion of ecological concern ~20 years before the Catholic and Anglican Churches in Australia formally expressed any similar concern.
'Statement to the nation' (1977)	Ecological concerns are addressed only as a minor component of a mainly social agenda. Again, deep anthropoexclusivism and utilitarianism is evident, but there is also an anti-consumerist and pro-equity (human) agenda. 'Resource conservation' and energy use are a focus. This appears to be largely a result of the general emphasis of mainstream environmentalism of that time.
Assembly Minutes (1985)	This document uses an anthropocentric stewardship orientation to express concern about nuclear testing in the Pacific.
Uranium: Resolutions and Statement (1985)	This document was not mentioned by John, 2005, perhaps because it contains no specifically theological content. However, the text reveals a deeply anthropocentric if not anthropoexclusive orientation. Opposition to the nuclear industry is mainly about human health and peace (see also Stringer, 2000).
'Educational resource on nuclear testing in the Pacific' (1986)	The stewardship model is again used in what is an anthropocentric rather than anthropoexclusive approach.
'Statement to the nation' (1988)	~90% of this document is about human justice (divorced from ecology) seen from a deeply anthropocentric and productivist orientation. Earth is seen as a resource for human use, with only human equity issues being considered. However, surprisingly, the document concludes with a statement that suggests that Nature has intrinsic worth. Humans are still seen as profoundly separate from Nature[201].
'Social Justice Sunday 1990 – Healing the Earth'	This is the first document to reveal the shift towards educative[202] and worship resources rather than the making of formal policy statements. It provides lots of background information to the problem and notably provides some practical solutions. It does not address some key theological issues including conflict between ecological values and the official UCA liturgy. It raises the concept of interconnectedness and recognises the inherent value of Creation to God, and that it does not need our 'improvement' to be 'good'. Yet other sections argue the converse. Overall, it is deeply conflicted, apparently in part as a result of having input from multiple authors.
'The rights of nature & the rights of future generations'	This is a reworking of a World Alliance of Reformed Churches document. It reveals deep and unquestioned anthropocentrism. Nature is given rights but they are subsumed by those of humans, who are clearly seen as not being part of Nature.

[200] At least some of the documents referred to here can be viewed at http://nat.uca.org.au/unitingjustice/cherishingcreation/environmentaljustice/index.htm or on linked websites. At the time of writing, the Church planned to assemble all of its statements and policies relating to ecological matters on this site but work was still in progress.

[201] In this section, I use 'Nature' and 'Creation' to show different concepts: 'Nature' is used where the Church is referring to the non-human part of the ecosystem, whereas 'Creation' is used when they are referring to all matter inclusive of humans.

[202] The reasons for the shift to an educative focus are discussed by John, 2005 who also cites Harrison, 1986 and Tabart, 1997. The primary reason is that the 'rank and file' membership objected to 'being spoken for', especially in the field of ecotheology where there was and remains a considerable diversity of perspectives within the UCA despite the impressions given by national policies and educative resources.

Commission for Mission report to the National Assembly (1991)	This document explicitly affirms the shift from formal policy pronouncements to an educative approach. It expands on the above work. It contains the first UCA use of the 'priestly'[203] model of Orthodox Christianity, though it was not repeated in later works. It is a profoundly anthropocentric position.
'Social Justice Sunday 1993 – The Land our Mother'	Ecological concerns are not the focus – the document is mainly about Aboriginal justice issues. It muddles traditional Aboriginal theology with Western theology and so contains anthropocentric models but also sees the Land as something that we belong to, not just as a resource.
Statement on Covenanting 1994: Congress Report	Whilst mainly about the relationship between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal members of the Church, the document also presents some ecotheology. Even the stated Aboriginal position is Westernised, anthropocentric, and ecologically exploitative.
Submission to Select Committee on Uranium mining and milling (1996)	Not mentioned by John, 2005, perhaps because it contains no specifically theological content, however it does refer back to Assembly policy and related theology in a manner which reveals some of the underlying theology. The document reveals that the UCA maintains a moratorium on mining and export of uranium in Australia. It includes an interest in protection of "the environment" and in advocating "ecologically sustainable development". It also mentions that nuclear-related activities are excluded from the ethical investment protocols of all Synod investment agencies. However, the orientation is anthropocentric and appears to have little other than tokenistic and naïve regard to non-human Nature, which is clearly treated as just a backdrop to human affairs, though one nonetheless worthy of moral consideration. Only when citing external documents that mention impacts on non-human Nature is this aspect mentioned.
'Invitation to the Nation' (1997)	Not mentioned by John, 2005, though it does contain one sentence that mentions in part the UCA's desire to see the nation commit to "the well-being of the environment, for the sake of the whole creation and for future generations." It also mentions the "whole of creation" but keeps humans separate from the rest of Nature.
'Social Justice Sunday 1998 – International Year of the Oceans'	This is the first adoption by the Assembly of a secular (UNESCO) statement on an ecological issue. The Assembly adopts UNESCO's then deeply anthropoexclusive orientation without question, even though the UCA rejected this position in its 1988 Statement.
Nuclear fuel cycle policy (2000)	This statement is anthropocentric and draws on dominion theology, revealing at least some of the variability in the Assembly's theological, philosophical and ecological orientation.
'World Environment Day 2001 – Connect with the world wide web of life'	This is the first WED response by the Assembly. It muddles its stance on how humans relate to the rest of Creation, seeing them as distinctly separate but also calling on them to reconnect. "So we have mixed messages. Having opened by affirming the anthropocentric stewardship model, WED 2001 closes by claiming that we are, 'merely a strand in the web,' pilgrims *with* not *on* Earth" (John, 2005). "WED 2001 is…an example of the inevitable theological compromises involved in preparing a resource for a diverse community" (John, 2005).

[203] The 'priestly' model is very similar to the vicegerency concept of Islam and is a version of the stewardship model. "In the Orthodox view, human beings are believed to be, '… a bridge between heaven and earth, a natural bond and mediator between extreme divisions' (Grdzelidze, 2002). Humans are the crown of creation, put on Earth to reign over creation, under God's direction. The task of humankind is to, '… *purify creation*, and *elevate it* to the level of its creator' (Grdzelidze, 2002). We are, then, more a minister or priest of creation than a ruler, and it is only through our *priestly* attitude to creation that it will survive" (John, 2005).

'Social Justice Sunday 2002 – Sustaining Creation'	This is the first ecumenical document of its type in Australia. It comprises ecumenical sections and denominational sections. The former again muddles different theologies, trying to achieve an ecologically, theologically, and ecclesiastically acceptable approach. The stewardship model is dominant in the ecumenical component. The UCA component challenges this in sections written by two progressive authors, but a third reverts to stewardship whilst later calling for a move beyond it. Specifically ecotheological sections also use stewardship whilst clearly trying to escape it for something that is not anthropocentric. The seeds of a radical new ecotheology are evident.
'World Environment Day 2002 – Give Earth a chance'	Stewardship is again evident, but also confused understandings of humanity's relationship with the rest of Creation. Evidence of the notion of agriculture "as a divine fiat" (John, 2005) emerges (as seen previously in some earlier Catholic approaches tainted by 'the Garden of Eden' concept). Productivism is evident. A biocentric theology emerges in a children's liturgy. Conflicting theologies undermine the document.
'World Environment Day 2003 – Water, two billion people are dying for it'	Frustrated by the problems with the above works, Jason John received approval to write this document himself. He focussed on revealing the two competing theologies (anthropocentric and biocentric) evident in earlier Assembly writings, not taking sides but simply presenting them as alternatives to be considered in light of their attributes. His intention was to trigger a more informed debate within the Church as to how it would orient itself and its policies relating to ecological issues.

10.2.2 UnitingJustice

Jason John's writing of the Assembly's 'World Environment Day 2003' statement was the first to produced by the newly formed UnitingJustice, which was formed from the Social Responsibility and Justice Agency / Committee. The organisation's mandate is described on a page of its website[204]. It is a small organisation, comprising a chairperson appointed by the Assembly, a National Director (Rev. Elenie Poulos), a synod staff representative, and three normal members appointed by the Assembly Standing Committee. It has only one staff member, the Director, making it even smaller than CEA (which had a CEO and an administration assistant). However, given that the UCA is a far smaller organisation than the Catholic Church in Australia, UnitingJustice is proportionally the largest national ecojustice body amongst all three of the subject denominations. In contrast to CEA, UnitingJustice deals with both nominal fields of ecological and social justice, with the bulk of its work evidently in the realm of the latter. Even with its Director shared between the fields of social justice and ecological justice, UnitingJustice is still proportionally larger than CEA. At the time of writing, there was no equivalent body in the national Anglican Church.

[204] http://nat.uca.org.au/unitingjustice/aboutUJA/mandate.htm

UnitingJustice has a considerable body of policy and related content available on the Resource Archive section of its website[205]. However, it divides the ecological content into two sections under the heading "Cherishing Creation": namely "energy and the environment"[206], and "environmental justice"[207]. The reason for such a division was not apparent, though it may relate to the historical focus of the Assembly on alternative energy matters alongside its objection to the nuclear industry.

To the extent that UnitingJustice's mandate specifies that it "Educate, inform and resource the church, to engage in actions for social and ecological justice and peace", the resourcing can only refer to educational material, as the organisation is not a source of funding for works such as 'green' retrofitting of Church infrastructure. The latter is a matter for Synods, Presbyteries and Church Councils. The focus of UnitingJustice on education and related worship resources is very similar to that of CEA and to the intent of the Anglican Environment Working Group. However, I note that UnitingJustice does provide some practical advice to members via the resources in the SJS 2002 Sustaining Creation materials and via its website. At the time of writing, it did not offer a self-audit scheme similar to that used by CEA and some Anglican Environment Commissions.

Following is an overview of ecological policies produced by UnitingJustice or other related bodies of the National Assembly after 2003.

10.2.2.1 No security without justice: Election 2004

This publication[208] by the Assembly outlines the policies and positions it sees as significant for the 2004 Federal election and it advocates action by its members to promote those outcomes. It includes a small section entitled 'Securing ecological justice', which opens with the statement: "We hope for a nation that respects the integrity of the earth's ecosystems and is committed to securing our future through ecological justice and environmentally sustainable living." It then backgrounds the issue by acknowledging the global ecological crisis inclusive of climate change, biodiversity loss and extinctions, industrial waste, exploitative use of water and energy, desertification and salinity.

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[205] http://nat.uca.org.au/unitingjustice/resourcearchive/index.htm
[206] http://nat.uca.org.au/unitingjustice/cherishingcreation/energyenvironment/index.htm
[207] http://nat.uca.org.au/unitingjustice/cherishingcreation/environmentaljustice/index.htm
[208] http://nat.uca.org.au/unitingjustice/resources/election2004/index.html

It goes on to discuss "the policy we seek", and it is here that instrumentalism and anthropocentrism undermine the otherwise very progressive stance of the document:

> "Recognising the vulnerability of life and the *resources* of the earth, environmental policies must promote the responsible *management, use* and occupation of earth by human society. They must ensure a fair distribution of natural *resources* and promote the long-term security of *our* natural environment." (My italics)

This is again evident where the desired policy is said to "care for and manage environmental assets for the public good". Emphasis is again on resources and "assets", with there being no hint of any intrinsic worth within Nature. But as was identified by John, 2005, it is quite common to see the ecological statements of the Uniting Church combine anthropocentrism and elements of biocentrism or at least an occasional acknowledgement of intrinsic worth. This is evident in this document, where simultaneously the desired policy is said to protect ecological values for future generations (clearly referring to humans), whilst also protecting "ecosystem functioning". The latter *may* be because this is intrinsically valuable, but from the rest of the document, it is reasonable to infer that this is valued because it protects "resources" that are of use to humans. The document calls for the "protection of biodiversity" but also for a "sustainable harvest", apparently assuming that "sustainable" refers to ecological as well as social values, and suggesting that as long as the "harvesting" is "sustainable", it is morally acceptable – an essentially instrumental approach.

'Securing ecological justice' is a small part of a larger document and it would be unreasonable to expect it to comprehensively explain the basis for the Church's orientation in this regard. However, similar to many earlier Uniting Church publications dealing with ecological concerns, it appears unclear as to what the philosophical basis for its position is. It appears to be anthropocentric and instrumentalist but hints at potentially going beyond this.

Even given the limited size available in this publication, it could have been concisely worded to better explain the Church's position and the basis for it. However, as suggested by the work of John, 2005, it seems that all too often, the Church's ecological policy statements are philosophically and ecologically confounded. This appears to be because of a schism between the progressives who are comfortable with a more theo/biocentric orientation (Creation is intrinsically valuable to God irrespective of its utility to humans) and the conservatives who remains stuck in deep anthropocentrism, with an equally deep fear of the heresy of pantheism.

What emerges is often a poorly founded hybrid policy that tends to adopt much of secular environmentalism's rhetoric but does so for exclusively or at least primarily anthropocentric reasons. Yet sometimes a policy document emerges in which anthropocentrism is specifically

denounced and in which the intrinsic value of Creation is argued to be fundamental. This is evident in the document that I review in the following section.

10.2.2.2 For the sake of the planet and all its people (2006)

The UnitingJustice website lists this document as an Assembly Resolution,[209] and as such, it would have doctrinal authority. This appears to represent a return, at least in part, to the earlier tendency to make official policy statements that address ecological themes, rather than using the softly-softly approach of providing purely educative resources. The Resolution involves adopting the associated policy statement, which is subtitled, "A Uniting Church in Australia statement on climate change". Assembly and UnitingJustice statements relating to climate change were brought together on one webpage in mid-2007.[210] The Resolution then calls on its members to enact the policy statements as follows:

> (Assembly) "encourages Uniting Church members, congregations, groups, agencies and councils to:
>
> - model ways of living and working that minimise the production of greenhouse gas emissions;
> - seriously and regularly include matters of environment and lifestyle change in prayer and worship, study, and communal decision making; and
>
> encourages Uniting Church members to:
>
> - advocate for government to implement policies that significantly reduce our dependence on fossil fuels and increase our use of non-nuclear renewable energy sources;
> - engage in dialogues, shared learning and action with non-government environment action groups."

The policy statement underlying the Resolution starts by recognising what John, 2005, points out in relation to the problematic theology of some earlier Assembly statements relating to ecological concerns. It acknowledges that contrary to its Statement to the Nation 1977, "The natural environment is, however, not merely a resource for the benefit of human beings but has *intrinsic value* (my emphasis) as part of God's good creation." It attempts to show that it addressed such earlier problems by citing its 1991 'The Rights of Nature and the rights of future generations' in which it declared that, "Nature has a right to the protection of its eco-systems, species, and populations in their interconnectedness". The statement goes much further:

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[209] Assembly Resolutions - Climate Change 2006
[210] http://assembly.uca.org.au/unitingjustice/cherishingcreation/ClimateChange_2007.htm

> "Since its inauguration the Uniting Church in Australia has been concerned about the continued existence of all creatures and plant life and believes that nature is not to be plundered and abused. We must acknowledge, however, that *the church has been complicit in the abuse of creation.* We have lived out a doctrine of the domination of nature by accepting and engaging in practices that have failed to safeguard the integrity of creation. We have supported systems and structures that exploit the natural environment in the service of human greed. We make this confession and we renew our commitment to move towards sustainable non-exploitative living, believing that God's creation—the earth itself and all the life that it supports—is precious and the earth's resources exist for the good of all now as well as future generations." (My emphasis)

This represents an overt acknowledgement of the problems of dominion theology. What's more, it is the strongest statement that I have encountered at the national level of any of the subject denominations in terms of acknowledging the Church's complicity in the very harms that it now decries. Theologically, the orientation includes the concept of the intrinsic worth of Nature, but it is ambiguous in its use of the term "earth's resources for the good of all". Does it mean all beings or all humans? From the first sentence of the quoted paragraph, I could infer that it refers to all beings, but having read all of the Assembly's earlier works of this nature, I can't be sure, as many of those works were theologically confused and even conflicted but were almost always underlain by anthropocentrism (a conclusion also reached by John, 2005).

However, it remains that the Resolution merely "encourages" particular ecologically beneficial actions. Thus, whilst it has doctrinal authority, it cannot be enforced. It does not require that any part of the Church do anything. In this regard, it arguably remains symbolic policy, though it does go beyond the previous stance of being purely educative and advisory. Whilst the Assembly could have used stronger language and directed[211] rather than simply encouraged Synods and other parts of the Church to act, it appears unwilling to do so.

Perhaps the most important aspect of 'For the sake of the planet…' is the confession by the Church of its complicity in harming Creation, and that this was based on a flawed theology and worldview. This seems to suggest a mood for serious reflection and reform, and in particular, a move towards bringing the Church into line with its own public policies. The latter does indeed seem to be occurring, with recent announcements from the Assembly and from the Synods of Victoria & Tasmania and of NSW that they will be embarking on a process to become 'carbon neutral', at least in relation to official activities. I discuss these announcements by the Assembly

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[211] Whilst it appears unwilling and seemingly unable to adopt a prescriptive approach to ecological policy, the National Assembly is seen as potentially having a far greater role in governance and the operation of the Church at lower levels than could equivalent national bodies in either of the older traditions (see Bentley & Hughes, 2004).

at the end of this section, with the Synods' announcements discussed in the sections dealing with each of their policies and practices.

10.2.2.3 International Human Rights Day 2006

As one of several short publications forming part of the Church's response to International Human Rights Day 2006, UnitingJustice produced a two page statement entitled 'Climate change: a human rights issue.'[212] The statement briefly explains what climate change is, then how it can be viewed as a human rights issue. Emphasis is given to the impacts of the phenomenon on Pacific island nations and to the inequality of impacts in relation to the causes of climate change. The Uniting Church has strong connections to similarly oriented Churches in the Pacific, and has been a vocal advocate of their plight in terms of climate change and the resultant generation of current and future 'climate refugees'.

The document is succinct, direct, and does not evade the political realities of the situation. It does not raise the impact of climate change on non-human Nature but this is outside its scope. It raises the fact that Australia is one of the largest *per capita* emitters of 'greenhouse' gases, yet its government has refused to grant any special refugee status[213] to the people of Tuvalu, Kiribati, or other Pacific island nations that are already suffering severe impacts of climate change (mainly through sea level rise).

The document also notes that UnitingJustice has endorsed a publication entitled 'A citizen's guide to climate refugees' published by Friends of the Earth[214]. The Friends of the Earth website relating to this publication shows that other Church and environmentalist groups have endorsed it. The former include CEA and three other Catholic organisations, along with the Evangelical aid organisation, TEAR Australia. The guide is described as giving "all the basic facts you need on climate change, greenhouse gas emissions; why people could become climate refugees, how many and where are they likely to come from, and, most importantly, what we can do about it."

'Climate change: a human rights issue' is one of several recent publications that demonstrate how the human welfare dimension of the impacts of climate change has apparently made it easier for the conventionally anthropocentric Churches to express concern on this issue, and for them to collaborate with secular environmental groups. The power of climate change as a unifying issue is raised briefly by Goosen, 2000 p204.

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[212] Link to Human Rights Day 2006 / Climate Change
[213] This is a reference to a refugee's status under the UN Convention on Refugees. The granting of "special status" would potentially mean that Australia would have to accept climate-change refugees from these countries.
[214] http://www.foe.org.au/resources/publications/climate-justice/CitizensGuide.pdf

The fact that climate change affects human and non-human Nature helps to demonstrate to the Churches and their followers that 'environmental issues' are not just about threatened species, forestry, and localised pollution. The global nature of climate change, the inequitable distribution of its impacts on people, the shared suffering of humans and the rest of Nature, all help to demonstrate important ecological realities such as interconnectedness and interdependency. Realisation of these realities by the Churches has challenged the doctrine of the separation of 'Man' from Nature, and has helped to replace the doctrine of dominion with the relatively less harmful doctrine of stewardship, or more progressive models such as custodianship.

10.2.2.4 Assembly commits to reducing its greenhouse gas emissions (2007)

'Crosslight' No. 166, May 2007 p1, the newspaper of the Uniting Church Synod of Victoria and Tasmania, reports:

> "The church's national Assembly… approved a proposal to go green, and (has) taken the first step by authorising an energy audit of its operations. The audit will assess how the Assembly can reduce its greenhouse gas emissions, improve its use of clean energy and support the development of renewable energy through investments and other action.
>
> Its decision, only a few months after it adopted a Uniting Church statement on climate change, 'For the sake of the planet', was based on a report about how it could put the statement's principles into practice.
>
> The report's author, Rev. Elenie Poulos, said it was vitally important to be "doing all we can to reduce our own environmental footprint" when the church was urging political leaders to make stronger commitments to renewable energy and reduction of greenhouse gases, she said.

At the time of writing, details were not publicly available, but this initiative is evidently another attempt to convert the Church's ecological policies into praxis. Further information is included in an article in the Sydney Morning Herald[215], though this is mainly about actions in NSW.

It is notable that this is apparently the first move by the Assembly to implement its policies within its own domain (essentially its offices and associated operations). Previous such endeavours were restricted to one or perhaps two of the most progressive synods. These have also announced similar moves to reduce their contribution to climate change by switching to certified 'green power' in their offices, and by amending their vehicle purchasing policy to "encourage smaller cars" (Crosslight 166 p1). The combination of efforts by the Assembly and

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[215] Link to SMH article - "Church attacks on greenhouse gas not just hot air"

at least two synod offices may be enough to catalyse broader changes throughout the Church. Indeed, examples of this are seen in a related article discussed in the section dealing with the NSW Synod's activities.

10.3 Ecological policy and praxis at the Synod level

In the UCA, the level of administration below the National Assembly is termed a synod. The term has a different meaning and function in the Catholic and Anglican Churches. In the UCA, synods are mainly based around the states and territories or more recently, amalgams thereof. Synods comprise a group of presbyteries, which are regional groupings of churches. Below that are local groupings under a Church Council, which has much the same function as the Parish Council in the Anglo-Catholic traditions[216]. Each UCA synod has a formal annual meeting. Synods have functionally more policy implementation power than does the National Assembly. They have the power to make directive policies and can conceivably enforce them through measures such as control of finances. A synod has much the same administrative power as a bishop in the Anglican and Catholic traditions[217], but on a larger scale and on a far more democratic basis.

The following section raises a selection of ecological policy and praxis examples from the synods. Because of constraints of the thesis format and the limited availability of the synods' ecological policies, I chose to focus on one synod as an example. I chose the Synod of Victoria and Tasmania because it provided a rich source of historical and present-day material and because I had been able to obtain a greater depth of information from this synod via its Environment Project Officer and its Earth Team. Providing an equally detailed analysis for all of the UCA's synods could warrant a thesis in itself. Consequently, for the others synods, I provide only an overview of more recent material.

Generally, I have not extended my investigation below the synod level because of issues of information availability and limitations on the volume of material that I can present. However, I have included a very small number of presbytery or local-scale projects that came to my attention.

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[216] For further information on the organisational structure of the UCA refer to Bentley & Hughes, 2004.
[217] The Uniting Church does not have bishops and does not have an apostolic succession as it sees all individuals as equal before God.

10.3.1 Synod of Victoria & Tasmania

10.3.1.1 Justice and International Mission Unit

Unfortunately, the Synod's recently redesigned website does not make it clear to 'outsiders' such as myself the means by which it deals with ecological matters. Consequently, use of the site's search engine was necessary to find where, in what to me appears a complex and foreign structure[218], the Church deals with such things as 'environmental issues'. The relevant body within the Synod is the Justice & International Mission Unit (or JIM) and the majority of ecological policy and praxis content is within this organisation's website. The JIM unit describes its operation[219] in a manner that indicates that it is very much in the ecojustice tradition i.e. it blends conventional social justice concerns with ecological justice issues.

The Unit employs a part-time Environment Project Officer and has done for several years. Similar bodies in some of the other synods employ project officers who address 'social justice' matters that sometimes include ecological concerns (Cath James, pers. comm., 2006).

During searches in 2005-6, the JIM Unit's website revealed a wealth of ecological policy material. It included a link to all of the Synod's Resolutions from 1977 to present that relate to ecojustice concerns[220], though when revisited in mid-2007, this part of the website was still being rebuilt, along with several others. When last checked in mid-2007, the website's main link to ecological content was through the Project Areas link, which revealed the field of Climate Change. This page contained a few paragraphs explaining the Unit's involvement in this area, and linking to a recent publication on this topic (reviewed later in this section). The Unit has previously had other projects with significance for ecological policy and praxis (esp. forestry) but they were not available on the new website. However, I discuss them later in this section based on my earlier searches of the JIM Unit's website.

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[218] Many of the Church websites investigated during research for this thesis has organisational structures that made it difficult for me to locate any ecological content. This may simply be because the websites are intended primarily or at least exclusively for the use of Church members, who I presume would be more familiar with the organisational structures used to address ecological issues. There is an apparent expectation that users will know that, for example, ecological issues can be found under the superficially unrelated link of 'justice' or 'social justice', and that the search term 'Creation' may be more productive than that of 'ecology'.

[219] http://victas.uca.org.au/main.php?id=960

[220] http://victas.uca.org.au/main.php?id=1956

10.3.1.1.1 Energy conservation and the 'greenhouse effect'

The Synod of Victoria, later merged with that of Tasmania[221], appears to have been a leader in the ecological policy and action of the UCA. Within just one year of the UCA's formation, the then Synod of Victoria passed a Resolution (75.5.11)[222] relating to energy, in which it resolved: "To instruct Synod Agencies and Divisions" to maximise energy efficiency through appropriate design of new buildings'; to insulate all of its residences; to "consider seriously the installation of solar water heaters in all residences." The same Resolution states that Synod will "request Presbyteries that they recommend to Parish Councils" that the same actions be taken at this level of the Church. It also resolved to request the establishment of a Committee on Solar Energy to provide advice to the Church in these matters. Perhaps most notably, the Resolution recommended that church members "give serious consideration to setting a personal/family goal to reduce their consumption of domestic energy resources - oil, gas, electricity, petrol, etc. - by at least 10% in 1979." Such a Resolution appears unmatched within the Anglican or Catholic Churches until far more recently.

The Synod's concern about energy use in the late 1970's was not driven by concern about climate change but by the so-called 'oil shock' or 'energy crisis', as well as by a general concern for minimising the use of finite and polluting fuels. Whilst it is not an example of the Church being a leader in addressing climate change, it does show a very early concern for reducing energy use and for preferring alternative energy sources. This feeds into its later responses to climate change.

John, 2005, comments that "Victoria, and to a lesser extent Western Australia, investigated the practical implications of alternative energy sources at length in their Synod resolutions." This is particularly evident in the 1999 Victorian Synod's Resolution 99.4.4 (Energy Audit) in which it directed that an energy audit be undertaken in relation to the Synod's offices. The audit related to electricity use and the Resolution included the requirement that an investigation be undertaken to determine how to reduce electricity consumption, along with an investigation into the use of 'Eco Power' (known today as 'green power' or renewable electricity).

James *et al.*, 2006 p7 report that the Synod committed to purchasing 25% of its electricity from 'green power'. It is unclear whether any part of the audit or the use of 'green power' occurred in the period 1999 to 2003. The motivation for the audit, reductions in consumption,

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[221] Tasmania was apparently the less progressive partner of the merger as suggested by the adoption of the 1991 National Assembly publication, 'The rights of nature and the rights of future generations' in the Synod of Victoria in 1991 but by the Synod of Tasmania in 2001.

[222] The Resolution can be seen in Appendix 2 of the Synod's 2006 publication, 'Climate change: faith and action' which is available at http://victas.uca.org.au/main.php?pg=download&id=2167.

and switching to 'green power' is clearly stated in the Resolution as deriving from concern for the impact of the anthropogenic greenhouse effect.

Despite the apparently disappointing outcomes from its earlier Resolutions, the Synod was not silent on energy and climate change issues. In 1997 it called for Federal Government action to address the impacts of climate change on Pacific Island nations and more generally. This is typical of the externally directed approaches that dominated the UCA's approach to ecological concerns. It was followed in 2003 by another plea to the Federal Government, this time to ratify the Kyoto Protocol. However, the latter part of the Resolution also directed the then Justice and World Mission Unit to "Work with at least five congregations to develop ways of reducing their energy consumption and report back to the 2004 Synod about the progress made." This appears to be the energy audit specified in 1999. James *et al*., 2006 p7, report that a pilot program commenced energy audits in congregations and Synod agencies in 2003, finding that reductions in energy use of 15% could be "easily achieved at relatively little cost."[223] The Earth Team, a volunteer group associated with the JIM Unit (and which I discuss later in this section), carried out the audit.

Again, it seems that even after the audit process and further related Resolutions, relatively little change occurred throughout the Synod. This is evidenced by the fact that much the same sentiment and intention as was expressed in these earlier Resolutions is again apparent in a 2006 publication by the JIM Unit, 'Climate change: faith & action'. The Unit also endorsed the CSIRO's report entitled 'Climate change in the Asia Pacific region'[224]. The JIM Unit's publication release predates the National Assembly's 2006 statement and Resolution relating to climate change, suggesting that it probably helped to drive the Assembly's response. Both were followed in 2007 by related commitments from the Synod and the Assembly relating to switching to 'green power' and reducing their energy 'footprint' (this is discussed below).

The Synod's newspaper, 'Crosslight' (No. 166 p1), reports a decision to switch (apparently 100% of) its electricity usage to certified 'green power' and to amend its motor vehicle policy to "encourage smaller cars". If granted approval at its meeting in late 2007, the Synod will also ask its congregations and agencies to "comply" with past Resolutions relating to the reduction of energy use and greenhouse gas emissions. This situation strongly suggests that earlier Resolutions were, at least in large part, not complied with by the Synod or at least not by its subsidiaries.

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[223] The audit report is cited as being available at http://jim.victas.uca.org.au/climate, but was not available at the time of writing.
[224] http://www.ccdr.org.au/report

Similar to the situation that I have documented in the other denominations, the Synod, whilst it apparently has the power to direct its subsidiaries to make changes such as undertaking energy audits, complying with recommended energy reduction measures, and switching to at least a percentage of 'green power', remains reluctant to do so. It seems that its strongest stance is "asking" its subsidiaries to comply with its earlier Resolutions.

10.3.1.1.2 Climate change: faith & action

This publication is the most in-depth and extensive that I encountered amongst all three of the subject denominations' responses to climate change. As noted earlier, this Synod-level report by the JIM Unit appears to have been a factor in the subsequent statements and commitments of the National Assembly. The report states that it "aims to assist Uniting Church members and the general community in understanding the causes and impacts of climate change and what action we can take to try to reduce the potentially harmful effects."

The document is 60 pages long and contains more information than can be fully addressed here. It contains only a small section that deals with the theological validity of the Church's concern about and action to address climate change. It notes that the Uniting Church has been concerned about this and related issues for a considerable time and that it has previously taken or sought to take positive steps to address the problem. The report contains substantial background information about the nature of the phenomenon but it is dominated by discussion of impacts and, to a greater degree, the various measures that might be used to address the problem. Economic and social considerations are dominant. Ecological considerations are a minor aspect of the document.

The theological/philosophical orientation of the document can be understood in one paragraph from the Executive Summary:

> "At the core of the Uniting Church's position is a belief that Christian theology implies respect for *all of God's creation* (including future generations) and a recognition [sic] of its *intrinsic value*. The Uniting Church also believes it is called to advocate on behalf of the poor and most vulnerable members of the global community. Because climate change is predicted to impact on the world's poorest *people* first, the Uniting Church acknowledges its moral responsibility to prevent this from occurring. Global *resource* use and the *equity* of this use are key elements in the climate negotiations. The Uniting Church maintains that *all* are equal in the eyes of God and this extends to our ability to enjoy and *access* the Creation." (My emphasis)

Like many of the earlier Church publications on ecological matters at both Synod and Assembly level, this latest document on climate change demonstrates a strange and uncomfortable hybrid of anthropocentrism with hints of biocentrism occasionally evident. The reference to "all of God's creation" appears to suggest a holistic and perhaps biocentric view in

which moral considerability is afforded to all of Nature, not just humans. However, the subsequent reference to "future generations" is conventionally a reference to humans and there is nothing in the text at this point to indicate that the reference might relate to future generations of non-human life.

The reference to "intrinsic worth" is consistent with some of the later Church statements but this position is not well supported, indeed, it is arguably undermined by other sections of the paragraph. "Intrinsic worth" suggests biocentrism, or perhaps the theo-biocentrism in which Nature is deemed intrinsically worthy but only because it was made by God and deemed "good". This is arguably a confounded position in itself as Nature is not actually being treated as intrinsically valuable, i.e. of value irrespective of its worth to anyone or anything else. It is only afforded value because it is seen to be made by God and deemed "good".

The next paragraph returns to the Churches' conventional emphasis on human welfare, especially concern for the poor. Unlike some of the more advanced ecotheologies, the paragraph indicates that the Church sees concern for the poor as being restricted to humans. Others such as Fox, 1983; Berry, 1988; Berry, 1992; McFague, 1993; Ruether, 1993; Collins, 1995; McFague, 1997; Berry, 1999; Gnanakan, 1999; McFague, 2001; Habel *et al.*, 2004, have extended the concept of "love thy neighbour" to include other species, noting that many of them are poor, dispossessed, abused, and at risk of extinction.

The paragraph's reference to "resource use" and related issues of equity is about human use of Nature, and equity issues in that context. There is no indication that the approach extends to consideration of interspecies equity, nor the notion that Nature is more than a collection of resources that simply need to be used in a more equitable manner between humans.

The final two sentences muddle concepts. The penultimate sentence states, "all are equal in the eyes of God", but it is unclear whether "all" refers only to people – it certainly appears to. The last sentence seems to validate my view that despite there being hints of biocentrism, the overall approach remains deeply anthropocentric. It concludes with a statement about "our (human) ability to enjoy (hinting at the possibility of a non-exploitative use, though it is still instrumental) and access (use/exploit) the Creation" (which interestingly and correctly receives capitalisation).

Sadly, from my perspective, it seems that despite the findings and work of John, 2005, and others in relation to the anthropocentric focus of the Uniting Churches' ecological policies, nothing or little seems to have changed in that regard. Even the JIM Unit, perhaps the most active and progressive ecological policy unit in mainstream Australian Christendom, appears stuck in anthropocentrism, or at least feels that it has to work from that perspective in order to communicate to its readers. My concern is that whilst the Churches remain stuck in

anthropocentrism, even when they have denounced dominion theology and begun to understand more ecologically valid orientations, their contribution to the resolution of the ecological crisis will be severely limited.

However, for all its philosophical and related ecological failings, the document is still a positive contribution to the Church's stance on climate change. It offers some good information to readers about the problem and some solutions. The document argues for reduced energy consumption, including through improved efficiencies and changes in values and behaviours. It advocates a shift towards existing renewable energy technologies and it rejects nuclear power. It supports "binding greenhouse gas emissions reductions of 20% by 2020, based on 1990 emission levels, as part of a roadmap to achieve at least 60% reduction by 2050." Notably, the Australian Greens seek a target of 80% by that date[225] and Monbiot, 2007, argues that 90% is necessary to prevent catastrophic and irreversible global climate change (>2ºC increase). The document is a positive contribution by the JIM Unit to what is expected to be a related policy statement backed with genuine institutional praxis at the Synod and Assembly level.

10.3.1.1.3 Forests & forest issues in Victoria and Tasmania

'Forests and forest issues in Victoria and Tasmania'[226] (Blair & Dockray, 2004) is an extensive externally prepared report that was produced for the JIM Unit on behalf of the Synod. Forestry practices had been publicly contentious for some time in both Victoria and Tasmania, and the Synod came under pressure from the JIM Unit to formalise its response at its 2002 meeting[227]. A Resolution produced by the 2002 meeting required the preparation of what in secular government terms amounts to a 'white paper' on the issue, to inform the Synod at its 2003 meeting. The contentious nature of the debate and an alleged lack of or deficiency in consultation on the issue within the Church membership saw the matter deferred to the 2004 Synod meeting.

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[225] http://greens.org.au/about/policy/policy.php?policy_id=20
[226] http://vic.uca.org.au/jim/localissues/forests/forestryreport.htm
[227] In November 2002, ordained representatives of some Churches (including the Uniting Church) staged a Forest Liturgy in Tasmania's Styx Valley where great concern was expressed about the nature and extent of forestry practices. This very controversial event and some of the related teachings of the Church divided congregations, particularly in Tasmania's north where there was strong opposition to the Church's position from members involved in the large forestry industry. The Forest Liturgy was organised by The Wilderness Society, which has used footage of the event as part of its fundraising campaign on its US-website.

At that event, the report and submissions[228] combined with strong lobbying to see the Synod pass a detailed Resolution in which it called for, amongst other things:

- an end to logging in “sensitive” and “high conservation value” areas;
- adherence to relevant law and policy by the industry;
- improvements in the regulatory system;
- adoption of “sustainable” practices; and
- adoption of ethical purchasing of forest products by all parts of the Synod and agencies.

The Resolution requires the JIM Unit to educate the Synod and its subsidiaries on the issue of ethical forestry and forest product use. Paper use is to be reduced and plantation-derived material is favoured. The Unit is to write to relevant governments requesting that they adopt the recommendations mentioned above. The Unit is given a watching brief on the ecological standards of forest products sourced from Victoria and Tasmania. I have not detected any action on these issues, though this may be, at least in part, because the Synod’s website is under reconstruction.

Irrespective of any operational outcomes, this report is highly significant, as it appears to be the first in-depth investigation of forestry issues by any of the three subject denominations. Even CEA’s series of relatively issue-specific position statements lack this level of detail and specificity. The report is not the first involvement of the UCA in the forestry debate, parts of which have previously been quite public in their opposition to aspects of the modern forest industry both in Australia and overseas, but it appears to be the only investigation of the issue in such depth. The Catholic Archdiocese of Hobart has also approached this contentious issue, but did not use a comparable approach, or one of such magnitude.

Despite its relatively detailed and comprehensive approach compared to anything similar within the ecological policies of the Churches, the JIM Units forestry report remains tainted by anthropocentrism and utilitarianism. This is consistent with the overall findings of John, 2005. Even though there are parts of the report that specifically attempt to go beyond anthropocentrism and instrumentalism, the overall orientation is still ultimately anthropocentric. I suspect that this is in part a consequence of the Church’s theological ‘baggage’ (dominion theology and anthropoexclusivism) and the very controversial nature of this topic in the Church (meaning that a pragmatic approach may have been taken).

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[228] http://vic.uca.org.au/jim/localissues/forests/Forestry_Project_Submissions.htm

The Church also clearly struggles to address both sides of the ecojustice agenda. It is relatively easy to mount an ecologically based case for dramatic changes in the forestry industry, but it is harder to address the social disruption and economic costs (even if they are relatively small and short-term), especially to market them to Church members that would be affected by loss of or significant changes in their employment. For an organisation that has strong roots in anthropocentrism and a passionate concern for human welfare, the oft-abused false dichotomy of 'jobs versus the environment' was clearly a salient concern. Nonetheless, the 2004 Synod's response, whilst it may be affected by anthropocentrism, is in line with at least some of the nation's foremost secular environmentalist groups such as the Australian Conservation Foundation. Both the Synod and the ACF argue for strong protection of ecological values whilst acknowledging the importance of social justice when it comes to addressing the impacts of forestry reforms on affected workers and communities.

10.3.1.2 National Threatened Species Day

McGlone (2002; 2004), describes some ecological praxis by the Uniting Church in Tasmania. These take the form of its 2002 National Threatened Species Day event, and a subsequent use of an Envirofund grant "to assist with controlling weeds in the church-owned cemeteries at Campbell Town that threaten several grassland plants." McGlone (2002; 2004) mentions that the church service associated with the National Threatened Species Day, at which he was an invited speaker, included a sermon by Reverend Spaulding that ending "by asking what parishioners and the church as an organisation could do for 'God's creation' and threatened species specifically." He notes two outcomes that he attributes to this challenge, namely the forests and forestry issues paper Blair & Dockray, 2004 discussed above, and the action by the church in the Campbell Town area.

McGlone's articles are published in The Web, the newsletter of the national Threatened Species Network, and represent a very rare acknowledgement of religious environmental action in a secular environmental publication. TSN is a project of WWF Australia in a controversial partnership with the Federal Government.

I wrote a short article that was published in the summer 2005 edition of The Web, briefly describing my work and asking anyone with knowledge of religious environmental action to contact me. I received a small number of responses.

10.3.1.3 The Earth Team

The Earth Team is based in Melbourne and operates as an informal adjunct to the JIM Unit. The Earth Team's activities are largely restricted to Melbourne but it facilitates some trips by UCA members to revegetation and 'rebirding' schemes in rural Victoria. Some of its material has been adopted more broadly in the Uniting Church and in parts of the Anglican and Catholic Churches, perhaps extending into other denominations and ecumenical bodies.

The Earth Team has a substantial Internet presence[229] but at the time of writing (mid-2007), its website was under reconstruction and no content was available, nor had it been for several months. Material addressed in this section derives from older versions of the group's website.

The Earth Team's website[230] contained an 'about us' section where it describes itself as "a network of people within the Uniting Church who are committed to working for environment justice." It "seeks to foster a greater awareness of local, national, and global environmental concerns within our local church; communities and beyond." It "is committed to keep(ing) 'green issues' on the agenda of the Church. However, rather than reinventing the wheel, it will endeavour to network with existing green groups." Its focus is on awareness raising within the Church, developing practical ways to address ecological challenges, and networking for mutual benefit. Further information on the group was available in the form of its Charter[231] and a small page dealing with the theological justification for Church's involvement in environmentalism[232].

The Earth Team is not operated by paid staff. The part-time Environmental Project Officer of the JIM Unit, Cath James, operates its email list and appears to function as the Team's co-ordinator. The Earth Team is apparently the powerhouse behind the JIM Unit's ecological policy and praxis agenda. This was particularly evident in relation to the Unit's policies on forestry and on climate change.

The Earth Team's website contained numerous pages related to a range of environmental issues. Examples included GM Foods[233]; Bioethics[234]; Energy, climate change, Kyoto Protocol[235]; Forestry[236]; Uranium mining / Jabiluka[237]; Waste management[238]; and Water[239].

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[229] http://vic.uca.org.au/jim/earthteam/index.htm
[230] http://vic.uca.org.au/jim/earthteam/about.htm
[231] http://vic.uca.org.au/jim/earthteam/about.htm#charter
[232] http://vic.uca.org.au/jim/earthteam/theology.htm
[233] http://vic.uca.org.au/jim/localissues/GMfood/front.htm
[234] http://vic.uca.org.au/jim/localissues/Bioethics/home.htm
[235] http://vic.uca.org.au/jim/localissues/energy/climatefront.htm
[236] http://vic.uca.org.au/jim/localissues/forests/front.htm

The site also contained links to other Christian environmentalist content[240] and to related liturgical resources[241]. Its website was far more extensive and detailed than anything comparable that I saw in the other two subject denominations from 2004 to 2006, though more recently it was arguably matched by the sites of a small number of diocesan environment commissions.

In 2005, the Earth Team was involved in a joint climate change project with the Catholic Commission for Justice, Development and Peace (Archdiocese of Melbourne), in which they received partial government funding to train people as energy auditors. Participants were required to attend a training workshop, successfully audit their own home and make appropriate changes to energy management in that context, then go on to audit and promote reforms in Church buildings. This project arose in part from a related resolution of the 2004 Synod and is a rare example of the Synod's ecological policy being converted to praxis. The project was apparently based on the national Cool Communities Project that was operated by state-based non-government conservation councils with partial funding by the National Greenhouse Office (a Federal Government body).

Traffic on the Earth Team's email list reveals that it has also prepared a brochure of ten things that each church can do to address climate change. The brochure was being updated and examples of successful implementation of impact mitigation measures were being sought from within the Church as of late 2006. In such works, the Earth Team functions as a volunteer arm of the JIM Unit, filling in some of the gap between the size of the workload and the scarce resources allocated to it by the Synod.

The Earth Team's submission[242] on the draft policy, 'Forestry and forest issues in Victoria and Tasmania' demonstrates the blurring of notional boundaries between religion, spirituality and environmentalism. Emails on its subscriber list indicate that it has maintained that interest and activism, noting that it had a role in getting the Victorian Government to protect controversial forest areas in East Gippsland, and presumably before that, in the Otway Ranges. The Team's submissions include some fascinating insights into Christian ecospirituality and the role of experiential learning and Nature-based revelation (see also Collins, 2004 Chapter 4 for a Catholic perspective). Having met two of the Earth Team and had extensive email dialogue with another, I suggest that at least some of these people demonstrate how a personal ecospirituality

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[237] http://vic.uca.org.au/jim/localissues/Jabiluka/jabilukafront.htm
[238] http://vic.uca.org.au/jim/earthteam/waste.htm
[239] http://vic.uca.org.au/jim/earthteam/water/water.htm
[240] http://vic.uca.org.au/jim/earthteam/links.htm
[241] http://vic.uca.org.au/jim/worship.htm
[242] http://vic.uca.org.au/jim/localissues/forests/Earth_Team_Forest_Submission.html

can merge with and drive the institutional environmentalism of the Church. These people are not environmentalists simply because the Church told them the facts and compelled them to act. They are environmentalists first or at least in parallel with being Christians. This raises the issue of the extent to which the Church can convert its followers to environmentalism as a part of their faith, or whether such a conversion has to come about by other means.

The Earth Team was certainly a leader in on-line Christian environmentalism, though my monitoring of traffic on its email group and a conversation with one its longer-term members suggested that the group was in decline due to volunteer burn-out, inadequate resourcing by the Church, and because of some conflict between some members and the leadership. Its activities appear to have declined from 2005 to 2007 and the group now appears to function primarily as an on-line network to distribute information about and co-ordinate involvement in events. However, with its website out of action, my perspective on the group's current situation is relatively limited.

10.3.1.4 MorePraxis website

"MorePraxis seeks to be an online community of and a resource/support for young adults who long for a more interconnected Christian spirituality of social action/involvement and theological reflection." [243] Its website has hyperlinks to the UCA Synod of Victoria and Tasmania and to the UCA National Assembly. MorePraxis is a product of the Synod's Uniting Youth Ministries. It appears to be unique amongst the three subject denominations.

The website includes a 'MoreEnvironmental' chat forum[244], which is one of many different topic areas that are addressed. When I last visited the forum in mid June 2007, the majority of postings had been made by the Church-employed webmaster, and most had no replies. Its archive commenced on 8/10/05 with the last of only 20 postings made on 14/05/2007. Most of the other topics on the website had more postings than 'MoreEnvironmental', though it was not the least used. Even the forum with the most postings, 'MoreActions', was dominated by the webmaster's own posts, and had very few replies.

The 'MoreEnvironmental' forum appeared to be receiving very little use if the number of replies and postings is a genuine indication of usage (many may simply read but not comment on postings). The sentiment behind the website's creation is commendable and is consistent with plans to retain and attract more young people to the Churches, not least to combat the negligible levels of member recruitment. Yet, the numbers of users apparently taking advantage

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[243] http://morepraxis.org.au
[244] http://morepraxis.org.au/?p=97

of the site is so small that unless the membership increases dramatically, I suspect the project will not receive on-going funding.

10.4 Synod of NSW & the ACT

The website of the NSW & ACT Synod[245] (herein referred to as the NSW Synod) is large and complex. In early 2005 and mid-2006, standard search terms were used within the Synod site and then on relevant subsidiary sites to detect ecological content. It contained far more ecological content than can be comprehensively addressed in this thesis. A significant amount of the content is accessible through links to other sites such as various news services and publications, some of which are based in the UK or USA. As external content, it is beyond the scope of my research. The Australian ecological content included material for teaching secondary and tertiary students about the ethics of the UCA; general and specific policy documents; discussion groups and opinion pieces; a large archive of its newsletter, Insights; and the on-line newsletter Imago, produced by the Parish of Dee Why in NE Sydney. I obtained a considerable volume of material through Insights and Imago, some of which I address below.

10.4.1.1 UnitingCare NSW

At the national level, ecological issues come under the domain of UnitingJustice, which also deals with social concerns that were formerly addressed by UnitingCare. Yet in the NSW Synod, a state-based version of UnitingCare deals with both social and ecological justice issues. UnitingCare places its ecological resource archive[246] (submissions, policies both local and national, statements, background information etc.) under the heading 'Social justice advocacy', subheading 'Environment and sustainability'. This may indicate the influence of historical and/or present anthropocentrism, i.e. ecological concerns are of interest primarily or only because of their impact on people.

An anthropocentric orientation is evident in the sample text relating to UnitingCare's submission to the Sustainability Charter Inquiry[247]:

> "Ecological sustainability is about meeting the needs of *people* within the limits of a finite earth. This requires that dealing with ecological issues takes place in a policy context that is also shaped by *human* rights and democratic processes. Sustainability requires economic decisions; these must take account of the *human* rights of the most disadvantaged, as well as environmental imperatives..." (My emphasis)

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[245] http://nsw.uca.org.au
[246] http://www.unitingcarenswact.org.au/advocacy/environment_sustainability.html
[247] Sustainability Charter Submission

From that statement, it is clear that whilst pleased to address ecological concerns via the concept of ecological sustainability, the Church is arguably more concerned about the human welfare dimension of ecojustice.

UnitingCare NSW is a relatively large organisation compared to its equivalent bodies in other synods. However, it has a wider range of responsibilities and operates more programs. It has two staff members that have a role in ecological policy development and in submission writing. The senior staff member is Rev. Dr Ann Wansbrough, who is variously given the titles 'Research and Liaison Person on Social Issues' and 'Theologian and Policy Analyst'. Like her counterparts in similar bodies of the Churches, her work encompasses "a wide range of issues from anti-discrimination to environment, and health and human rights to welfare reform"[248]. Her listed appointments within and beyond the Church demonstrate a strong focus on social justice rather than ecological justice or ecojustice. She is supported by Justin Whelan, Social Policy Officer, who has a background in "environmental political theory", but whose work for UnitingCare appears to be primarily about social welfare.

UnitingCare NSW does not have an 'Environment Officer' or equivalent position. It is primarily a social welfare organisation to which ecological aspects of ecojustice have been added. Nonetheless, it has produced substantial ecological policy, though the evidence appears to be that this has not yet resulted in substantive institutional praxis. UnitingCare's Resource Archive page[249] lists a range of items that demonstrate its involvement in advocating ecological concerns, though in a form that would be best described as 'nature conservation' after Milton, 2002 p5. By 'nature conservation', Milton refers to forms of environmentalism motivated by an anthropocentric rather than a bio- or ecocentric orientation.

Despite the dominance of anthropocentrism evident in UnitingCare's approach to ecological concerns (a situation consistent with the findings of John, 2005), there are works that demonstrate a more critical orientation. The 1996 document 'Environment and Compassion - Caring for our Earth: Strategies for Thinking'[250] written by Dr Wansbrough, is a very well written publication that is essentially a methodology and method for critical thinking. She explains and applies this approach in the context of ecojustice policy, but particularly with particular reference to the ecological dimension.

The fact that Wansbrough is able to develop and promulgate such a scholarly approach to policy analysis and policy-making stands in apparent contrast to some of the ecological policy that emerges from the Synod. I can only assume that this is because there are other parties at

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[248] http://www.unitingcarenswact.org.au/whoweare/stafflist.html
[249] http://www.unitingcarenswact.org.au/advocacy/environment_sustainability.html
[250] http://www.unitingcarenswact.org.au/library/advocacy/environment/strategies.PDF

work in the policy-making process who have more influence in the outcome than does Wansbrough.

10.4.1.1.1 Environmentally sustainable housing

This is a series of web pages attached to UnitingCare's website. They present good quality technical information about the impact of domestic energy and other resource usage. They include a page dealing with the specifically religious aspect. It contains links to other denominational statements on ecological matters and to some international sites of a similar nature. The series of pages are well referenced, have useful external links, and provide a strong basis for practical action. I noted from research elsewhere that Dr Wansborough's house in Sydney has been used by government agencies as a demonstration for best practice low impact housing. There are numerous photos of it throughout these web pages. She is certainly leading by practical example.

10.4.1.1.2 Environmental audits

An article published by Dr Wansbrough (1994a) in the in-house journal 'Diakonia', noted that in 1993, the NSW Synod adopted the resolution, "That the synod:

- note that the NSW Synod/Assembly task group is preparing material to help parishes conduct an environmental audit of their parish properties and practices, as a practical way in which the church can assess and improve the level of responsibility towards the environment
- encourages parishes to make use of the material when it becomes available, by cooperating with a neighbouring parish so that each parish is 'audited' by someone beyond their own parish and by reporting the results to BSR
- encourages institutions within the synod and its parishes to have a professional audit done to ensure that they fulfil legal requirements and that their practices meet high standards of environmental responsibility where there are no legal requirements, particularly where doing so does not impose additional costs; and to report the results to BSR
- notes that an environmental audit should be conducted about every five years, or when renovations or new buildings are proposed and encourages this practice within the church
- recognising that property matters are involved, asks Presbyteries and the Board of Finance and Property to include environmental matters in their discussions with parishes of property renovations or new buildings."

A draft audit form was reportedly produced in 1995. However, it seems that the audit process was never adopted or at least not by the Synod. Rev. Prof. Barry Leal, a senior member of the UCA in Sydney reported to me that he had never seen the draft environmental audit form and did not know of any parishes involved in the audit as proposed. Prof. Leal is a minister of the Church and the founder of the Earth Ministry program, so I expect that if the above Synod

resolution had amounted to anything other than paperwork, he would have known about it. Recent statements from the NSW Synod in 2006 seem to confirm that little came of the above resolution (see section below on 'Green Church'). This is unsurprising given the lack of outcomes from similar resolutions of the Synod of Victoria & Tasmania, some dating back many years.

Only in late 2006 did the Synod resurrect its concept of undertaking ecological audits. It announced that it would audit its own operations, and did not raise the notion of compulsory audits for subsidiaries, as this apparently remains a sensitive and unresolved issue.

10.4.1.1.3 Green Church program - Green power switch

Following the late 2006 resolution of the National Assembly, "In October, the 2006 meeting of the New South Wales Synod asked all congregations, presbyteries and agencies to make one, simple and practical first step to help stop polluting the air and stop global warming: switch to Green Power."[251] The Moderator (head of the Synod) claims, "If every church in the New South Wales Synod switched to Green Power it could cut greenhouse gasses by 4,500 tonnes, the equivalent of taking 1,000 cars off the road for a year." However, this would only occur were all of the parts of the NSW Synod to switch all of their electricity use to 100% 'green power'. This appears unlikely because, like similarly oriented earlier resolutions, it is non-binding and only encourages such a change.

The Synod provided on-line and other information to its subsidiaries about the means of switching to 'green power'[252] and some of the associated considerations. The Moderator's letter to Synod subsidiaries emphasises that the extra economic cost of 'green power' is minimal, and he infers that it is not and should not be seen as a barrier to enacting the Synod's resolution.

The associated information provides options for subsidiaries to adopt 'green power' ranging from minimalist (complying with the resolution but only to the minimum extent necessary) to comprehensive (investigating and obtaining the most ethical source of 'green power' for 100% of electricity requirements).

The information sheet provided to Synod subsidiaries also notes that those wanting to switch to 'green power' can contact 'Church Resources' to obtain a bulk purchasing discount that may be achieved if sufficient bodies join together in choosing a suitable electricity provider. Church Resources[253] is not part of any denomination, but claims to provide a range of bulk purchasing discounts on all manner of goods and services for the benefit of churches and other

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[251] http://nsw.uca.org.au/news/2006/moderator-greening-the-church_16-11-06.htm
[252] http://nsw.uca.org.au/news/2006/Green-Power-letter.pdf
[253] http://www.churchresources.com.au/

not-for-profit groups. I have earlier mentioned the questionable ecological ethics of this organisation in relation to the Anglican Diocese of Perth. For example, Church Resources promotes and sells just about everything that the average business or private consumer would desire, irrespective of the ecological impacts. This includes promoting the Mitsubishi brand of vehicles, despite the fact that in environmentalist circles, a subsidiary of this company is condemned for illegal and destructive logging practices in SE Asia. Church Resources is arguably an example of economic rationalism having colonised institutional Christianity.

Whilst the NSW Synod's call for subsidiaries to switch to 'green power' is commendable, it lacks credibility in terms of institutional praxis because it relies on voluntarism. The experience of the Synod of Victoria & Tasmania with similar endeavours and resolutions is that voluntary compliance by subsidiaries is very low. The recent statement on climate change by the National Assembly[254] also acknowledges the Church's general failure to enact its own policies at an institutional level. Yet the NSW Synod has again relied entirely on voluntarism.

Hamilton, 2007c p110[255] notes that voluntarism has not worked nor been the chosen approach in key secular policy areas such as urban air quality improvement and the prohibition and disposal of ozone depleting chemicals.

With particular reference to 'green power' he comments that this scheme (making concerned consumers pay more for a service that it is in the public interest to purchase when compared with the 'black power' alternatives), "suffer(s) from most of the problems of voluntary approaches to environmental problems". In an example of a policy/praxis or attitude/behaviour disjuncture of particular relevance to the Churches, he points out that early market research relating to the potential uptake of 'green power' indicated that two thirds of Australian households would be prepared to pay more for ethical energy. Later research claimed that by 2000, the uptake rate would be 26-30%. But by July 2006, the actual uptake rate nationally was less than 4% (Hamilton, 2007c p52-3).

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[254] For the sake of the planet and all its people

[255] "We did not eliminate the production of ozone-depleting substances by relying on the good sense of consumers in buying CFC-free fridges. We insisted our governments negotiate an international treaty that banned them. We did not invite car buyers to pay more to install catalytic converters, the greatest factor in reducing urban air pollution. We called on our governments to legislate to require all car-makers to include them." The Churches have largely failed to 'legislate' that their institutions address ecological issues. There are very rare regional and local exceptions such as the energy and water conserving building codes imposed on subsidiaries in the Anglican Diocese of Canberra & Goulburn.

Notably, in his submission on the final report of the Prime Minister's Task Group on (greenhouse gas) Emissions Trading, Bishop George Browning, chair of the Anglican Communion Environment Network, used the same argument as Hamilton, 2007c in relation to the need for regulation, not voluntary action:

> "Lead in petrol was not left to the market's discretion, nor was cigarette advertising, nor was drink driving, nor was gun control, arguably the Prime Minister's greatest triumph. The fact that carbon emission is harmful behaviour on a global scale does not make it any less necessary to regulate" Browning, 2007.

The Churches appear to believe that voluntarism in the context of their ecological policy and praxis will work for them, despite evidence to the contrary from within and beyond their ranks. Some of that evidence from within the Churches is now 30 years old. In contrast to their stance on the achievement of ecological reforms within their organisations, the Churches do not accept voluntarism as the appropriate method of policy enactment in the context of financial accountability or the protection of children from sexual abuse. These domains have legal, economic, and demographic costs that have convinced the Churches to mandate institutional compliance with such policies. No such weight is given to ecological policies and praxis, which remain voluntary in all but very rare and localised examples.

10.4.1.2 Regional praxis - Earth Ministry

This project was formed by Rev. Prof. Barry Leal in 2002 and "is an attempt to give practical expression to ecotheology's insights; seeks to heighten awareness of God's creation; and seeks practical ways of expressing commitment to the environment" (Leal, 2003). It initially operated in just two congregations – Northbridge and Castlecrag on Sydney's North Shore. Earth Ministry launched its website[256] in July 2006. Earth Ministry's promotional literature cited in Leal, 2003 states that it:

- "is a response to the need felt by many Christians to recognise the riches of God's creation and to address from a Christian perspective, the environmental problems of our society";
- "springs from a belief that only a fundamental change of attitude to the Earth – a deeply spiritual change – will be sufficient to address the problems we have created and to enhance our enjoyment of creation";
- "comes from a conviction that the Christian faith has a significant part to play in environmental debate and action in our society"; and
- "results from the knowledge that, at least in recent times, Christian teaching has not sufficiently stressed the role of the Earth and the environment in God's plans for humankind".

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[256] http://www.earth-ministry.com/

The March edition of the NSW UCA newsletter, Insights[257], describes how Rev. Leal took the program's message to the Northern Sydney Presbytery before moving on to a new job as Chaplain at Macquarie University. The article states that "He listed among the Earth ministry's achievements the planting of a bush garden outside the Northbridge church — 'an expression of our delight in Creation and an example for the community' — and the successful lobbying of Willoughby City Council to adopt calico bags as an alternative to plastic at supermarkets" (Anon., 2005). The article is unclear as to whether Earth Ministry will continue given Prof. Leal's absence, though it suggests that it will not only continue but may expand across the region. However, Rev. Leal later informed me that Earth Ministry was unsuccessful in retaining its funding and that it will be unfunded after March 2007 (Leal, pers. comm., 26/06/06).

Earth Ministry's website was still active in mid-2007 but appeared to have no content after October 2006. However, one of its projects, 'WaterLines',[258] may be continuing because of a longer funding period. This project is more in the realms of ecotheology than praxis but it seeks to raise community awareness of the significance of water in a particular catchment. It is notable for its apparent involvement of interfaith and interdisciplinary approaches.

10.4.1.3 Local praxis – Maroubra Junction 'Green Church'

The website of the Maroubra Junction Uniting Church[259] in urban SE Sydney reveals that it has been and apparently remains a recent leader in ecological praxis. Examples of the many practical activities it has undertaken to reduce its ecological 'footprint' include:

- making the switch to 100% 'green power';
- installing a rainwater system to minimise potable water use;
- installing a solar hot water system;
- starting a local branch of a commercial car-sharing business;
- obtaining funding to install a greywater reuse system;
- operating a local composting scheme;
- having its own vegetable garden; and
- operating a battery powered volunteer-based eco-mower service (the grass is composted).

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[257] http://nsw.uca.org.au/news/2005/northbridge-uc-earth-ministry_03-05.htm
[258] http://www.earth-ministry.com/waterlines.htm
[259] http://www.mjuniting.org.au/default.asp?CID=1

Under a link entitled ‘Green Church’, the website shows that this church was the source of the 2006 NSW Synod resolution that called for the adoption of ‘green power’ by congregations[260].

I engaged in a short email dialogue with a member[261] of Maroubra Junction church, noting that its website claimed that the Synod’s decision in relation to ‘green power’ would result in an emissions reduction that clearly required all Synod subsidiaries to participate. I suggested that this was unlikely based on interstate experience and the fact that the Synod had only “encouraged” participation. The respondent agreed:

> “Ultimately each church needs someone like Geoff[262] (the local change agent) who is willing to put in the (voluntary) hours to make the changes at their local churches. Most churches either don't have the people who are that concerned, or don't have the resources. The (Synod) resolution was a way of trying to get green power onto all the church’s [sic] agendas. Some may well have adopted it, who really knows.” (No apparent monitoring mechanism)

Despite this, the respondent rejected my suggestion of a more regulatory approach. He said that such a move would be “totally at odds with a Uniting Church ethos that is all about consensual-bottom up decision-making.” It seems that it is relatively easy to get consensus on a resolution when it is completely non-binding but that it is apparently impossible or never contemplated to seek consensus on the same resolution where it is enforceable. This is consistent with my earlier comment about the ideological opposition of the subject denominations to any regulatory and enforcement mechanisms dealing with ecological policy in the Churches. I understand and appreciate the support for bottom-up and consensual decision-making and praxis, but when this has demonstrably been inadequate in achieving stated goals, I believe there are grounds for looking at additional approaches. This need not and ideally should not involve swapping to an entirely authoritarian approach.

The respondent confirmed that this example of local ecological praxis relied entirely on two critical change agents and many volunteer hours. There was apparently no institutional support for the various Green Church projects.

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[260] http://www.mjuniting.org.au/art-template-normal.asp?CID=89&AID=463

[261] I do not identify the member as he was not formally asked to participate in my research and was not asked whether any of his comments could be attributed to him in this thesis. My contact with him was incidental and initially sought to clarify the claimed carbon dioxide emission reductions associated with the Synod’s promotion of ‘green power’.

[262] Geoff Callaghan has since been employed by The Climate Institute as its Faith & Climate Officer. To my knowledge, this is the only such position in any environmentalist organisation.

10.4.2 Synod of Queensland

I first searched the Synod of Queensland's website[263] in mid-2006. At that time, it had an internal search engine, the use of which with standard search terms generated the following five results: Firstly, a promotion for a 1999 seminar series entitled 'One World'[264], that was run by Community Aid Abroad, the United Nations Assoc., Amnesty International, and the Global Learning Centre. It includes academics and both social and ecological justice campaigners. The 'Issues' section of the series' web page reads:

> "How do we create a more just, peaceful and ecologically sustainable world? How could the current levels of poverty, human rights abuses and environmental destruction our world endures be significantly reduced in the first decade of the new millennium? What are the critical issues that we need to deal with if we are to live in such a world? What might 'living sustainably' look like, locally and globally? The One World Seminar Series is a fortnightly series of six seminars that offers at least some of the possible answers to these questions, linking people and organisations committed to creating a just and sustainable world.";

Secondly, an Internet-based discussion group[265] dealing with Christian perspectives on ecological issues. Interestingly, it argues that humans are inherently ecologically 'bad' (this is linked to the Christian doctrines of The Fall and Original Sin) but that Christianity offers salvation and redemption for our inherent pollution of the world. This parallels some versions of Deep Ecology and related eco-spiritualities that are often criticised by Christians because such views are, or are seen to be, deeply misanthropic. Christianity usually sees humans as 'made in the image of God' and therefore inherently 'good' subject to the limitations of the above doctrines;

Thirdly, a promotional site[266] for UCA conference centres that notes that these facilities offer "environmental studies" detailed as being, "Rainforest studies, plant studies, wildlife studies, water studies and astronomy studies";

Fourth, a promotion[267] for a 2002 lecture at the University of Queensland's St Francis Theological College entitled, 'Exploring Eco-justice' with lecturer Rev. Dr Noel Preston (who is also a member of the Queensland Conservation Council, a peak state-based and nominally secular environmentalist group); and

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[263] http://www.qld.uca.org.au/
[264] http://www.ucaqld.com.au/mission/sr/news/99/apr99/29apr99.html
[265] http://www.ucaqld.com.au/~piula/Groups/Windows/Social/social3.htm
[266] http://www.ucconferencecentres.ucaqld.com.au/programming.html
[267] http://ucinfo.ucaqld.com.au/archive/2002-8-9.htm

The fifth item is a protocol document[268] about the establishment of new UCA schools. Under "Curriculum", the following statement is made: "Environmental education will be given some prominence and students will be given opportunities to acquire familiarity with new technologies."

I checked most of the links relating to the aforementioned material in mid-2007 and found many of them were no longer active. I revisited the Synod's website and noted that it had been completely rebuilt, with most of the aforementioned material, much of it being already out of date in 2006, having been removed. The new website lacked an internal search facility and did not appear to have any ecological content. However, my knowledge of how the UCA tends to structure its management of ecological issues led me to investigate the link to the Justice & International Mission Advocate. It was here that I located ecological content.

The JIMA website included links to equivalent organisations in the Synods of Victoria & Tasmania and Western Australia, as well as to UnitingJustice. Original content included a page about the JIMA's sole employee[269], whose interests include "the environment".

A link is provided to a project entitled 'Global Walking'[270]. Suspecting that this may relate to the encouragement of less car use as part of a response to global warming, I investigated. However, somewhat ironically, the project is about volunteering for international aid work in the Pacific, a process that involves jet air travel, a major contributor to climate change.

The most relevant link to ecological content was headed 'Go Green Church'. Its page links to topics including the 'greening' of churches internationally, in Australia, and in the Synod; facts about climate change; worship resources dealing with "environmental issues"; and technical information about climate change and options for responding to it (links to external government and NGO sites)[271].

The page relating to Australian material includes a link to the interfaith statement on climate change, 'Common belief'; and related work of three other synods (Vic/Tas, NSW, WA). I address the latter elsewhere in this chapter.

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[268] http://www.schoolscom.ucaqld.com.au/newschools.html
[269] http://www.socialissues.ucaweb.com.au/index.php?page=content&idcon=1438
[270] http://www.socialissues.ucaweb.com.au/index.php?page=content&idcon=3528
[271] http://www.socialissues.ucaweb.com.au/index.php?page=content&idcon=3499

The page[272] relating to international material includes a useful but small subset of some of the major interfaith, ecumenical and single faith-based ecological projects such as the Alliance of Religions and Conservation, and Eco-congregations.

The page[273] dealing with "the facts about climate change" does not provide any information. Instead, it has a link to an email address through which users submit their questions. These are then referred to "experts" for a response. The page does not disclose who the "experts" are.

The page[274] providing liturgical resources links to the 'Seasons of Creation' on-line resource (discussed in this chapter) and to an international publication entitled 'Holy ground'.

The page relating to the Synod's response to ecological concerns[275] links to some motions[276] that were proposed to be presented to the 26th synod meeting. An email posted by the JIMA's employee shows that the 'Green Church' motion relating to energy audits, reducing energy consumption, and reducing greenhouse gas emissions was carried as a resolution (apparently in 2007).

Unlike equivalent proposals that I encountered in other synods, the motion addresses how the proposals would be funded. Notably, funding was to come from external government grants, not from the Synod. There was not even an attempt to seek primary funding from the Synod, despite the fact that in the same set of motions, one of the proposals seeks the allocation of $300,000 by the Synod to the potential establishment of congregations in new urban areas. This suggests that the proponents of the 'Green Church' motion felt that whilst the Synod has money to allocate, there was no point asking for it because it would not be provided for what remains non-core business. This is further supported by the fact that the motion notes that if the external grant applications are not successful, it will rely on volunteers and will not be able to carry out the agenda within the specified time.

However, it notes that the external grants are sought for up-front costs arising from the motion, but that the proponents will seek some internal recurrent funding from within the JIMA's budget or the general budget of 2008. The wording suggests that the proponents do not see this as likely to be provided.

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[272] http://www.socialissues.ucaweb.com.au/index.php?page=content&idcon=3497
[273] http://www.socialissues.ucaweb.com.au/index.php?page=content&idcon=3482
[274] http://www.socialissues.ucaweb.com.au/index.php?page=content&idcon=3498
[275] http://www.socialissues.ucaweb.com.au/index.php?page=content&idcon=3599
[276] http://www.ucaqld.com.au/26synod/General%20Proposals.pdf

The ‘Green Church’ resolution:

- notes the Assembly’s statement on climate change;
- notes the Synod’s previous related resolutions (of which there are 5 spanning from 1989 to 2006), most of which appear not to have been achieved or were only vaguely instructive in relation to the conduct of Synod subsidiaries;
- requests all congregations and faith communities to undertake an energy self-audit and seek ways to minimise their production of greenhouse gas emissions;
- encourages congregations to change to ‘Green Power’;
- “encourages individual members to undertake an audit of their energy consumption and seek ways to minimise their production of greenhouse gas emissions”;
- “requests the Council of Synod to establish a Synod working group including: UnitingCare, the Schools’ Commission, Finance and Property Services and any other interested parties to: collate and promote the work currently being done to reduce the production of greenhouse gas emissions; explore ways of co-operatively seeking to reduce greenhouse gas emissions; and report to the Council of Synod by November 2007 on the progress, and recommend future action”;
- “requests the General Secretary to arrange for an energy audit of the UC Centre site”;
- “requests the Justice and International Mission Advocate to: arrange for experts to provide training in energy auditing, and energy efficiency in all Presbyteries; provide an education program on climate change to congregations”;
- “requests the Justice and International Mission Advocate to provide a report to the 27th Synod on the progress of proposals (c) to (h) and recommend future action.”

This is a highly commendable program. However, it lacks any directive element beyond the Synod offices. It remains optional for presbyteries and congregations to undertake energy audits. Education and training is to be provided and there is a reporting mechanism, but similar approaches have been adopted by other synods over at least several years and the results appear to have been poor and patchy. The Anglican Diocese of Canberra & Goulburn encountered similar difficulties. Getting individual churches to enact synodal or diocesan policy and programs appears to be a transdenominational problem. A major constraint is the lack of adequate resources for education, implementation and monitoring, though other barriers are almost certainly involved.

10.4.3 Synod of South Australia

I first searched the website[277] of the Synod and Presbytery of South Australia on 7/07/06. The website was apparently professionally constructed. The home page did not present any obvious ecological content or links to it. I chose to use the internal search feature, using standard search terms to detect ecological content. Search terms 'eco-justice', 'ecojustice', 'sustainability', 'environmentalism', and 'Earth' did not generate any relevant results. The term 'environment' produced numerous results, many of which did not use the term in an environmentalist or ecological context.

The first search item of ecological content was a short promotion for an event called 'Lightening the footprint: a positive response to environmental issues'[278]. This was a forum run by two international speakers. The central question appeared to be "What should Christians do about the environment?" No further information on the event was available other than that the item was posted to the site's UC E-news in May 2006.

The second search item was a longer article posted on 19/06/06 and entitled "The Earth is the Lord's"[279]. It relates to the work of one of the two above-mentioned international speakers on ecotheology – in this case, Rev. Brian Polkinghorne of Tanzania. An excerpt of the article is included below:

> "When speaking of the Word, full of grace and truth, and made flesh among us, our Lord and Saviour Jesus, John says, that 'nothing in all creation was made without him'. Nothing! Therefore we and all the little and big and extreme bits of creation are his - his property, which he loves. Every time we pollute, use beyond sustainable limits, exterminate and contaminate anything in the heavens and on earth, we are betraying and denying Christ - and are certainly not worthy to be called Christians! Any wonder the world has difficulty accepting the gospel when they see us throwing dirt in the face of our Lord and King?"

The excerpt is from the later part of the article, the earlier sections of which list other Biblical evidence for Christian moral consideration to extend to all aspects of Nature. The author's introduction to the article is a very brief story of how his worldview and faith was significantly altered by learning to 'look with ecological eyes' (after Leal, 2006). The article is a very succinct Biblical argument for Christian ecotheology and a related, though non-specific call for action based on the understanding that "the Earth is the Lord's" – being a common basis for advocating the stewardship and custodianship approaches.

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[277] http://www.sa.uca.org.au/site/page.cfm
[278] http://www.sa.uca.org.au/site/page.cfm?u=1&c=1088
[279] http://www.sa.uca.org.au/site/page.cfm?u=1&c=1414

The third search item[280] related to global warming and was entitled "What is the world coming to?" The subheading was "Climate change is happening. There is now a general acceptance that significant changes are occurring to the climate as a direct result of human impact on the environment." The article was written by Kate Tretheway who is identified as a "Uniting Church SA Solidarity and Justice Officer". The article draws significantly on the 'The weather makers' (Flannery, 2005) in briefly making a case that climate change is real, is substantially an anthropogenic phenomenon and that the consequences of not addressing it fully are significantly negative. The article asks, "How should we respond? (and) Should this question even need to be asked?"

Tretheway concludes, "Faced with the realities of climate change, surely the only response we can make is to do all that we can to make a difference. The encouraging thing is that there are steps that each one of us can take to reduce our impact on climate change." She goes on to list eleven commonly promoted and practical measures for reducing climate change (these derive from Flannery's work). What the article does not address is the extent to which Tretheway's recommendations as a Church employee have been or will be adopted by her employer.

The updated version of this page[281] viewed in mid-2007 notes that "Sadly Christians have often been as slow to respond to this issue as anyone else." There is also a new link to congregational responses[282] to climate change. It states that many actions are being taken but it only lists one response (this is addressed under the heading 'Landcare and related works' later in this section).

The website's 'Events' page contained a link to an event termed a "Season of Creation workshop" [283] scheduled for July 2006. The event was to be facilitated by Rev. Dr. Jason John, Australia's first 'Ecominister'. Season of Creation is a liturgical and celebratory program devised by the prominent Lutheran ecotheologian, Norman Habel. Notably, the UCA Synod of Victoria & Tasmania's JIM Unit hosts its website[284]. Season of Creation is an ecumenical program. Season of Creation provides the basis for and the process of celebrating God as creator. It attempts to establish this as part of the regular Christian schedule of rituals and celebrations.

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[280] http://www.sa.uca.org.au/site/page.cfm?u=1&c=1415
[281] http://www.sa.uca.org.au/site/page.cfm?u=326
[282] http://www.sa.uca.org.au/site/page.cfm?u=425
[283] http://www.sa.uca.org.au/site/page.cfm?u=198
[284] http://www.seasonofcreation.com/

A range of other educational and celebratory activities were listed such as 'Water Lessons', 'Earth Day Retreat & Worship', 'Stewardship Sunday' and 'Radical discipleship: the Spirit and sustainability'. The latter event is run by the Forge Mission Training Network[285]. It was unclear from Forge's website whether 'sustainability' was being used in the environmentalist context or whether it was a reference to personally sustainable missionary work. The latter appeared to be more likely as there was no ecological content on Forge's website.

10.4.3.1 Ecofaith Community

Use of the search term 'ecological' on the Synod's website produced a link to the Ecofaith Community[286]. This is a group operated by Rev. Dr. Jason John[287], and it adopts a methodology and method intended to facilitate personal ecospiritual growth. Similarly progressive projects occur elsewhere in the Churches, but primarily at the fringes of Catholicism within what amounts to the Australian version of the 'green sisters' movement of North America (see McFarland Taylor, 2002, 2007b, a). At the time of writing, John was employed as an 'Ecominister' at Scots Church in Adelaide.

Ecofaith Community is a controversial venture. John communicated to me via his participation in my Christian Ecojustice Yahoo Group, that he had received quite a few very critical emails from Christians who considered his views and practices deeply heretical. His work is, in my view, an example of where the Churches need to go if they are to fulfil their potential as contributors to addressing the ecological crisis.

10.4.3.2 Landcare and related works

In response to a short article that I published in The Web, the newsletter of The Threatened Species Network, I received an email from Bill Matheson, a Uniting Church member from South Australia. His correspondence revealed ecological praxis that was not evident on the Church's website.

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[285] http://www.forge.org.au/
[286] http://ecofaith.org/general/index.html
[287] This is the same person as the author of John, 2005 cited extensively earlier in this chapter.

This may be explained by the fact it occurred at the level of a single congregation.

> "For the past 7 years members of the Morialta Uniting Church in suburban Magill, Adelaide, have assisted the revegetation of two properties…. Some 800 trees have been planted on the first, while more than 2000 trees and shrubs have been planted on the latter. In addition, many of the seedlings have been raised by Morialta church members. Planting takes place on the Queen's birthday holiday…, the closest to the Environmental Sabbath when some 50 church members participate. This year it is anticipated that more than 1000 seedlings will be planted" (Bill Matheson, pers. comm.).

Matheson was evidently the facilitator of this event and he noted his professional and volunteer involvement in Landcare and related works. The Earth Team in Victoria are involved in similar activities but mainly at the planting stage, whereas Bill collects and grows the seed as well.

10.4.4 Synod of Western Australia

I first visited the WA Synod's website[288] on 7/07/06. Ecological content was not evident on its home page. An internal search facility was not available so I followed the Social Justice link to the page of the Social Justice and Uniting International Mission organisation[289] within the Synod. The content was restricted to conventional notions of social justice, and had a substantial focus on the international context, for example, East Timor, West Papua, and Indonesia, perhaps because WA is physically relatively close to Asia. It also had local content relating to Aboriginal social justice and broader national social justice concerns. The Mission's webpage had an internal search feature that I used to detect any ecological content that might be identified using standard search terms. None of the search terms or their variants produced any positive results. I also used the terms 'eco-justice' and 'ecojustice' but they did not produce any links to ecological content. A brief manual search also produced no ecological content. I attempted to determine how current the website was but this was not evident. The page 'properties' indicated that it was current to 7/07/06 but this may be an artefact of the software and not confirmation that the home page had been updated on that date.

10.4.4.1 'The Transit Lounge'

In February 2007, I received a group email from the UnitingJustice list about a new Uniting Church on-line magazine called 'The Transit Lounge'[290]. 'The Transit Lounge' was described as being a joint venture of the Synod of WA and the National Assembly. Its focus is "offering new ways to connect with people on the margins of the church or those inside the

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[288] http://wa.uca.org.au/
[289] http://www.justice.wa.uca.org.au/default.asp?id=1&mnu=1
[290] http://www.thetransitlounge.com.au/home

church who want to reflect on the nature of faith and life from a contemporary Christian perspective." I examined the first edition and immediately found substantial ecological content including references to reducing consumption of material goods and energy, and the benefits of adopting a simpler lifestyle[291]. Some links associated with the article entitled 'Designer simplicity', included a recent CSIRO publication about the economic impacts of reducing Australia's greenhouse gas emissions (the report favours doing so); a 'Living Sustainably Action Sheet'; and the multifaith and ecumenical statement on climate change ('Common belief' – discussed in Chapter 8).

10.4.5 Northern Synod

I visited the Northern Synod's website[292] on 7/07/06. No ecological content was evident on the home page. The website appeared to have been professionally constructed and seemed to be current or at least relatively so. However, some components of the site, such as its Northern Synod News page, were significantly out of date – in that case, October 2005. I noted that the site does not produce page-specific hyperlinks. As a result, I can only provide the name of the relevant link and page.

The 'Committees' link did not produce evidence of any bodies that might address ecological concerns, however the 'Agencies' link revealed a Synod Social Service Commitment. The Commitment was in the form of a series of statements. None of the statements indicated the Synod's position on ecological issues. However, the section entitled Social Justice Statement claimed that the Northern Synod "supports the Uniting Church in Australia stance on social justice issues".

This suggests that the National Assembly's policies that come under the domain of social justice are supported by the Synod. However, my research indicates that in this context, 'social justice' is still widely understood to mean 'human welfare', rather than encompassing any ecological aspects. The 'Guiding Values' and 'Guiding Principles' sections of the 'Commitment' page also lacked any reference to the Synod's position on ecological values.

The 'Vision' page displays the Mission Statement of the Synod. The Statement does not contain any obvious ecological aspect. However, it does state, "As indigenous and non-indigenous people, we live together in a Covenant relationship." In ecotheology, reference to covenants can be that between Moses and his descendants and God; between Noah and God; or to the concept of covenant in the Hebrew bible. Such covenants have been interpreted to have

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[291] http://www.thetransitlounge.com.au/domestic/designer_simplicity
[292] http://ns.uca.org.au/

significant ramifications for how Nature is perceived and related to (Northcott, 1996 e.g. p130,146,167,181,187). However, my reading of Northern Synod News, November 2005, makes it clear that the covenant referred to within the Synod is about race relations, rather than ecotheology.

The Northern Synod News page contained three back issues of this publication. I downloaded and manually checked the March 2005 edition and the then most recent (November 2005) edition for any ecological content. I found no such content, despite the presence of at least one article that could have readily provided scope for mention of climate change as a concern for people in low-lying coastal and island communities.

Given the very strong role of Aboriginal people and Torres Strait Islanders in the Northern Synod, I was surprised not to find any evidence of ecological content on its website. I had thought that the strong influence of indigenous culture would have connected with the environmentalist stance of the National Assembly to make the Northern Synod a relatively progressive area for the practice of ecojustice. The absence of on-line content of this nature does not mean that the Synod has no ecological policies and no related praxis, however my reading of the on-line content suggested the Northern Synod is primarily concerned with conventional social justice issues. This is perhaps unsurprising given the poor standard of living experienced by many Aboriginal people and Torres Strait Islanders. A similar situation is seen in those Churches predominantly patronised by native Africans in South Africa (see for example, Conradie & Martin, 2007).

Stringer, 2000; John, 2005 p28, note that at least in the past, Northern Synod did have something to say on ecological issues, though the motivation was apparently not that of conventional environmentalism. The first meeting of the Synod in 1977 passed a resolution opposing uranium mining. The resolution came from the Aboriginal delegates. The orientation underpinning this resolution was far ahead of the then Assembly's theological position. It clearly saw Nature as having genuinely intrinsic worth, as sacred, and as interconnected with humans rather than as something entirely separate from them (Stringer, 2000; John, 2005 p28).

Northern Synod is apparently dependent on funding from the UCA National Assembly and appears to have undergone significant administrative changes during 2005. My impression was that it is a Synod significantly constrained by its relatively low membership over a vast area; by associated financial and administrative difficulties; and apparently by on-going difficulties between administrative groups of its indigenous and non-indigenous adherents. It appears to have no resources left to address ecological concerns, which are apparently seen as secondary to addressing what are admittedly often severe problems with the social welfare of indigenous Australians. The ecojustice connection between at least some of the social welfare issues that are faced, and the ecological context surrounding them, does not appear to have been made.

10.5 Summary and conclusions

The UCA's policies are evident in some form at least 20 years prior to anything similar emerging from the Catholic or Anglican Churches in Australia. Its concern for matters within the scope of environmentalism date back 30 years to the Church's formation in 1977. However, most of the early ecological or related policies of the UCA at a national and synod level are variously broad, symbolic, externally directed and non-operational. Where there were operational elements, these were at the synod level and appear to have been largely if not entirely unsuccessful in terms of their being converted to praxis until very recently. Regional and local praxis has occurred but is largely undocumented on-line and does not seem to have been collated by the synods. It is patchy and dependent on critical change agents and volunteers, having received little or no higher-level institutional support. However, some examples of regional and local praxis are very encouraging, as are a small number of synod-level policies and related praxis.

The Assembly has recently noted that the Church has long been making ecological policies but has largely failed to enact them internally. It has committed to praxis, and some meaningful developments are apparently underway. The Assembly and some Synod offices and staff are conducting energy audits to reduce consumption, switching to 'green power', and buying carbon offsets.

A major problem within the UCA's ecological policy and praxis is its reliance on voluntarism with regard to subsidiary levels of the institution – at least in terms of ecological policy. The Assembly will not require the synods to do anything and the synods will not require their presbyteries or congregations to do anything. This situation is related to notions of democracy and subsidiarity. All ecological policies were and remain recommendatory rather than compulsory.

The lack of institutional 'force' behind the UCA's ecological policies is also arguably connected to its strong tradition of anthropocentrism, a problem comprehensively documented by John, 2005. Most of its ecological policies and related statements reveal anthropocentrism, even anthropoexclusivism, with only minor occurrences of bio-, eco-, or theo-biocentrism.

The theological basis of its policies has been and remains muddled. Even with, and perhaps in part because of this confusion, there is a significant gap between the ecotheology and the policies of the institutional Church. There is also a clear lack of real consensus within the UCA as to its ecotheology, which despite more recent ventures beyond anthropocentrism, remains largely stuck in a basic version of the stewardship ethic.

When I discussed such concerns with Rev. Prof. Barry Leal (who was also formerly a senior administrator in two NSW universities) he agreed that:

> "The environment is clearly not 'core business' as far as the authorities and I suspect most parishioners (are concerned). A lot of good work has been done and is being done but there is little background support so that much of it remains dead in the water. I have come to the conclusion that the best thing I can do is to write and at least leave something more or less permanent."[293]

The lack of meaningful institutional support is noted by Millikan, 1981 p104, in relation to earlier social justice activism by the Churches: "Though sponsored by the churches, these initiatives have not been well received within the conservative church structures. There are strong forces which would like to see the political tone and vigour of these activities modified." The same appears to be true in relation to ecological and ecojustice activism.

Leal (pers. comm.) also noted, along with Rev. Dr Clive Pearson[294] (Uniting Theological College) that economic rationalism is increasingly dominant in the operations and culture of the UCA, at least in the NSW Synod, a situation strangely at odds with the Church's long standing and often vociferous concern for social justice. The preferring of economic values over ecological ones is likely to have stymied some of the earlier attempts at ecological praxis, for example, synod-based moves to adopt the use of 'green' electricity and solar hot water.

The dominance of economic rationalism over ecological values is consistent with the Church's general and often profound anthropocentrism. It is also consistent with what I perceive to be a siege mentality within the UCA – a situation driven by its rapid decline in affiliates, members and attendees; by internal schisms that threaten to tear the Church apart; and by fear of anything that is perceived to add to pressures on what is arguably a slowly imploding organisation. The latter includes pressures from inside and outside the Church (perceived and actual) to dramatically improve its ecological performance.

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[293] His latter comment relates to his series of recent and planned publications on ecotheology (Leal, 2003, 2004a, b, 2006).

[294] He made a comment to this effect on an earlier version of his website http://www.utc.uca.org.au/clive and confirmed this view when I met him during late 2006.

Chapter 11: Synopsis

Each of the denominational chapters provides a summary of conclusions relating to the ecological policies and praxis of those Churches. This chapter brings these together with a focus on commonalities between the denominations and a return to the question at the centre of this thesis: is 'green' religion the solution to the ecological crisis?

11.1 Overview

11.1.1 The Churches are part of the solution…

All three of the subject Churches have officially adopted a positive policy response to the ecological crisis. At a national level, they all acknowledge the existence of the global ecocrisis and there is broad agreement as to its causes, though in Catholicism, the sensitive issue of human population growth and related issues such as contraception is largely avoided or sidelined.

11.1.2 The significance of climate change as an issue

The Churches all acknowledge the phenomenon of anthropogenic climate change. They have all called on various levels of government to take action to address it, with participation in the Kyoto Protocol being given particular attention. Until recently, most ecological policies of the Churches, including those dealing with climate change, have been externally directed. They have often lacked any notion of action within the institutional Church to address the various issues. They have sometimes raised the concept of the Church taking action internally, but this has not been accompanied by effective operational policy on a national scale.

The Churches' public concern about climate change has been particularly notable in its influence on their ecological policy-making because this issue, perhaps like no other, overtly links traditional concerns about human welfare, to the more recent concern of the Churches for broader ecological impacts. Its significance in this regard is mentioned briefly by Goosen, 2000 p204. Rue, 2006 p20 observes that "Social justice was the doorway through which environmental issues entered the public arena of the Catholic Church in Australia and the message of ecological justice came first from the Third World churches: 'If you want to look after the poor, look after the Earth'."

Despite this bridge-building feature of the Churches' interest in climate change, the key motivation for their concern is the inequitable impacts that the phenomenon is having and will increasingly have on people and nations who have contributed the least to the problem. The

impact on humans, especially the poor, is emphasised and tends to be prioritised over broader ecosystemic impacts.

11.1.3 The burden of anthropocentrism

Anthropocentrism remains a dominant factor in the Churches' ecological policies. Anthropoexclusivism was dominant in the earlier policies and statements and it is still evident in the orientation of some parts of the Churches. Occasionally elements of biocentrism or ecocentrism emerge (in a theocentric context) but these are often muddled with anthropocentrism in the same policy document, suggesting confusion on the part of the authors, and/or the effect of policy-making by committees in which there is not genuine consensus. Even in later documents that specifically disclaim anthropocentrism and its theological and ecological ills, the influence of anthropocentrism remains evident. It appears that for some within the Churches, the anthropocentric orientation is so deep and so linked to their faith, that it is difficult for them to fully adopt a theology or worldview in which humans are not at the centre.

The Churches clearly struggle to move on from anthropocentrism and its manifestation as the stewardship ethic. However, they are not alone in this regard, with the problem arguably being typical of Western society. Nonetheless, to maximise their effectiveness in the context of ecological policy-making and praxis, the Churches need to comprehensively address the problem of anthropocentrism in their theologies, policies, and institutional operations. This is linked to the need for education as discussed later in this section.

Whilst the Churches remain "infected with anthropocentrism" (Collins, 1995, p5) and "absorbed with the pathos of the human" (Collins, 2004 p133) their policies will not be ecologically sound and will be very confined in their scope and impact if implemented. There are Christian ecotheologians and evidently members of all three subject Churches who have moved beyond anthropocentrism, arguing for a form of Christianity that is theo-ecocentric, i.e. the ecosystem of Creation is seen as sacred because it is made by God – humans are a part of that interconnected system, but not the reason for the system's existence. There remains a substantial gap between their understanding and that of the institutional Churches other than in a very limited and largely symbolic sense.

11.1.4 Organisational problems - subsidiarity

Whilst the Churches now have national policy that responds to the ecological crisis, primarily calling for government and public action, this situation is not mirrored at subsidiary levels of the denominations. For example, a national policy on climate change will not necessarily be officially or functionally adopted by all dioceses or Synods, let alone by individual churches. Even in the more hierarchical and less democratic denominations, central

authority is not applied when it comes to ecological policy. Even in the relatively democratic Uniting Church, its National Assembly has the constitutional power to enact and enforce binding policies but has never done so in an ecological context, despite acknowledging that 30 years of policy-making has had little effect within the Church.

All three Churches have organisational structures that afford a relatively large degree of autonomy to components such as the dioceses of Catholicism and Anglicanism (C & A), and the Synods of the Uniting Church. Indeed whilst much of the ecological policy emerges at a national denominational level, most of the institutional and operational power occurs at the diocesan (C & A) or Synod (UCA) level. Explanations for this include the ecclesiastical notion of subsidiarity (power should be vested at the lowest level at which it can be reasonably deployed); the theological notion of conscience (one has free will in terms of how one acts but this should be done with reference to the Church's teachings); and the political notion of democracy (this is often muddled with subsidiarity and is highly constrained other than in the UCA). In my view, the reality is that the Churches are not prepared to put much, if any institutional 'weight' behind their national policies. They can agree to make a policy, they can sometimes agree to implement it in some way, but they cannot actually implement it.

A similar pattern is evident at lower levels of the Church hierarchies. For example, dioceses could control the building practices of parishes (subject to overriding government law and policy) because dioceses control the funding. This is the case in the Anglican Diocese of Canberra & Goulburn. Yet dioceses apparently do not have control of where a parish purchases its electricity from, nor any related issues such as the achievement of basic energy uses efficiencies in the operation of parish infrastructure. I understand the same situation applies in relation to the synods and presbyteries of the Uniting Church. The outcome of this is that dioceses or synods can make a policy relating to the purchase of 'green' electricity, the conducting of 'environmental audits', etc., but they can't or at least won't enforce it.

My interpretation of this organisational issue is that the concept of subsidiarity that underpins the structures is one of those ideas that looks good in theory but is another matter in practice. It may well have been less of a problem, indeed it might have been a relatively positive approach when the Churches were flourishing. Now that they are largely in decline and/or have maintained archaic structures that do not mesh with present-day organisational needs, subsidiarity appears to be more of a burden. It assumes, for example, that a parish is suitably informed and resourced (in all regards) to make decisions about its use of energy, in particular, issues of energy conservation and the option of switching to 'green power.

However, this assumption does not hold in a reality where:

- the parish is being asked to take on-board a new and arguably still emergent ecotheology, related ecological policies, and to implement them;
- at a time when its clergy are depleted in number, the few who remain are often tired, overworked, nearing retirement, and lacking in any training relevant to ecological reforms;
- local funds are running low, along with volunteer numbers and hours;
- anthropocentric values are deeply entrenched in the Church and society; and
- there may be resentment of the diocese for pursuing new policies related to the 'trendy' issues of environmentalism whilst reducing parish staffing and budgets, and talking of enforced church closures and parish mergers.

Subsidiarity needs to be re-evaluated as a decision-making and organisational concept within the Churches. The assumptions underpinning it need to be subject to critical scrutiny, especially in the context of ecojustice policies and praxis. Any such review needs to be undertaken comprehensively and must take account of both bottom-up and top-down processes and consequences. For example, from an ecological praxis perspective, I see no reason why energy management cannot be taken out of the hands of parishes and presbyteries, and put clearly under the control of the dioceses (C & A) and the synods (UCA).

11.1.5 Abuse of children is illegal, abuse of Creation is optional

I suggest that one reason why subsidiarity has not been adequately challenged in the context of ecological policy and praxis is that such matters are still not 'core business' of the Churches. Ultimately, subsidiarity did not prevent the Churches addressing, albeit belatedly and inadequately, their organisational responsibilities towards the protection of children and others from sexual abuse by Church personnel. One only has to look at the Churches' mishandling of the many sexual abuse scandals revealed in recent decades (see for example, Bouma, 2006 p19-20; Robinson, 2007) to see that even in matters of criminal law and in an area of anthropoexclusive concern, they still struggled to function effectively. Geoffrey Robinson, former Chairman of the Australian Catholic Bishops' Conference Professional Standards Committee claims that the Catholic Church still struggles in this regard, adopting a policy of 'managing' rather than 'confronting' the issue (Robinson, 2007). Despite its slow and apparently inadequate response, it is evident that having learnt hard lessons associated with the criminal prosecution of offenders, large legal and punitive costs, *ex gratia* compensation payments, bad publicity, losses of laity and clergy, the Churches have managed to enact a substantive institutional response in this context.

The Churches' response to the problem of sexual abuse within its ranks is in some, though not total contrast with its response to its institutional abuse of Nature, i.e. its 'environmental impact' or 'ecological footprint'. In the Catholic context, a national process saw all but two bishops and the leaders of religious orders agree to the enactment of a binding protocol to address the problem of institutional sexual abuse (Robinson, 2007. Parishes were not afforded discretion to accept, modify or reject the protocol. In relation to the Catholic Church's impacts on abuse of Nature, there is no binding national protocol, and dioceses and parishes have complete discretion as to whether they adopt any measures to reduce their impacts.

My searches of Church websites focussed on policies and as a result, I often looked in parts of websites with headings such as 'Codes of Practice', 'Church Law', 'Church policies', yet none of these revealed rules for the minimisation of ecological harm. Instead, such areas contained rules relating to the protection of children, and the management of finances and property. I encountered only one (Anglican) diocese where there are binding and enforceable rules relating to the minimisation of ecological impacts. However, even in that instance, such rules are of very limited scope, are confined in their application by organisational subsidiarity, and were found to be undermined and subverted by other more dominant parts of the organisation, e.g. finance and infrastructure development.

The Churches are not alone in the privileging of anthropocentric values in their organisational structures and priorities. Much the same can be said of Western society in general, though again the Churches have been particularly slow to begin to address ecological concerns other than through primarily non-operational and externally directed policies (see for example Carmody, 1983; Collins, 1995, 2004; Leal, 2004a; McDonagh, 1990; Gnanakan, 1999; Goosen, 2000; Rue, 2006 p34). One only has to look at the marginalised status of 'environment departments' in government to see that ecological concerns are peripheral, not central. Nonetheless, the Churches could place far more theological and ecclesiastical weight on ecological policy and praxis, even within their existing structures. At the very least, they could act consistent with the seemingly accepted doctrine of ecojustice by giving equal operational significance to both ecological and social justice.

11.1.6 Low ecological literacy

A related challenge for the Churches is the problem of low ecological literacy in the clergy and the membership. For most of the Churches' existence, there was no concept of a global ecological crisis, and neither ecological science nor environmentalism as we would recognise them today existed. This is also true for Western society in general, though at least within some parts of the Church there were and remain traditions that have a positive or relatively positive relationship with Nature, for example the Franciscans. However, "Christianity in the modern period almost lost interest in the revelatory power of the natural world and reinforced the

tendency to set humanity over and against nature in a manipulative, polluting way of life" (Hessel & Ruether, 2000a p.xxxv). This saw it even more reluctant to engage with the challenges of ecology and environmentalism when they arose.

Both the Churches and broader society are still struggling to come to terms with the implications of the findings of ecology and the moral questions raised in at least some forms of environmentalism. However, the Churches' delay in responding to the ecological crisis has seen them particularly poorly equipped in terms of the ecological literacy and skills of both their clergy and their membership. Overall, clergy have not been taught ecology or 'environmental science' or anything remotely like it. Most have not even been taught ecotheology, yet it is arguably a change in ecotheology that forms the basis of the Churches' ecological policy-making.

The Catholic Church in Australia appears to have acknowledged and acted to address the resultant deficit in its internal ecological literacy through its decision to appoint expert advisors to the Council of Catholic Earthcare Australia. Such advisors are not restricted to the ranks of Catholicism. CEA has also outsourced some of its policy writing to established authors who are from traditions other than Catholicism, for example, prominent Lutheran ecotheologian, Norman Habel.

Despite or perhaps because of the weakness in the Churches' intellectual capacity to respond to the ecological crisis, there are no compulsory ecotheology courses for trainee or retraining clergy in Australia (see Leal, 2004a p73, and Chew cited in ABC Religion & Ethics Unit, 2000). At present, they do not require their clergy to be trained or retrained in the relevant fields that would potentially give them at least a working knowledge of the issues and the basic skill-set to enact such policies. It is little wonder then that they struggle to convert their ecological policies into institutional praxis.

A factor operating against the Churches in this context is the relatively elderly nature of the clergy. Whilst Australian society deals with the politically contentious issue of an aging population, the phenomenon is more intense within the Churches, particularly in the Protestant realm (Bouma, 2006). With such a relatively elderly clergy, it is not so surprising to see a lack of institutional commitment to their retraining, though this does not explain why new and younger entrants to the clergy are not obliged to have at least a basic grounding in ecotheology and ecology. I note that the generational factor influencing the Churches' low ecological literacy is also seen in wider society.

There are some exceptions to the norm and I encountered a small number of clergy or other Church officials who had substantial ecological knowledge, and in some cases relevant qualifications. Some were later life entrants to ministry who apparently had prior education in

ecologically relevant fields. Some were self-taught amateur naturalists. I read of a young priest in one Anglican diocese who reportedly had a degree in environmental science, and the relatively young Uniting Church 'ecominister' Rev. Dr. Jason John is another of the few clergy who have qualifications in environmental science.

The problem of ecological literacy amongst clergy is arguably part of a broader problem of their having a relatively low level of education in general, especially in Protestantism. Bouma, 2006 p100, notes that Catholic clergy have "usually been educated to a substantially higher level than Protestant clergy whose professional preparation in the British Commonwealth is usually at the level of a primary school teacher." He sees this as a major factor in the decline of Protestantism in Australia with most of its clergy being inadequately skilled and out of date such that they cannot adapt to the rapidly changing social circumstances, which I believe include the requirements of ecological policy and praxis.

There is a pressing need for the Churches to engage in so-called 'capacity-building' such that they might be better placed in terms of knowledge and potentially the values necessary for them to make and enact ecological policies within their institutions. Relying primarily on voluntary education and on school-based education is insufficient for the purpose. Heavy reliance on school-based ecological education (as happens in the Churches and in secular society) is a form of generational buck-passing. Whilst a strong school-based education program is necessary and commendable, it is not necessarily the most effective, or an adequate or equitable response.

As part of the Churches' challenge of converting their ecotheology and policy into institutional praxis, there is a need for a comprehensive 'whole of Church' education and training strategy accompanied by adequate resources and a genuine and sustained commitment to its implementation. Drawing an example from the commercial world, the Churches could choose to accept the challenge of reforming their operations (particularly their businesses) to comply with the International Organisation for Standardisation ISO 4000 series[295]. This would entail their agreeing to operate by internationally accepted standards of 'environmental management'. To achieve this, they would have to enact an effective education process across all relevant aspects of their operations.

The low ecological literacy of clergy is linked to not only the long-standing disinterest or at least peripheral interest of the Churches in ecological concerns; it is again part of a broader phenomenon in Western Society. However, though the Churches have been, and remain, particularly slow to address this problem, a situation worsened by their demographic challenges.

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[295] http://www.iso14000-iso14001-environmental-management.com/iso14000.htm

Traditional theology and ministry remain the educative and vocational domains for clergy, whilst ecology is a domain and vocation for laity, and never (or rarely) do they meet, at least not in Australia.

11.1.7 The role of change agents

Change agents, sometimes termed 'critical change agents' (where 'critical' means 'essential') are very evident in the 'greening' of the Churches. They are a key factor in the extent to which the Churches can be part of the solution to the ecological crisis. There have been influential change agents at the top of Church hierarchies, such as the late Pope John Paul II, and more recently the Archbishop of Canterbury, Rowan Williams. There are others in the middle ranks such as Anglican Bishop George Browning and Catholic Bishop Chris Toohey. There do not yet appear to be similar high or mid-level ecological change agents within the UCA, though this may be a consequence of its more democratic structure more than an indication that such agents are actually absent. The newly elected Moderator of the NSW Synod may be the first ecologically oriented change agent to emerge at such a high level in the UCA.

There are also influential change agents operating at the lower levels of all three denominations. For example, Cath James (UCA Synod of Victoria & Tasmania), Rev. Dr. Jason John (the first UCA 'Ecominister'), many religious sisters within the orders of Catholicism (for example the Presentation Sisters who operate the ErinEarth facility, and the Mercy Sisters who operate the very 'green' Earth Link project), and some of the members of Anglican diocesan environment commissions. I also encountered people from all three denominations who were ecojustice change agents operating at the very local level, such as within particular churches and parish councils."My research indicates that such change agents are a significant factor in explaining the conversion of ecological policy to praxis in some parts of the Churches, and its absence in many other parts[296]. For example, much of the Anglican Church in Australia seems to lack ecological praxis or at least anything beyond either the tokenistic or the very basic. Yet it is Anglicanism that yields a particularly good example of policy and praxis at the diocesan

[296] Reference has also been made in earlier chapters to factors such as the general orientation of particular regions of the country, e.g. the tendency to conservatism in traditional rural areas and the tendency to more progressive values in metropolitan areas, with the exception of Sydney, which has long been a bastion of conservative religion (see for e.g. Millikan, 1981 p80). Patchiness at different scales was also apparent both within and between denominations. I observed that adjoining dioceses and even adjoining parishes had or were reported to me as having profoundly different orientations towards ecojustice in theory and in practice.

level[297], substantially it appears, because of the change driven by Bishop Browning and supported by the diocesan environment commission.

There are others in Anglicanism who share at least an equally substantive reform agenda and who have enacted it wherever possible. However, most of these other reformers are in the laity or the lower ranked clergy.

Similarly, without the significant theological and policy reforms led by the late Pope, I doubt that the Catholic Church in Australia would have responded to the extent that it has, albeit still lacking in many ways. In Catholicism, the stand-out change agents are the 'green sisters' but there are others in the dioceses.

The influence of these positive change agents is constrained by a range of factors including:

- heavy workloads of the few staff (including clergy) who seek to enact substantive ecojustice reforms;
- the generalised absence of specialist and adequately funded positions that deal with ecojustice at all levels of the Churches, meaning, amongst other things, that change-oriented clergy rarely have any or adequate paid staff they can delegate related work to;
- high likelihood of 'burn out' and turn-over in volunteer and paid change agents because of inadequate institutional support, and is some cases reported to me, due to profound institutional obstruction;
- the ease with which senior leaders can readily and unaccountably quash change that they are uncomfortable with (especially in the older Churches);
- a generalised lack of organisations within the Churches that give adequate weight and resourcing to ecojustice reforms (meaning that change agents tend to operate individually or in very small groups rather than having much if any institutional support);
- an ageing of Church leadership and membership, with resultant decreases in personal energy to drive change;

[297] I am not suggesting that the ecojustice reforms in the Anglican Diocese of Canberra & Goulburn are adequate in my terms, simply that it is one of the better examples. Interviews conducted for this thesis but generally not reported in it for various reasons included information about activities that reveal some deep-seated difficulties in the process of converting policy to praxis in this diocese. In August 2007, I noted an official announcement that Bishop Browning is leaving the diocese and returning to England.

- shrinking budgets to enact ecojustice reforms (noting that some are actually cost-neutral or positive but won't necessarily be known or perceived to be so), especially in rural areas and in the Protestant churches(see for example Bouma, 2006 p 97); and
- the sidelining of ecojustice reforms by more established institutional priorities such as social justice, evangelism, maintenance or renewal of infrastructure, and the survival or expansion of the Church.

Again, many of the above-mentioned constraints on ecojustice change agents in the Churches also operate in broader society. I have experienced and observed many of these problems in secular environmentalist groups and within the 'environment departments', where they existed, in Local, State and Federal government agencies. However, the Churches have some particular problems and some constraints that may be more severe than in the secular realm. For example, the relatively young age that boys used to enter training for the priesthood such that they are effectively cloistered, indoctrinated and institutionalised before being able to form independent adult views of the world. This would conceivably make it difficult for such people to adapt to change, especially the radical changes necessary to address ecojustice issues.

11.2 Are 'greened' Churches the solution to the ecological crisis?

I did not intend that the case study used in this thesis would definitively determine whether and/or to what extent 'greened' religion or even 'greened' Christianity can be or is the solution to the ecocrisis. It is simply an insight into this global and multifaith issue in the context of mainstream Christianity in Australia. I simply intend that it contribute to the international literature on this theme. The case study may be able to be extrapolated with a reasonable degree of fidelity in other Western, predominantly Christian, or at least Christianised nations such as the UK, Canada and New Zealand. Aspects may also be extrapolated in the context of Western culture and Western religion, and perhaps into other religions.

My research indicates that the greening of the Churches is such that they are now *part* of the solution to the ecocrisis, but that their contribution as institutions is currently little or no more than any other part of society. However, the Churches have an advantage over the rest of our increasingly individualistic society (see for example, Mackay, 2004b) in that their communal structure provides a potentially powerful vehicle for collective education, motivation, and action. Environmentalist groups can provide a similar platform for collective change, but being secular and predominantly relying on rational science for many of their arguments, they tend to lack something in which the Churches have been strong, at least historically. This significant difference is the Churches' background in being able to make overtly and profoundly moral arguments for personal and societal change. Given increasing discussion of the ecocrisis,

particularly climate change, as a moral issue, 'greened' churches could conceivably be better placed to convey the moral message and perhaps even achieve the necessary transpersonal and collective changes than are the secular environmentalist groups. Were their efforts in this regard effectively combined, synergistic benefits may be generated.

11.2.1 Summary of the case study of the mainstream Churches in Australia

I have shown that the mainstream Churches researched for this thesis are part of the solution to the ecological crisis. However, at present they are not anything more than one of several parts of society moving in that direction. Their capacity to be even a substantial part of the solution is limited by factors including:

- their current or demographically predicted decline in membership and affiliates, and the related problem of an aging clergy and membership (for example Bouma, 2006);
- a shift in affiliates away from the Churches and towards a less institutionalised or entirely deinstitutionalised expression of faith, apparently driven by dissatisfaction with and a lack of trust in the Churches as vehicles of the faith (for example Bouma, 2006; Whelan, 2006a);
- a bifurcation that now sees the mainstream Churches respond to their demographic and other challenges by becoming either more insular and fundamentalist or more progressive (for example Bouma, 2006; Macken, 2007b; Tacey, 2007; and in part Millikan, 1981 p68). Overall, the most fundamentalist churches are growing in members. The fundamentalists tend away from ecotheology or at least progressive ecotheology, and denounce environmentalism or adopt very superficial forms.
- long-standing and deeply entrenched anthropocentrism (for example Collins, 1995; John, 2005; Nasr, 1996; White Jr., 1967);
- conflicting corporate goals that see ecological concerns and reforms subsumed by economic rationalism and concern for the narrowly-perceived financial well-being of the institution (for example in part Howe, 2002);
- the related inadequate resourcing of ecological reform processes, despite the fact that some of the processes have immediate or relatively rapid cost benefits;
- organisational structures that generally impede the conversion of policy to praxis, inclusive of a generalised reliance on voluntary implementation and an absence of formal processes for compulsory institution-wide auditing and (preferably public) reporting of ecological impacts and mitigation measures;

- low levels of ecological literacy that are not being adequately addressed (see for example Leal, 2004a) and which leave the Churches open to naïve, selective, and populist adoptions of 'science' as their new or at least a subsidiary arbiter of truth;
- substantial reliance on often isolated change agents to drive both policy and praxis, rather than there being a broader, institutionally supported movement of reform.

Despite these limitations, the Churches still have the capacity or potential capacity to influence the 8 to 18% or so of believers who attend church at least monthly, perhaps extending their influence to that much larger portion of the public who still affiliate with these denominations. They also have considerable theoretical potential to reduce their institutional ecological impact through the operation of their infrastructure and associated corporate bodies that are active in healthcare, education, employment and welfare.

A potentially significant contribution of the mainstream Churches beyond the realm of their own institutions and membership may be made through their increasing collaboration with the broader environmentalist movement (see for example Gardner, 2002, 2003, 2006; Gottlieb, 2006, 2007). This serves to broaden the demographic and political base of environmentalism, taking it into areas of relative political conservatism through the vehicle of the Churches and their concern for social and (to a lesser degree) ecological justice. This phenomenon of collaboration between the Churches and secular environmentalist groups warrants further research.

There are some excellent examples of ecological policy and praxis in all three denominations. However, these tend to be at the fringes of the institutions or in parts where there are well-positioned change agents that have adequate institutional support or an absence of substantial opposition.

The Churches are not leading societal responses to the ecological crisis. They are largely following secular trends in environmentalism, though they bring an overtly religious and perhaps spiritual dimension to mainstream environmentalism that has previously been absent or at least cryptic, particularly in Australia. This aspect may be their greatest contribution to date, as it provides a relatively legitimate (in cultural terms) alternative basis for environmentalism, i.e. a mainstream Western religio-spiritual basis linked to science, rather than depending primarily or solely on scientific rationalist arguments or the adoption of relatively foreign (to Westerners) indigenous or Eastern perspectives.

The Churches have been late to join the environmentalist cause and they have great difficulty converting their policies into institutional praxis, though they are not alone in this. Despite this handicap, there are aspects of the Churches' teachings that are well in advance of mainstream society's understanding of Nature and humanity's place within it. However, these

more progressive ecotheologies are at the fringes of the Church or outside the official Church, though they sometimes surface in the largely symbolic policy statements of the institution. They are not seen in institutional operational policy. Such theologies are deeply antithetical to much of what Western society currently sees as normative (see for example the work of (Berry, 1988, 1999 and Carmody, 1983).

Were these 'deep ecotheologies' (a version of Deep Ecology in a Christian context) to become dominant in the Churches, it might then be more legitimately claimed that the Churches were a direct and significant part of the solution to the ecological crisis. At present, such a situation seems unlikely, though perhaps a radically reformed Catholicism could be a workable vehicle for a Church-led ecological revolution in the West. The extent of reform needed to address the problems within Catholicism comprehensively would likely be such that it would not resemble the organisation as we perceive it today. There appears little hope for any such radical change within mainstream Protestantism which seems doomed to fade away as a tradition that failed to stay relevant (Bouma, 2006).

Beyond issues of organisational structure, anthropocentrism, demographics and ecological literacy, the Churches are limited by some broader constraints of their traditions. Macken, 2007a, cites David Tacey as saying that that the future will be dominated by a hybrid spirituality of East and West. "It might be argued that the East has the internal stuff worked out but it isn't overly concerned about social justice. Whilst Christianity is the reverse – it's strong on social justice but has no interiority. We need both. We need to breathe in and breathe out" (see also Tacey, 2003, 2007; Carmody, 1983).

I agree with Tacey, and I believe that the mainstream Churches will not be anything more than a relatively minor and increasingly peripheral contributor to the solutions to the ecological crisis. They are simply too Western in philosophy and operation, and they profoundly lack applied critical reflexivity – the interiority that Tacey mentions. The Churches, as institutions, are far more interested in their institutional survival. The Churches have arguably become the religion.

The current and seemingly escalating interest in spirituality, primarily outside the institutions of religion, may see aspects of the Christian faith reworked in an ecologically sound form. It appears likely, from the work of Tacey, 1995, 2000, 2003; Bouma, 2006; Tacey, 2007, that such a form will also need to address the demand for the interiority that mainstream Christianity has largely lacked. Evidence of the emergence of an ecologically grounded and critically reflexive Christianity is seen in some of the activities of the 'Green Sisters' of Catholicism, such as the Mercy Sisters' Earth Link. In that example, the theological basis is the so-called 'Creation spirituality' of Thomas Berry and Matthew Fox combined with the ecofeminism of Rosemary Radford Ruether. This is then linked to a strong commitment to

broadly based community education (not just school children) and to leadership through praxis. A similarly positive and progressive, but smaller scale project is the 'ecoministry' of Rev. Dr. Jason John at the Uniting Church's Scots Church in Adelaide.

I believe that what the many authors and commentators who advocate the view that 'green' religion is the solution to the ecocrisis are honing in on is the transformative power of spirituality, particularly in relation to the moral dimension of the ecocrisis. Some certainly see religions as powerful institutions with large asset bases and memberships, which were they directed to the environmentalist cause, could be very beneficial. However, at least in Australia, the primary focus should not be on the economic or political power of religious institutions but on the potentially radical transformative and transpersonal power of ecospirituality. This view is expressed succinctly by Hamilton, 2006a:

> "Traditionally, the churches have attended to and represented the deeper aspects of life, those that transcend the individualism, materialism and selfishness that so characterise modern affluent societies. It is in this transcendent concern that I believe we can find the roots of a new progressive politics – not in the institutions of the churches themselves but by rediscovering those aspects of life that, at their best, the churches articulate and cultivate."

Ecospiritualities may well arise and perhaps even flourish in some institutional religions but I suspect that they will best develop and flourish outside the institutions, or at least outside the present day institutions.

11.3 Conclusion

Even were the Churches to have sound ecological policies, effective organisational structures, adequate funding, and the necessary levels of training and education for a demographically sustainable clergy, lay staff and general membership, a vital ingredient is necessary to ensure that the associated 'greening' is other than relatively superficial. This ingredient is ecospirituality. To be authentic and effective, ecospirituality needs to be based in ecological reality, inclusive of critical reflexivity linked to praxis, transcendent of the dichotomising so common in Western thought, and able to extend knowledge of ecological 'facts' into commensurate values, attitudes and behaviours through having a strong moral dimension.

At present, mainstream Christianity, or at least the mainstream Churches, lack such an ecospirituality and still struggle to comprehensively agree on an ecologically valid ecotheology and the related policies and praxis. This is unsurprising given that they still struggle with the comparatively simple issue of gender equity. Authentic ecospirituality is seen in a few people and in a few groups at the fringes but it is not the norm.

As it stands, the mainstream Churches can only be expected to make relatively minor changes such as switching to ‘green power’, buying smaller cars, participating in municipal recycling schemes, and installing rainwater tanks. They largely lack the transpersonal and transformative ecospiritual dimension needed to make them real leaders in the process of radical change that is necessary to address the ecological crisis. On this basis, I have concluded that the mainstream Churches in Australia do not provide a supporting case for the proposition that ‘green’ religion is the answer to the ecological crisis. This does not infer that I refute the proposition. Instead, my research has led me to conclude that genuinely ‘greened’ religions have the potential to be a major part of the solution to the ecological. However, ecospirituality rather than institutional religion has this capacity or potential capacity to address the profound moral challenge at the heart of the crisis. Ecospirituality may exist within or outside religions. In Australia, it primarily exists beyond the Church.

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Appendix 1: National & State-level ecumenical & multifaith policies

A1.1 Introduction

In this appendix, I present and discuss the range of national and state/territory level bodies that form part of the ecological policy-making context for the mainstream Churches. I first address the national scale, dealing with organisational structures between and within the denominations. The national perspective includes reference to and analysis of policies formulated or at least recognised at the national multi-faith, interdenominational, and ecumenical level.

I then address the state/territory-based structures and related interdenominational policies. Only a small number of entities such as state councils of churches exist, and even fewer of them had any ecological policies available on-line. The latter is likely to be due in part to the national and regional structure of the dominant Catholic and Anglican traditions. All three denominations have state-based structures but they are only of major administrative import in the relatively small Uniting Church.

I have not presented this material in the main body of the thesis because it is not specific to the three subject denominations.

A1.2 National ecumenical & multi-faith responses

Whilst the three largest denominations are independent of each other, along with other Christian denominations, they collaborate on national issues and for the purpose of representing an Australian Christian view[298]. This has conventionally occurred through the National Council of Churches and its predecessor organisations, though the Catholic Church is only a relatively recent full member of the Council (discussed later in this section). The now obvious social justice issues associated with the consequences and causes of global climate change have begun to bridge the gap between the Churches' established concern for social justice and its more recent interest in ecological justice.

Given the generalised decline in and aging of the membership of the mainstream Christian denominations, and their need to rapidly become literate in ecological policy matters,

[298] The next largest scale of ecumenism is the World Council of Churches, which I do not specifically address in this thesis as the case study focuses on the three subject denominations in Australia.

collaboration through ecumenical and interfaith organisations is likely to be an increasingly significant part of their pursuit of ecojustice. Indeed, it is a multi-faith policy rather than an ecumenical policy that is arguably the most significant ecological policy statement that all three denominations contributed to at the national scale. I discuss that statement below.

A1.2.1 'Common belief: Australia's faith communities on climate change'

'Common belief' was produced and organised by The Climate Institute[299], a not-for-profit body funded by a five million dollar grant from the Poola Foundation, a private philanthropic body. Released in December 2006, 'Common belief' includes contributions from sixteen faith communities. These include several Christian denominations including the four largest, plus the Australian Christian Lobby (a political body primarily associated with the conservative Evangelical movement), and other faiths including Buddhism, Islam, Baha'i, Judaism, Hinduism, Sikhism, and Australian Aboriginal. A representative of each faith tradition presents an official position on climate change over 1 to 2 pages. The statements from the three largest Christian denominations come from Fr Charles Rue and Colin Brown, respectively a senior member and the former CEO of Catholic Earthcare Australia; Bishop George Browning, Chair of the global Anglican Communion Environment Network (ACEN); and Rev. Elenie Poulos, National Director of UnitingJustice.

The document's formulation was perhaps influenced by the pivotal role of Bishop Browning, who is the only religious leader on the Advisory Council of The Climate Institute. Bishop Browning has been a prominent and strong advocate of faith-based action to address climate change. However, it is also likely that Dr Clive Hamilton, Chair of the Board of Directors of the Climate Institute and Director of The Australia Institute[300], was also a key proponent of the document as this would be consistent with his public view that faiths have a significant role in addressing the ecosocial crisis (Hamilton, 2006b, a, 2007b).

In the introduction to the document, Corin Millais, then CEO of The Climate Institute provides the following explanation as to why the Institute sought to collate and publish the views of faith communities in climate change:

> "The climate change debate has tended to be dominated by the language of science. The recent 2006 Stern Report from the UK began to extend the discussion to the economic effects of global warming.

[299] http://www.climateinstitute.org.au
[300] http://www.tai.org.au

> But for most of us, the fate of the planet as a result of global warming is really a moral issue. Climate change is ultimately about what it means for people — especially children — and the whole creation.
>
> It was our hope that Australia's faith communities could aid the broader dialogue on climate change by speaking the language of morality and of faith itself.
>
> Australia's religions responded enthusiastically. Here, for believers by believers, is the beginning of a dialogue on the morality of climate change.
>
> The Climate Institute encourages this new and vital focus on morality and spirituality in the environmental conversation. We hope the moral dialogue may bring greater light into the debate" (Millais, 2006).

'Common belief' moves beyond both the science and economics-based discourse, extending into the realm of morality, faith and spirituality. The Climate Institute, and apparently the contributors to 'Common belief' see this latter dimension as pivotal in promoting the realisation that the whole of society needs to take effective action with respect to climate change. 'Common belief' reveals an emerging bridge between secular and religious environmentalism, a phenomenon identified as vital by writers including Gardner, 2002, 2003, 2006; Gottlieb, 2006, 2007.

I see this emergent common ground of morality between secular and religious environmentalism as important for several reasons:

- it revitalises the arguably suppressed spiritual and/or moral dimension of much of the mainstream environmental movement;
- it provides a basis for faith-based environmentalism (even though some forms remain deeply anthropocentric and ecologically naïve);
- it may promote greater exchange between the religious and the secular environmental movements to the benefit of both;
- it can act synergistically to increase the reach and effectiveness of environmentalism in the broad sense; and
- it begins to reveal and break-down false dichotomies, most notably that of 'science' and 'religion'. This in turn may start to heal societal, institutional and personal divisions that are a significant factor in the ecological crisis and its associated spiritual crisis (or in other words, the profound dilemma of what it is to be fully human in today's world including the question of how to respond to the moral dilemmas presented by the ecosocial crisis).

Millais, 2006, is saying, in effect, that scientific and more recent economic arguments to address global warming have not been sufficient to drive the necessary responses. This is obvious enough, but to move beyond the view that science and economics should be sufficient to drive such change is quite an epistemological leap. The socially privileged knowledge systems of science and economics clearly have not been adequate in the context of global warming because the problem is not wholly within their scope.

The growing recognition of the ecological crisis as a 'moral' crisis could be termed the 'moral turn' of later environmentalism, or at least the re(emergence) of the moral dimension as a key element of environmentalism. This 'moral turn' may have arisen from frustration with the lack of progress derived from increasingly tired and inadequate scientific and economic arguments[301], but it is effectively a revelation that is occurring at individual, institutional, societal and global scales.

The logic is simple enough: the ecological crisis is not essentially a technological, economic or administrative crisis but is instead a moral crisis (Wright, 1975) because at its root are profound questions of ethics, the rights and responsibilities of humanity, the place of humans in Nature (or what Pearson, 1998, terms "being human"), and the nature of Nature, etc. It is ultimately about values (in the ethical sense) rather than simply about facts (in the empirical sense), though it is not a case of one or the other. It could also be, and increasingly is seen as a spiritual crisis (Pearson, 1998).

As a moral crisis, the views of religion have an entry to the debate that they conventionally have not had on matters seen as 'scientific'. As White Jr., 1967, noted: "…since the roots [of the ecological crisis] are so largely religious, the remedy must also be essentially religious, whether we call it that or not. We must rethink and refeel our nature and destiny". The scientific and economic problems and partial solutions to the ecological crisis are increasingly been seen as subsidiary to the ultimately moral/spiritual/religious[302] nature of the crisis and its ultimate solution.

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[301] The profile of the World Spiritual Forum to be held in Brazil in December 2007 addresses this: "The solution to our problems certainly does not rest on the refinement of our economic, scientific and political institutions but in the blossoming of new ways of acting based on new paradigms: solidarity as the base of human relationships; effective action; behaviour coherent with one's ethical values; concern for nature and life on the planet; valuing diversity without sectarianism."
http://www.forumespiritualmundial.org.br/Ingles/oQueE_apresentacao.asp

[302] Different authors use these terms in much the same way because they are not necessarily clearly defined, mean different things to different audiences/readerships, and arguably overlap or at least can overlap.

The ecological crisis could be seen as a philosophical crisis in the common conception of 'philosophical'. The 'environmental philosophy' field has certainly seen the crisis in philosophical terms but has often missed the 'elephant in the room' – that of spirituality. Skolimowski, 1994, dismisses academic philosophy as a part of the solution to the crisis, writing, "It has become unreadable to ordinary persons and even well educated ones. It stands out as a curious marred monument abounding in intellectual labour and yet leaving us totally dry and uninspired. This *philo-sophia* (love of wisdom) has renounced all claims to *sophia*."

This thesis does not address the history or views of academic environmental philosophy. However, I sense that much of academic environmental philosophy fails to escape the realms of dry intellect – to emerge from the disconnected Western 'head' and recognise that a key problem underpinning the crisis is the psychological, arguably psycho-spiritual schism that (after Skolimowski, 1994 and Milton, 2002) pits mind or 'rationality' against emotion.

The ecological crisis is better described as a moral crisis because morality is not confined by academic philosophy and it is not about the 'love of wisdom'. It is much more practical and arguably goes deeper – closer to the heart of the crisis i.e. the need to heal the multitude of falsely constructed schisms, mainly dichotomies, that cause us as individuals and as a global society (in general) to misunderstand the nature of our interconnected and interdependent reality.

To some extent, the 'moral turn' is a response to desperate times. The modern tools of science and economics have not been enough to motivate and sustain the magnitude of the values, attitudes and behavioural changes necessary at an appropriate scale to address the ecological crisis. So the response for some is to turn (perhaps turn back?) to religion and/or spirituality as a realm from which answers might come as to how to achieve the reforms necessary to address the ecological crisis, or more specifically, the part of the crisis specifically associated with global warming/climate change.

Part of the growth in religio-spiritual interest in the ecological crisis and part of the growth in people seeing the crisis in religio-spiritual terms also appears to be related to the need for hope in what are arguably fearful times. This was very evident during my attendance at the inaugural Catholic Earthcare Australia national conference on climate change. It was also evident in my interactions with members of a local Uniting Church congregation who were in the process of formulating their parish's ecological policy. As we increasingly hear that climate change is not only real but also occurring faster than many earlier predictions, there is evidence that many people feel increasingly helpless and hopeless in the face of such a seemingly intractable and complex global problem (see following references). It is unsurprising that this scenario, coupled to measured increases in personal and societal stress and decreased levels of trust in political, judicial, and religious institutions (see for example Tacey, 2000; Hughes,

2004a; Mackay, 2004a; Bouma, 2006), would promote increased interest in matters spiritual as a source of explanation and hope for what looks like an increasingly grim future.

I don't see that the 'moral turn' of environmentalism and the associated decision to include religions in the debate about resolving the ecological crisis is indicative of a resurgence in the influence of mainstream religion. The secular environmental movement is not collaborating with religions in a way that even hints at a call for people to join or rejoin faith traditions as part of the response to the ecological crisis. The movement is simply acknowledging, as per Millais, 2006, that there is a need to add "the language of morality" to the call for action.

In Australia, the Churches and increasingly other faiths are still the primary source of that language – a situation largely a result of the virtual linkage of morality to religion as part of the twin dualism of 'secular' 'rationality' in opposition to 'religious' 'emotion'. Whilst a growing number of people adopt a spirituality that isn't religious (after Tacey, 2000), the very nature of that phenomenon means that there aren't substantial and representative organisations, let alone institutions, that can readily be consulted and liaised with. This sees organisational interactions between the secular environmental movement and the institutional religions leaving a gap through which people who are more ecologically aware and 'spiritual but not religious' at least partially fall through.

A1.2.2 National Council of Churches in Australia

I accessed the website of the National Council of Churches in Australia (NCCA)[303] on 23/06/05. The NCCA formed in 1994 as a reworking of its predecessor entity, the Australian Council of Churches. It represents 15 Christian denominations including all three of the most populous: Roman Catholic, Anglican and Uniting Churches, with the former being a relatively recent full member[304]. It is a member of the World Council of Churches and works with equivalent state-based Ecumenical Councils. It is a substantial entity, and one that is potentially significant in understanding ecumenical relations on ecological policy matters and from this, how it and its members might interact with secular environmentalist organisations.

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[303] http://www.ncca.org.au/about_us/ncca_story
[304] The Roman Catholic Church chooses to remain outside the World Council of Churches.

A1.2.2.1 Social Justice Network

The NCCA deals with ecological concerns through its Social Justice Network (SJN), which it established in 1996 and mandated to:

> "provide a means by which member churches inform each other of work done, work under way and work in prospect, and help each other to a deeper understanding of the methodologies they use in seeking to explicate the implications of the gospel for the concern for social justice in Australia; facilitate co-operation between the churches, and where appropriate their joint action, as they seek to give prophetic leadership to each other and the Australian community through their commitment to promoting justice, peace and the integrity of creation; to advise the NCCA on actions which might appropriately be taken by the Council and/or severally by the member churches."

I accessed the website of the SJN[305] on 13/03/06. The NCCA's use of its SJN as the body with carriage of ecological policy matters is likely to be a result of social justice concerns being a far more established policy area for the Churches, with ecological concerns often being added as a more recent feature. It may also indicate the operation of an ecojustice paradigm in which the NCCA deliberately keep social and ecological policy matters together in recognition of their interconnectedness. However, were this the case, one might expect that the SJN would have been renamed to reflect an ecojustice orientation. The NCCA does not appear to use the term 'ecojustice', but certainly makes statements that have the same effect. The term and the concept remain sufficiently vague that a composite body such as the NCCA is able to adopt them in some form, without causing problems for some of its more anthropocentric and generally conservative member Churches.

The SJN has at least one senior ecological policy offer, Dr Ann Wansborough, who has also played a significant role in ecological policy development within the Uniting Church and its NSW Synod. The decision of the NCCA to place ecological policy within the SJN rather than either establishing a separate and specific entity, or renaming the SJN to reflect its inclusion of ecological policy is consistent with the approach taken by the Uniting Church. The UCA also combines social and ecological policy but renamed this body 'UnitingJustice' to reflect the fact that it is no longer restricted to social justice concerns. The use of the name, 'Justice Network' or 'Ecojustice Network' by the NCCA would more accurately reflect the current role of the SJN and would remove the obvious anthropocentrism associated with the SJN's name.

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[305] http://www.ncca.org.au/departments/social_justice_network

The NCCA's ecological policies reveal a mix of anthropocentric environmentalism and a more egalitarian environmentalism that recognises the inherent worth and moral considerability of all life/Creation. There can be some confusion in the latter view as to whether all of Creation is at issue or only the components that we recognise as living. This lack of ecotheological clarity muddies the subsequent ground on which the NCCA builds its ecological policies. Evidence of ecotheological confusion or perhaps diversity is to be expected given that within each denomination, there remains considerable debate on ecotheological matters. So as an ecumenical body, the NCCA can be expected to inherent a cumulative confusion and considerable potential for ecotheological conflict. This is perhaps a factor in the variable ecotheology that it presents – a covering of all bases in an attempt not to offend any particular member denomination.

The NCCA website contained ecological policy content in several locations. As of 13th March 2006, the home page did not have any ecological content. This could be obtained via links through "Departments" – "Social Justice Network" – then to either "NCCA Official Statements" – "Environment" or "Social Justice Issues" – "Publications & Resources". The link to "Social Justice Issues" also contained a subsection entitled "The Environment" that had a link to the NCCA's 'Sustaining Creation' statement, and to the 'Sustaining Creation resource package' (via the UCA website) as discussed below. It did not have a link to the 'Changing Climate, Changing Creation' brochure. It also provided three links to statements by some of the member churches. These were to "Orthodox Ecological Activities", "Catholic Earthcare", and "Religious Society of Friends Statement on Climate Change". There were no links to Anglican or UCA policy statements, or to international ecumenical or multifaith positions on ecological issues.

A1.2.2.1.1 'Changing Climate, Changing Creation'

In 1996, the SJN produced 'Turning the Tide - Greenhouse Gas Emissions and Stopping Climate Change'. The key motivator for this statement was apparently the welfare of Pacific Island nations that risk cataclysmic inundation with relatively small increases in sea level that are already being seen as a result of the greenhouse effect. Since then, NCCA ecological policy has broadened further as discussed below.

As of June 2005, the NCCA website featured perhaps the first overt and specific instance of policy collaboration between it and the nominally secular environmental movement, represented in this instance by the Australian Conservation Foundation. This took the form of a

brochure entitled 'Changing Climate, Changing Creation'[306], which was designed for launch on World Environment Day, June 5th 2005. I discuss the brochure as an NCCA policy rather than as a policy of the contributing denominations because the NCCA represents a higher level of policy formulation. It is notable that the NCCA website describes the document as having been "produced by the Australian Conservation Foundation" (ACF).

The brochure targets an audience of Christians who are:

> "concerned by the growing impact of human induced climate change on our planet, its inhabitants and ecosystems - God's creation - and by the need for justice for those people and environments that are most vulnerable to the adverse effects of climate change".

The brochure quotes from various key ecological policies of the contributing organisations such as Catholic Earthcare (an extract from 'Let the many coastlands be glad'), the National Assembly of the Uniting Church (an extract from 'The rights of Nature and the rights of future generations'), the NCCA (an extract from 'Sustaining Creation'), and from ACF President, Ian Lowe. In contrast to some of the NCCA's earlier policies, the quotes used in this publication reflect an ecotheology that is not anthropoexclusive or necessarily anthropocentric. It clearly recognises the value of life other than in human form, and uses much broader terms such as 'Creation' and 'environments'. This is reinforced in the liturgical statements on the second page of the brochure, which include the comment that "We have thought of ourselves as the pinnacle of creation. But we do not, cannot, exist without all that has come before".

'Changing Climate, Changing Creation' provides background information that argues for Christian concern about anthropogenic climate change and its consequences, and for action to mitigate it. Some of this information comes from key Church policy statements, and some is more technically oriented. It encourages readers to lobby their local politicians and ask what they are doing to address climate change; to become informed about how they can reduce their domestic impact on climate change (link provided to ACF website and free-call phone info-line); and to take action within the church and associated groups (links provided to prayer and liturgical resources from the three contributing Christian bodies). It encourages action by government via signing the Kyoto Protocol, increasing the proportional use of renewable energy, and investing to encourage more walking, cycling and the use of public transport.

The brochure does not challenge common lifestyle assumptions. However, some of the literature to which it supplies links addresses issues such as the rates and types of consumption, going beyond simple matters such as the need to use public transport more. It does not advocate

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[306] http://www.ncca.org.au__data/page/107/05_WED_flyer.pdf

joining an environmental group, nor engaging in protests or boycotts. However, the brochure is a very brief promotional document, and it does contain links to some material that addresses environmental problems and some suggested responses much more thoroughly.

Perhaps the greatest significance of this document is that it demonstrates positive collaboration between the Churches, the NCCA, and the ACF. In doing so, it works against views within some of the more conservative denominations that secular environmentalism is dangerous and not to be engaged with[307]. It also provides an opportunity to demonstrate to the nominally secular and, from my experience, sceptical environmental community, that at least some aspects of some denominations are advocating positive policies and actions. The document may prove to be a catalyst for further such collaborative productions as have occurred in the UK and USA (see for example, Gardner, 2002).

Notably, the 'Changing Climate, Changing Creation' brochure displays not just the icons of the ACF and the NCCA, but also those of Catholic Earthcare and UnitingJustice. The brochure states that it is an initiative of UnitingJustice, Catholic Earthcare and the ACF, supported by the NCCA. This is significant in identifying both the driving organisations and which potentially key bodies were not involved.

Given its numerical and historical significance, it is notable that the Anglican Church is not listed as a specific contributor to this brochure. At the time that the brochure was being compiled, the Anglican Church lacked both an equivalent organisation to Catholic Earthcare and a body with a substantial environmentalist focus equivalent to the UCA's UnitingJustice. It did not, and as of February 2007, does not have an operational 'front desk' for ecological policy and collaborative engagement.

The ACF staff involved in the 'Changing Climate, Changing Creation' project indicated that they were not aware that the Anglican Church had any ecological interests and they did not know who or which part of the organisation to contact. I supplied the contact details for Bishop Browning who chairs the Church's National Environment Working Group and the international ACEN. ACF staff were keen to engage with Bishop Browning and the Church on future collaborative projects.

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[307] I have heard such a view expressed in Anglican and Baptist circles. In addition, some of the Anglican literature that can be viewed on the Church's national website reveals deep concern about the "political" nature of debate about "the environment". It is clear from such concerns that there is a view that environmentalism is inherently political and that the Church is not supposed to get involved in political matters (part of the notional separation of Church and State, and the notion of religion as beyond politics). Yet the same Church has a history of speaking out on equally politically sensitive social justice matters.

I note that the Anglican Church's National Environment Working Group is apparently not empowered to make any policy decisions on its own but at least it can act as a conduit for engaging with the Anglican hierarchy to determine whether the Church will participate in any future public statements on ecological matters. Given that the Church-proper isn't listed as the contributor to the Anglican section of the 'Common belief' document discussed earlier in this appendix, it appears that is still largely reliant on the input of Bishop Browning who wrote that section not as the chair of the Environment Working Group but as the Chair of ACEN.

A1.2.2.1.2 'Sustaining Creation'

I accessed the 'Sustaining Creation' web page[308] on 14/03/06 and found that it was relatively brief. 'Sustaining Creation' is effectively the policy pillar on which the NCCA bases its ecological stance. It is evidently worded to portray a clear ecumenical position in support of ecological concern and action. What it does not do is represent the fact that the depth of this ecumenical policy is highly variable and that in some instances, it is largely superficial and lacking in institutional support. John, 2003, also points out that it is an internally conflicted document that mixes anthropocentric stewardship models with more biocentric 'web of life' models.

'Sustaining Creation' is very much a public document and a political one, being substantially targeted towards government. It emphasises calling for various actions by Federal and State governments, though the wider community is also included in a broader call for action. Most notably, the statement commits to "do all in our power through the Churches to act in ways that will assist in the achievement of these goals." This latter statement suggests an institutional commitment to ecological reform. Yet there is relatively little evidence of this in the three largest denominations, and the policy portrayed in 'Sustaining Creation' remains primarily symbolic. This is a situation consistent with the views of various writers who claim that most of Churches' response to the ecological crisis is symbolic and rhetorical, for example, McDonagh, 1990; Mische, 2000; McDonagh, 2001; Collins, 2004.

A1.2.2.1.3 'Sustaining Creation ecumenical resource kit'

This body of information was an outcome of the above Social Justice Sunday 2002 'Sustaining Creation' project. It is discussed here as a national response because it was prepared by the national social and ecological justice bodies of the three subject denominations. It is not primarily a policy document so much as an education resource, though aspects of denominational policy or at least ecotheology are addressed. There is not room in this thesis to provide a detailed analysis of the various parts of the 'Sustaining Creation' project, which is

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[308] Link to 'Sustaining Creation'

quite substantial. I provide only an overview to offer some additional context for the Chapters 8, 9 and 10.

The kit contains a message from the heads of the three denominations; an 'Action Resource Kit' of educational material and links to other literature with topics of food, forests, population, water, energy and climate change; a set of ecumenical resources; and group of policy, theology and liturgical resource for each denomination. The material is provided as A4 printed pages which are noted as being printed on 100% recycled paper and board (for the enclosing folder) using soy inks.

The message from the three heads of Churches contains some significant concepts. These include an acknowledgement that much harm has been done and continues to be done to "the environment". It also notes that the resources provided in the package are intended to "help us focus on the role each of us must play in repairing and sustaining the natural environment". It states, "Human beings were not created separate from the natural world – our connection with God connects us also with the environment[309]. We have a responsibility to act as good and faithful stewards of God's creation" (Carnley *et al.*, 2002).

A particularly significant sentence in the heads of Churches' message is that which states that the 'Sustaining Creation' resource kit is intended to "assist congregations, small groups and individuals… and to encourage them to take action for the well-being of the planet." This is consistent with a general tendency of the Churches to encourage members to change their ways, whilst simultaneously doing little or nothing as institutions to change their organisational behaviour.

I acknowledge that the 'Sustaining Creation' statement discussed earlier mentions a commitment by the heads of the Churches to "do all in our power through the Churches to act in ways that will assist in the achievement of these goals." However, that view is not reflected anywhere else in the 'Sustaining Creation' materials and it is arguably drowned-out by an overall emphasis on 'grass roots' voluntary action.

The final sentence of the message from the heads of the three Churches states: "We encourage all members of our Churches to use this kit on Social Justice Sunday and as a basis for ongoing action and reflection." This is a stance characteristic of the denominations' policy

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[309] This is a rather odd concept and not one that I have encountered in my extensive reading of Christian ecotheology. I suspect that it is an expression that is a result of the three heads of Churches having to come up with language and a concept that conveys the essence of their meaning without offending too many of their more conservative members. The concept is also highly problematic because it maintains the separation between 'Man' and Creation that is widely acknowledged as a problem in much Christian and Western philosophy and society.

response to ecological concerns, i.e. education and reflection to *encourage* action by members – again with little, or more often, no attention given to action at an institutional level. Whilst associated theological and liturgical content can include quite direct language as to Christian obligations to 'care for Creation', there is no mention of what the Churches as institutions will actually be doing to comply with the advice that they provide to their followers. It is essentially a case of 'do as I say, not as I do'.

Overall, the 'Sustaining Creation' resource kit is commendable in terms of the extent and quality of advice that it provides to its readership so that they might reduce their ecological impacts and understand the need to do so from a Christian perspective. It is a valuable educational resource and has clearly been produced by some well-informed ecojustice advocates and experienced educators. I did not specifically explore how effective the kit has been in achieving its stated aims, though I note that it was very rarely mentioned in any of the many conversations and emails I had with Christians from the relevant denominations, including some of those who were significant contributors to the project. It was also not mentioned during several workshop sessions in which I participated with a local Uniting Church congregation that was seeking to formulate its parish's ecological policy.

A1.2.2.1.4 'Overcoming ecological violence'

'Overcoming violence' was part of the World Council of Churches 'Decade to Overcome Violence' (DOV) initiative. It was listed under the NCCA's 'Special Projects' link. The program included a section on 'ecological violence'. The NCCA's webpage on this topic[310] only mentioned ecological aspects of the program in the listing of objectives. These include "to act in solidarity with all struggling for justice, peace, and the integrity of creation." The 'Resources' link included a list of DOV publications, though these did not include any ecologically related material. 'Overcoming violence' was produced as a CD-ROM, approximately one quarter of which is allocated to 'overcoming ecological violence' and is dominated by material from CEA's 'The garden planet' video, as reviewed in Chapter 8. As of March 2006, the NCCA website does not mention the CD-ROM or provide any links for obtaining it.

A1.2.2.1.5 The Australian Collaboration

The NCCA's website had a link to 'partnerships' which included mention of The Australian Collaboration[311]. The NCCA is the Churches' representative on this national body that brings together a range of social and ecological justice interests. The Collaboration's website notes, "The overall objective of the Australian Collaboration is to help to achieve a new

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[310] http://www.ncca.org.au/dov/key_issues/ecological_links
[311] http://www.ncca.org.au/special_projects/partnerships/community_partners/australian_collaboration

and sustainable balance between social, cultural, environmental and economic policies and activities in Australia"[312]. The ACF is also represented in the Collaboration.

As of early 2006, The Australian Collaboration had prepared three reports: 'A Just and Sustainable Australia'; 'Where are we going?: comprehensive social, cultural, environmental and economic reporting'; and 'Success in Aboriginal Communities: A Pilot Study'. It also produces 'The Public Interest Series' of short books "written by prominent Australians. The themes will include international policy, aspects of democracy, the environment and Indigenous issues."

A small number of state-based versions of the Australian Collaboration exist, for example, the WA Collaboration[313], and because of input from member Church groups, can produce practical cooperative material such as the Sustainable Christmas campaign. However, I have not addressed such policy and praxis in this chapter because it is not Church policy.

A1.3 State & Territory ecumenical responses

Various state/territory-level ecumenical councils exist and at least one of these in each jurisdiction is an affiliate of the NCCA. However they are not all called 'ecumenical councils' or a 'council of churches' and in some cases there is more than one ecumenical body in each state. For example, there is a NSW Ecumenical Council and a NSW Council of Churches, both of which are discussed in a review produced for the 1994 Anglican Synod of NSW[314]. Both bodies had an on-line presence in 2006. The NSW Ecumenical Council[315] is an affiliate of the NCCA and has a focus on interdenominational co-operation and understanding. It has the same 15 denominational members, as does the NCCA. In contrast, and despite its name, the NSW Council of Churches[316] is not a subordinate arm of the NCCA, and has a much narrower membership, with a more conservative and evangelical orientation. Its website specifically notes that it is not an affiliate of the NCCA but has "friendly links (with the NCCA and the NSW Ecumenical Council), with each council having an observer with the other, and cooperation where appropriate". The situation is slightly different in other states and the Northern Territory. For example, the Victorian Council of Churches[317] is an affiliate of the NCCA and has the same denominational membership. The ACT is represented within the NSW Ecumenical Council.

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[312] http://www.australiancollaboration.com.au/
[313] http://www.wacollaboration.org.au/
[314] http://www.sydney.anglican.asn.au/synod/reports/ecumenical.htm
[315] http://www.nswec.org.au/
[316] http://www.nswchurches.com/
[317] http://www.vcc.org.au/About%20us.htm

The state/territory ecumenical councils do not appear to have a substantial policy production role. However, of those that have websites, some provide evidence of ecumenical ecological policy being promoted or adopted, as well as links to relevant ecological content. Only the NSW Ecumenical Council had a significant ecological policy element on its website and I discuss this over page.

Some of the other ecumenical councils only have ecological policy content to the extent that concern for 'the integrity of Creation' or similar environmentalist sentiment is expressed in the body's or a subordinate body's mission statement. However, my investigation of ecumenical council's is largely limited to searching their websites, and thus, they may have a greater role in ecological policy and praxis than is evident on-line. The Tasmanian Council of Churches and the Northern Territory Council of Churches did not have websites as of March 2006.

A1.3.1 NSW Council of Churches

As of March 2006, this organisation's website did not contain any ecological content. This is to be expected given that the organisation is primarily evangelical in orientation and has a conservative membership. It appears to exist only because its more conservative membership does not approve of or find adequate the NSW Ecumenical Council. Despite its name, this group is not representative of all or even the mainstream of NSW Churches.

A1.3.2 NSW Ecumenical Council

When reviewed in 2005-6, the Council's website included an archives section in which two key ecological policy statements were provided[318]. The first is a letter to government and the broader community entitled 'Sustaining Creation', which has been discussed earlier in this appendix. The second is a letter to NSW and ACT churches, also arising from the 'Sustaining Creation' theme of Social Justice Sunday 2002. Both texts are useful in indicating the policy stance and orientation of the Council in two key areas: its stance towards the role of government and the wider community in addressing ecological issues; and its stance towards the Churches' role. The documents were also provided on the NSW[319] and the national Uniting Church[320] websites. I discuss the letter to NSW and ACT churches over page.

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[318] http://www.nswec.org.au/archives.htm#SCGC
[319] http://nsw.uca.org.au/news/2002/ecumenical-council_s-j-sunday.htm
[320] http://nat.uca.org.au/nsrj/sjs/2002/index.htm

A1.3.2.1 'Urgent call to focus on environment'

The NSW Ecumenical Council's letter to NSW and ACT Churches, entitled 'Urgent call to focus on environment'. Some key features of the letter include:

- acknowledging that the ecological crisis is severe and that it is due to human activities;
- using scientific opinion to back this view;
- noting that addressing the crisis is "a political issue…(but that ultimately) it is a profound moral and religious issue… a spiritual crisis";
- that ecological and social problems are interrelated;
- that "Both individuals and decision-making bodies of the churches at all levels need to be actively involved in addressing these problems";
- there is a need to bring ecojustice concerns and actions "to the forefront of public worship… as well as private and corporate reflections…";
- "to encourage leaders – in both Church and community to place this crisis at the highest level of their concerns";
- "to promote training and educational programs regarding the planetary crisis"; and
- "to demonstrate simplicity of lifestyle in our patterns of consumption to counteract greed and over-consumption".

'Urgent call to focus on environment' is one of the most strongly worded documents of this kind, and it is notable for its overt inclusion of the need for institutional change *within* the Churches, and for its call to place ecojustice concerns at the "highest level". If the Council's call was heard and the associated challenges met, churches in NSW and the ACT, and quite likely more broadly, would be very different to what they have been in the past and what they largely remain today.

'Urgent call to focus on environment' is primarily intended for internal distribution, is up-front about not only the severity of the ecological crisis, but that the Churches' position of concern includes the political and economic aspects, and is based on the view that the crisis has moral and spiritual origins. This position is perhaps a hallmark trait of Christian environmentalism in that it goes beyond the scientific evidence of the crisis, adds the human dimension in the form of the interconnection between poverty and ecological harm, then brings these together to argue that the overall crisis is fundamentally a spiritual or at least a moral one.

The sentence, "Both individuals and decision-making bodies of the churches at all levels need to be actively involved in addressing these (ecojustice) problems" is particularly relevant

to this thesis. Along with a later reference to “all aspects of the Church’s life and mission”; “corporate reflections”; “highest level of their concerns”; and “promote training and educational programs”, it indicates an awareness of the need for a comprehensive and consistent *institutional* approach inclusive of praxis.

The most significant statement is “We undertake to do all in our power through the Churches to act in ways that will assist in the achievement of these (ecological) goals”. This is consistent with the awareness of the need for internal change that is evident in the letter to other Churches. However, since the statement was issued in 2002, as revealed in Chapters 8-11, relatively little appears to have changed in the way that the three largest mainstream denominations conduct their operations. Some denominations have made more progress than others. The differences range from the relatively substantial developments of CEA, through to that apparent absence of meaningful institutional change within the Anglican Church. There are certainly individuals and parts of the Churches who have apparently heeded the call of the NSW Ecumenical Council or other sources promoting a similar approach, but none of the three largest denominations has made substantial positive progress on this at an institutional level.

It is notable that the Council’s meeting produced two statements: one directed at member churches, and the other at government and the broader public. This is arguably indicative of the fact that the ecological conversion of Christendom is by no means complete – indeed it is perhaps at least as much a ‘work in progress’ as the broader agenda of societal ecological reform.

Whilst the Catholic, Anglican and Uniting Churches in Australia have ecological policies or at least relevant public statements, these are primarily top-down in origin and are not necessarily representative of the views of their broader membership. The relatively undemocratic nature of the Catholic and Anglican Churches means that top-down policies need not have any ‘grass roots’ support. This is perhaps one reason why the NSW Ecumenical Council felt the need to call on member Churches to improve their ecological conduct. Church ecological policies have largely been driven by a small number of keen individuals able to gain sufficient influence in the upper echelons of institutional decision-making. Some of those individuals are part of the elite, for example, bishops, whilst others are very much at the ‘grass roots’ end of the spectrum. This leaves a potentially substantial gap between the policies coming from the top of the Churches, and the views of the majority of members.

The second document produced by the Council as part of the ‘Sustaining Creation’ theme is an open letter to government and the wider community. It follows on from the position of the ‘Urgent call to focus on environment’ but is slightly more prescriptive. Notably it goes beyond the earlier ecumenical call for ratification of the Kyoto Protocol, recognising the need for “stronger measures”. Overall, it takes a fairly broad and conventional line in favour of

"ecological sustainability" whilst being overt about the associated social justice issues. The issue of materialism and consumerism is raised in the context of a call to "act consistently" with an orientation that values all of Creation in the context of intergenerational stewardship.

A1.3.2.2 2007 NSW Election Statement

During the 2007 State election, the NSW Ecumenical Council published an advisory statement addressing, amongst other electorally contentious matters, ecological concerns:

> **Media release: 3 vital issues for the electorate**[321].
>
> "Recognising care of the environment as a key issue of our time, the Council calls for a desperately needed change of spirit. All life is inter-related. Development cannot be defined in economic terms alone, and is not sustainable if it steals from the present and future generations. In particular, the Council urges those seeking election to be committed to increasing renewable energy targets and to improving incentive schemes."…
>
> **The environment is one of the key issues of our time!**
>
> "All of us are aware that for the state of our planet's health and vitality things are going badly wrong. Climate change, flooding, drought, habitat destruction, desertification, pollution, urban expansion, and famine have all played their part.
>
> Every problem facing the world community is interrelated. Exploitation and greed, the consequent poverty of human communities, displacement of people, environmental degradation all impact on each other. It is not possible to tackle one without attempting to tackle another.
>
> Certainly, these matters are political issues. They are economic issues. But at a deeper level, they are much more. They constitute a profound moral and religious issue. At its core, this is a spiritual crisis, touching all that we hold sacred.
>
> We desperately need a change of spirit. Sustainable development is one of the most urgent moral issues of our time. It begins in sustainable values that recognise the inter-relatedness of all life. Sustainable development cannot be defined in economic terms alone, but must begin in a commitment to care for the poor, the marginalised, and the voiceless. Therefore it is sustainable community that we seek.

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[321] http://nsw.uca.org.au/news/2007/nsw-election-nswec_22-02-07.htm

> Speaking out of our Christian faith convictions, we call upon the political parties and all candidates in the election:
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> - to recognise that development is not sustainable if it steals from the present and future generations
> - to recognise that poverty and environmental degradation are interwoven, and that it is the poor who suffer most from this degradation
> - to be committed to policies that enhance the quality of the rivers and the land, the sea and the air and protect endangered species and all forms of life, specifically by
> - increasing renewable energy targets as part of a comprehensive strategy to address climate change
> - ensuring energy policies and decisions are consistent with a serious response to the threat of global warming
> - improving incentive schemes for public participation in local water capture and recycling and solar power generation
> - strengthening environmental planning controls, and actually enforcing them."

Given such a relatively strong environmentalist and broader ecojustice stance, it is little wonder that the NSW Ecumenical Council is not supported by the far more conservative member denominations that operate the NSW Council of Churches.

The Council's website also contains a selection of archived news items, newsletters and lectures that I did not investigate.

A1.3.3 Victorian Council of Churches

As of March 2006, the VCC website contained only one item of ecological policy in the form of the 'Renewing Creation' ecumenical bible study for Lent 2004[322]. The VCC publishes a newsletter, however only the current issue was available on-line. The February 2006 edition did not contain any ecological content.

[322] http://www.vcc.org.au/Resources.htm

A1.3.4 Council of Churches of Western Australia

The Council's website homepage[323] lists the organisation's mission as:

> "The CCWA gathers those churches and Christian communities which confess the Lord Jesus Christ as God and Saviour as witnessed to in the scriptures and the life of the Church. The CCWA calls on such groups to deepen their relationships and their commitment to their common calling through dialogue, prayer, witness, service and action in the cause of peace, justice and *the preservation of the environment*" (my italics).

The 'Resources' page includes a link to the WA Collaboration's 'Sustainable Christmas' website[324] which provides access to download a small brochure on this theme. In essence, the 'Sustainable Christmas' concept is similar to some schemes operated by international aid groups in which users can purchase ethically sound gifts that provide assistance to people in 'developing' countries. For example, rather than buying your relative a conventional material gift, websites such as 'Sustainable Christmas' allow you to buy them a card which notes that your gift in their name, entailed the purchase of a water filter for a tribe in Ghana or a milking goat for a family in East Timor, etc.

In March 2006, the Council's News page included a paragraph about an event promoting the adoption of the ecumenical liturgy package, 'Season of Creation', intended for ecotheological teachings during September.

A1.3.5 Queensland Churches Together

As of March 2006, this site[325] did not have any ecological content.

A1.3.6 South Australian Council of Churches

This organisation's website included a page that describes its 'Vision'[326], which includes the sentence: "Encourage and enable member churches and communities in the light of the Gospel to give leadership to each other and the wider community on issues of justice, peace, creation and the shared use of the world's resources". The Council had a number of Task

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[323] http://www.churcheswa.com.au/
[324] http://www.wacollaboration.org.au/index.cfm?objectid=2C3F0B80-65BF-EBC1-23527F93C20E82AA
[325] http://www.qld-churches.asn.au/index.htm
[326] http://www.sacc.asn.au/members.html

Groups, which included one entitled the Justice, Peace and Creation Commission[327]. Its webpage was very small but noted that:

> "The focus of the Commission is: 'to Help Australian churches work towards a mutual commitment to justice, peace and the integrity of creation.' JPCC is doing this through:
>
> - Challenging unjust social structures that result in poverty and oppression;
> - Promoting the responsible and sustainable use of the earth's resources.
>
> To achieve these goals, we are:
>
> - Studying contemporary theological and ecological understandings of the connection between justice, peace and the health of the environment. In this way we are promoting an 'earth theology';
> - Researching the challenge to develop a new social order which promotes the common good of all peoples;
> - Fostering networks which encourage environmental care and a responsible understanding of the connections between theology, liturgy and community.
>
> The membership of the Commission is: a Chairperson and up to three persons from each denomination."

The website also contains a list of publications for purchase[328], one of which is entitled 'The Earth is the Lord's.' It is described as "a collection of notes from One World Forums in 1998 and cartoons from New Times from 1997-99" and that "it is intended for use in churches to help us be active, questioning Christians. We are hoping to stimulate dialogue about the interaction between economy, ecology and Christian faith." I did not investigate the document, as it was more of an educational resource rather than a policy.

The website had an Events page, which noted that 2006 was the International Year of Deserts and Desertification. The list of events included World Environment Day, which is consistent with this event being recognised and celebrated by at least the major denominations.

The site also had an Archives page, which noted that in 2002, the Council participated in the Earth Charter Initiative, which is a major international project in which religions have played a formal and significant role[329]. This was described very briefly with four dot-points and a quote from the preamble to the Earth Charter. No details of the Council's participation were provided.

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[327] http://www.sacc.asn.au/Commissions/jp&cc.html
[328] http://www.sacc.asn.au/Publications/publications.html
[329] See for e.g. http://www.green.net.au/hope/docs/earthcharter_doc.pdf

A1.4 Summary of national & state ecumenical & multifaith responses

There are some substantial national and state ecumenical responses to the ecological crisis, for example, the 'Sustaining Creation' statements and resource kit, and the related statements by the NSW Ecumenical Council. There is at least one significant multifaith response that includes the mainstream Christian denominations, namely 'Common belief', although this is a relatively recent initiative and it was driven by The Climate Institute, a secular environmental group. The Institute employed a 'Faith & Climate Officer' during mid-2007. None of the subject denominations has an equivalent employee at national or State levels as of 2007.

The Churches' ecological policies and responses are patchily distributed at the State and Territory level and can be inconsistent, reflecting, at least amongst the major denominations, the degree of variability in their position on and commitment to ecological matters.

Most of the national and state ecumenical and multifaith organisations are not strongly connected to policy-making within the denominations, thus most of what they have produced is symbolic because it has no operational authority within the organisations. For example, the National Council of Churches has no power to determine the ecological operations of the Anglican Church. It can only formulate and publicise policy statements or, in the case of the 'Sustaining Creation' materials, it can include agreed-upon educational resources for distribution. It is notable that in the latter instance, the majority of the 'Sustaining Creation' resource kit comprised material provided by each denomination, rather than there being a single package of information on which they could all agree. These denominational differences appear to continue to undermine the establishment of a consistent ecological policy, let alone praxis, between the denominations. Nonetheless, the sometimes-strong statements and open letters produced by ecumenical bodies in support of ecojustice issues is a positive contribution to the 'greening' of the Church and to the environmentalist cause in general.

Whilst the ecological policies and calls for action produced by ecumenical bodies are largely symbolic, they reflect a positive, if not actually productive engagement with ecojustice concerns. In some of these bodies, this engagement is becoming more strident and vigorous, yet others appear disengaged or constrained by conservative agendas.

I do not dismiss symbolic policies as meaningless or ineffectual. They are significant in indicating what the Churches are prepared to 'say' publicly, even if they are not united in this position or in their willingness and ability to put such policies into action within their own organisations. Symbolic policies may simply represent a stage in the process of institutional change. At the very least, they serve an internal function of validating, refreshing and reinforcing the pro-environmentalism or pro-ecojustice views and praxis of those within the Churches who are prepared to do what they can to address the ecological crisis.

Some of the ecumenical bodies examined for this appendix did not appear to have an ecological policy position and/or did not have an on-line presence as of March 2006 when the latter stage of research for this section was completed. Given rates of change seen elsewhere in this field, it is possible that some or all such bodies now have websites and ecological policies.