



Edmund Rice Centre

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MEDIA RELEASE

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Politicians should visit Kiribati or Tuvalu before pretending to be climate change experts

Following a speech by former Prime Minister Tony Abbott in London overnight in which he questioned the science of climate change, the Edmund Rice Centre has issued an open invite to Australia's 226 Federal politicians to visit Kiribati and Tuvalu to see first-hand the impacts of climate change in our region.

Mr Abbott's speech and the Federal Government's likely retreat away from a Clean Energy Target are signs that Australia's politicians do not understand the challenges faced by our neighbours in low-lying Pacific atoll countries.

Pacific Island leaders have warned that unless global temperature increases are limited to 1.5 degrees Celsius, their countries will be devastated by climate change, including rising sea levels, more severe storms and cyclones, drought, coastal erosion, contamination of underground water and an increase in water borne diseases such as dengue fever.

"While Mr Abbott is in London proclaiming the benefits of climate change, for our neighbours in the Pacific, climate change is simply and clearly a threat to their survival," ERC Director Phil Glendenning said.

"The very future of countries like Kiribati and Tuvalu is under threat. These are resilient people who refuse to sit and wait for the world to save them from the impacts of climate change. But senior politicians from Australia keep making it harder and harder.

"We are inspired by the leadership shown by Pacific leaders and lament the lack of understanding demonstrated time and again by Australia's leaders. If Australian politicians doubt whether climate change is real, or question the need to act urgently, they should visit Kiribati or Tuvalu.

"Having recently been in Kiribati and Tuvalu, and seen the human fall-out that occurs when sea level rise threatens the very existence of a people and their culture, the lack of political will and action in Australia truly beggars belief.

"When one sees springs of salt water coming up from underground at high tide in Tuvalu – something local people have not seen until recent years – it is impossible to deny the reality of what is happening.

"Our politicians need, indeed must, go and see this reality for themselves.

“The very future of countries like Kiribati and Tuvalu are under serious threat unless the world takes serious action on climate change. If we do not act, the culture that has sustained these peoples for centuries will be lost to the world.”

The Edmund Rice Centre’s Pacific Calling Partnership will be sending a delegation of advocates from Kiribati and Tuvalu to the United Nations Climate Change Conference in Bonn, Germany in November.

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