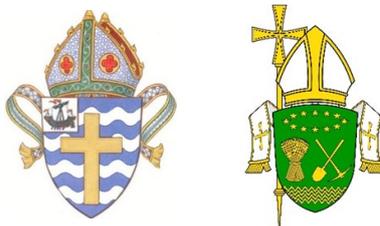


JOINT STATEMENT

Catholic Diocese of Wilcannia-Forbes & The Anglican Diocese of Riverina

Second week in Lent, 11th of March 2020



‘Water - A Spiritual and Physical Resource’

We, the Bishops of the Far West of New South Wales, express our deep concern for the people and communities in our respective Dioceses as they continue to face significant shortages of water as a result of the serious drought affecting our country.

We acknowledge that water has spiritual, moral and ethical dimensions that impact Aboriginal communities of the river lands. Indigenous Australians have preserved the river system for tens of thousands of years and it’s their communities that are among the hardest hit by water shortages and dying rivers. We recognise that primary producers and people in our communities who are dependant on water from our river systems for everyday domestic use are also struggling.

Water is of the essence of God’s creation. The Genesis story tells us that the Spirit of God “swept over the waters” in creative purpose. We see that everything in this good earth that God has given us relies on water to sustain life.

We recognise that water is a fundamental resource necessary for life: it is needed to sustain human life and health; it is needed to sustain grazing animals and the native wildlife of our land; and it is needed to nourish the crops grown to provide food and sustenance to many in our nation as well as to people overseas.

We inhabit the oldest and driest continent on earth. We recognise that we Australians have become complacent and extravagant in our use of water because we are used to plentiful supply. Those who live on and from the land are keenly aware of the limited supply of water, but many Australians may not be as aware.

Pope Francis in his Encyclical Letter *Laudato Si- On Care for Our Common Home* said:

‘Even as the quality of available water is constantly diminishing, in some places there is a growing tendency, despite its scarcity, to privatise this resource, turning it into a commodity subject to the laws of the market.

‘Yet access to safe drinkable water is a basic and universal human right, since it is essential to human survival and, as such, is a condition for the exercise of other human rights.

– *Laudato Si’: An Encyclical on Ecology and Climate, Pope Francis 2015*

We believe the trading of water for personal economic gain is immoral. Water is a limited resource to be shared for everyone and not controlled by large multinational businesses.

First Nations artist and activist Bruce Shillingsworth puts it bluntly:

'We need to protect our natural resources: the things we rely on; the things that keep us alive; the things that sustain us. We get our food from the environment. So, why are they destroying it? When we get a sick river, we get sick communities. And then we get sick people.'

What practical ways can we help in this time of drought? By limiting our use of water in whatever way we can including:

- Shorten the length of time taken showering
- Not leaving the tap streaming while washing hands or cleaning teeth
- Reusing 'grey water' on our gardens rather than irrigation systems using fresh water supply
- Plant a native garden which requires little watering

This time of Lent leading to Easter is a time of reflection and self-discipline. We encourage everyone to reflect on their use of water and be disciplined about limiting its use so there is enough for all our needs.

Yours in Christ Jesus who brings us life,



The Most Reverend
Columba Macbeth-Green OSPPE DD
Bishop of the Catholic Diocese of
Wilcannia-Forbes



The Right Reverend
Donald Kirk
The Anglican Bishop of Riverina

