

# Environmental damage a sin, says church

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The Anglican Church has declared environmental degradation the sin of the 21st century, warning of global catastrophe unless the Church and wider community take action.

The Church's Australian environmental working group chairwoman, Dr Ann Young, said environmental degradation was a sin, and resulted in the displacement of people and poverty.

The global Anglican Consultative Council passed a resolution last week which recommended churches look at their own environmental practices and promote awareness among churchgoers of the growing problems of greenhouse gas emissions and the overconsumption of resources.

It follows comments from the head of the Church, Archbishop of Canterbury Rowan Williams, in April that social collapse was a serious possibility if environmental degradation continued to be ignored.

"When we speak about environmental crisis, we are not to think only of spiralling poverty and mortality, but about brutal and uncontainable conflict," he said.

Bishop of Canberra-Goulburn and convener of the Church's International Network for the Environment, George Browning, oversaw a report submitted to the council, which prompted last week's resolution.

He said mandatory environmental audits should be conducted in churches.

"The Church must see this as its core business and do something about it," he said. "Every parish is expected to take an environmental audit, to look at energy use, recycling and biodiversity. It is hypocritical to tell others what to do without doing it ourselves first."

Dr Young said: "There is certainly a great deal of concern in the Church worldwide, especially because the effects aren't being felt equally.

"It is the smaller nations such as the Solomon Islands which wear the consequences of greenhouse gases. It is a sin because it is an expression of greed, selfishness and contempt for others."

Bishop Browning said he wanted to see bishops across Australia become more vocal on the issue.

A spokeswoman for Perth Archbishop Roger Herft said the resolution and the call for environmental audits would be considered by the diocese.