

# TALANOA TOKTOK

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Staying afloat .... civil society climate warriors arrive at Kioa on canoes - Image: Caritas

## Churches support islanders' battle Kioa will fight back

THE tiny Pacific island of Kioa has become the front line in the fight against rising sea levels ahead of COP27 in Egypt.

Civil society and faith-based organisations gathered to sign the Kioa Emergency Declaration in late October, highlighting the plight of small island states. Kioa is home to about 200 people of Tuvalu ancestry who left the British colony of the Ellis Islands between 1947 and 1962.

Today, Tuvalu struggles against climate change but their relatives on Kioa in Fiji's north will fight on their behalf.



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Island of hope ... Kioa leads the Pacific charge

# Politics is out

COMMUNITIES have taken the lead role in Pacific climate change talks, relegating politicians to the sidelines ahead of COP27.

On the remote Fijian island of Kioa, home to a community of Tuvaluans since the late 1940s, Pacific Civil Society signed an emergency declaration.

This after claiming that regional agreements signed in the past by their leaders had achieved little for the people.

The agreements include the Suva Climate Change Declaration (2015), Boe Declaration (2018), Kainaki II Declaration (2019) and the 2050 Blue Pacific Strategy (2022).

"Many of these declarations have been made by leaders, rather than organisations working with the communities who are most affected by climate change," said PCC General Secretary, Reverend James Bhagwan.

The Pacific Islands Association of NGOs (PIANGO), Pacific Islands Climate Action Network (PICAN), the Pacific Conference of Churches (PCC), Caritas Oceania, 350 Pacific signed the declaration witnessed by diplomats on Kioa.

## What the Kioa Declaration wants

1. **Greater action on mitigation, to reduce greenhouse gas emissions to align to the 1.5 Degrees Celsius temperature goal, to ensure survival of small island communities.**
2. **Urgent action on adaptation including financing and support for community-led initiatives.**
3. **Urgent progress on the issue of Loss & Damage (L&D) of homes and livelihoods from a changing climate where adaptation is not possible.**
4. **Ensure the just, dignified and safe movement of peoples, in the context of climate change**
5. **Guaranteed access to finance, and the creation of more equitable finance arrangements, beginning with a review of regional and international financial architectures, with inputs from civil society organisations and other stakeholders.**
6. **Ocean policies that are compatible with the climate goals including banning deep sea mining and other destructive practices that endanger the survival of small island communities.**
7. **Achieve inter-generational equity, ensuring we leave a better world for our descendants, by cancelling climate debt and a commitment to a debt-free future.**





**One bread, one body ... PCC staff members celebrate the Eucharist at the Lomana Na Vulagi Farm to mark the end of the Season of Creation**

## One with Nature and Christ

BREAKING bread and sharing wine in nature - that was the focus of the Season of Creation liturgy for PCC staff in October.

Our staff members who were not on duty travel gathered on the Feast of Saint Francis of Assisi at the Lomana Na Vulagi Eco-Farm to pray and share the Eucharist.

Reverend Sierra Bird conducted the morning service

on the site of the new caretaker's cottage.

After prayers of thanksgiving and atonement, the staff members were asked to share their thoughts on the Season of Creation and how they had been able to make a change to reduce carbon emissions or fight for increased climate action. The service was held on a large mat spread on the grass

in the shade of surrounding trees.

After sharing bread and wine, all moved to areas of the farm to plant coconut or banana trees. Planting of trees has become a compulsory activity for staff who return from overseas travel.

Most of the staff at the service had recently returned from the World Council of Churches Assembly in Karlsruhe, Germany.



**Straight talk ... Wilfer Rigamoto of the PCC delivers a message at a faith-based meeting on coal emissions**

## Listen, Oz told

"FAITH communities gathered in Suva to support Australian churches in a call for greater climate action.

This followed an appeal from Australian churches.

Fijian faith groups gathered at the Holy Trinity Anglican Cathedral, Suva, to show their concern over Australia's inaction and delivered this message to Australian Prime Minister, Anthony Albanese: "Coal and gas from Australia are a threat to our survival - and it doesn't matter where they're burned.

"Whether Australian coal and gas is burned overseas or on Australian soil, our homes and cultures are threatened either way. New coal and gas projects are a death sentence to the Pacific way of life and life in the Pacific."





## About Lomana Na Vulagi

**Location** - 90 minutes northeast of Suva

**Land type** - Freehold, 50 acres with standing local forest and pasture land

**Local communities** - Methodist, Roman Catholic and Sikh villages and settlements nearby

**Main activity** - Forestry, agriculture, floriculture, farming for people with disabilities

**Retreat centre** - To open in June 2023 with regional ecological school

# Eco-farm takes shape

IN the Tailevu forest, a slow transformation is taking place.

This is the site of a regional Ecological School which aims to change the way of thinking of communities and churches throughout the Pacific.

Fertilisers and insecticides are banned - organic farming is the only acceptable form on this 50-acre block bought last year.

Not a single tree will be felled as the vegetables and root crops are planted.

Buildings will be erected within the standing forest to benefit from the shade and all power will come from solar panels.

Manure from the existing cattle herd and a new piggery will provide gas for cooking in the workers' homes and the retreat centre kitchen.

Completely off the grid, Lomana Na Vulagi Farm has been designed as a centre-piece for Pacific churches.

"The time for talk is over," said Reverend James Bhagwan, General Secretary of the Pacific Conference of Churches.

"We will concentrate on his work as the world heads off to talk at COP27 in Egypt.

"Let them talk and let regional churches put into action the work that needs to be done to save the planet."

While the PCC acknowledges that it cannot act alone to save the planet, the work on the farm is critical



## Digging in ... staff on the way to plant cassava

in shaping the philosophy of young people who must deal with a region which faces the climate change onslaught.

"The Pacific youth will come to this farm physically or virtually to learn the importance of traditional knowledge and Biblical values about the land," said PCC Climate Change expert, Frances Namoumou.

"They will come as strangers and depart as allies in the fight to

save our Pacific using ancient knowledge."

Namoumou said each Pacific community would be encouraged to find local solutions.

"The farm is only a catalyst for change - it's not a solution to everyone's issues. We want to inspire young people to be instruments of change.

"And we want our member churches to provide pathways using their resources."