Greetings from FEN, the Faith Ecology Network, an Australian hub for strengthening an interfaith dialogue between science and religion.

# November 2025 Newsletter

Greetings FEN Members and Supporters!

This is our last newsletter for 2025 and as a bumper one as we finish the year by sharing some of the wonderful work caring for biodiversity in which our faith and ecology networkers, both local and global, have been involved.

**We are always keen to hear your story of how FEN's Six Ways to Care framework has inspired you and your community to care for the Earth in practical ways. Our interactive Six Ways to Care Online Resource will feature diverse stories from across our network and we would love you to be a part of it, so please get in touch!**

Following the advice of those with expertise, especially the Biodiversity Council, FEN made a submission recently to the Federal Government's DECCW Discussion Paper on Implementing Australia's Strategy for Nature 2019-2030.

This next few weeks are an important time in Australia. After much political manoeuvring in the last few years, the current Federal Environment Minister, Murray Watt this week introduced the long-awaited bill to overhaul the 25-year-old Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999 (EPBC Act). It is an important opportunity for all of us in the FEN networks to assist in changing the dominant narrative.

Australia is a signatory to the Global Biodiversity Framework which aims to "Halt and reverse biodiversity loss by 2030 to achieve recovery by 2050" and to "Ensure by 2030 all activity is in accord with or contributing to harmony with nature." We expect the implementation plans by the Australian government will **actually lead** to achieving this mission.

**Will you make time this week and in the next few weeks to write to your local Federal Member and Senator on this matter (a discussed in our parliament? You can use FEN's submission attached here to write a letter to your own words.**

The Biodiversity Council is a sound source of information at Latest News: https://biodiversitycouncil.org/ aw

Use this to back up your local Member's contact details: https://www.aph.gov.au/Senators and Members

Thank you in anticipation and please let us know when you write a letter.

**Anne Lanyon**
**FEN Co-ordinator**

**FEN is a volunteer network.**

We rely on your support to employ a part-time Co-ordinator to assist us. We appreciate any assistance in achieving this goal. Donate Now.

## FEN Local News

### FEN at AlterCOP 30 Australia Sydney, Day 3.

FEN Core Group member and agricultural scientist by training, **Sue Martin** will be representing FEN at the panel at this event at the Transdisciplinary School, University of Technology, Sydney on Wed, 19 Nov, 5.30pm - 8.30pm AEST.

To register or see how Sue will represent FEN, go to https://events.humanitix.com/from-roads-to-sydney-voices-for-change-alterco30-day-3

**What is AlterCOP?**

As Australia prepares to potentially host COP31, we have a unique opportunity and responsibility to open up climate dialogue to all and show that local actions to mitigate and adapt to climate change are already happening across different sectors.

Running alongside the United Nations (UN) COP30 agenda, the four-day event will foster grassroots ownership of global climate goals by showcasing local and regional engagement across Australia. With the main event hosted in Brisbane, there will be satellite events across other parts of the country.

### Planting a Tiny Forest to restore habitats for endangered animals

*By Antonina Ferro*

In July 2021, NSW Dept of Planning, Housing and Infrastructure rezoned Glenfield, a suburb in south-west Sydney, with a plan to build a town centre of up to 12 shops, 3600 homes, a new primary school and a park for up to 5,000 people and approximately 158 hectares. This rezoning impacted adjacent to Apple Orchard, a 5.47 hectare school, catering for students with mild to moderate intellectual disability, and their families.

As development began, clearing of underlying bushland caused fragmentation of a vital wildlife corridor, impacting local fauna and flora. This local area hosts over 64 threatened species, including koalas, powerful owls, squirrel gliders, grey headed flying foxes, regent honeyeaters, and the Cumberland Plain land snail. Concerned about habitat loss, Angus Macfarlane, Apple Orchard Environmental Leader, and a group of parents and teachers began plans to a small area to help restore biodiversity and combat urban heat. With support from Earthwatch Australia, Campbelltown City Council, the Royal Botanic Gardens, and volunteers, 800 native plants were planted in August.

The establishment of our tiny forest will not only protect biodiversity and reduce urban heat, but also allow our school community to develop a deep connection to their local environment and to grow in their sense of place. We're excited to watch it grow!

**Antonina Ferro is a teacher at Apple School, Glenfield NSW, and participated in the 2024 Mercy Ireland Ecology Leadership Fellowship.**

For more information on Tiny Forests, see https://www.abc.net.au/news/2021-07-28/tiny-forests-miyawaki-method-solves-perths-tree-canopy-problem/13438600

### Reflecting on the Family

*By Dallas Edwards*

A group of families from Sydney's Northern Beaches have come together for a two-day retreat at the Sydney Baha'i House of Worship to explore how families are fundamental building blocks towards peace.

This retreat embraced families from diverse backgrounds and focused on what our 'family' can look like, and how that extends to our community and the natural world.

The camp also provided the community with the opportunity to team up with like-minded organisations and further the community-building process.

Collaborating with Bush to Bowl – a Fred Hollows organisation focusing on connecting the Northern Beaches with Indigenous culture – the program featured a smoking ceremony as well as a nature walk through the Temple grounds, and artistic expression with a shared mural. The mural depicted native plants, bush foods, and the cultural knowledge that surrounds them.

In all its community-building efforts, the Baha'i community strives to understand and consult with local community members, which pairs also with FEN's principle of 'Listen to and Learn Wisdom from the Elders' found in the 'Six ways to care for biodiversity'.

This camp was one way in which the Northern Beaches community could build on their regular Baha'i moral and spiritual educational programs unfolding on the Temple grounds, and in their efforts towards creating a vibrant and peaceful neighbourhood.

View a FEN presentation on Kinship by Oxfam: www.earthpeas.org.au/events/kinship-24dec/

### Appreciating our interconnectedness during the Season of Creation

*By Peter Cain*

*With open wings a seagull skims the spray,*
*Sounding the depth below, a great white stingray,*
*Your Spirit moves amongst them as they play*
*Glory be to God!*
*Wide open are all your Spirit wings,*
*Where the tuna dance and the dolphin sings,*
*That love may spread in stirring rings,*
*Speak to my soul through all you made this day.*
*Lord, let me fly with the albatross and your wings,*
*And let your Spirit lift the wards I carry*
With wings open, Malcolm Guite, "Sewer Whale Days: The Fifth Day: Creatures of the Sky and Sea"

My feeling of being connected to God – to the Divine, the sacred – has been very much mediated for me by my experience of what we call "nature", the natural world. I could involved continues to surround the word "nature" because our culture's binary way of thinking has created a dualism between us and "nature" that I don't like at all. I feel that the connecting experience with the other hard have led me to an appreciation of the interconnectedness we share with the other creatures and the planet. I very much understand in the depths of my being the reason why St Francis of Assisi described the sun, the moon, fire, water and the other creatures as being our brothers and sisters, with the earth being our mother.

This sense of being interrelated and interconnected means that images that are used in the Bible to describe God's love for us, like a hen with her chicks, or the Good Shepherd who lifts and beasts of under as much as it does in the beauty and vitality of my living, and together we make something very beautiful for God.

This deep sense of emotional connection means that Season of Creation, which runs from September 1 to October 4, is a very important time of year for me. The Season of Creation provides a special opportunity to celebrate the connections we enjoy with the rest of creation. It is appropriate that the celebration reflects the beauty of the divine and so is sacred, and it is appropriate that we celebrate the God-given call to be good stewards of this most unique and precious of gifts.

During the Season of Creation, I often find myself often returning to some words of William Blake:

*The tree which moves some to tears of joy*
*is in the eyes of others only a green thing*
*that stands in the way. Some see nature all ridiculus and deformity...*
*and some assume nature is all*
*But to the eyes of the man of imagination,*
*nature is imagination itself*

(William Blake in a letter written to The Reverend John Trusler, 1799)

I return to Blake's words because I am both frustrated and concerned by the fact that our culture seems to have conditioned many to assume nature is all or a not seeing that has led to a profound sense of disconnection, a life threatening sense of disconnection.

There is plenty of hardcore information, produced by very careful, conservative & support overly conservatively cautious analysis, that tells us that the sixth mass extinction is underway, with the rate of species disappearance that we are now at at a rate seeing that has led to a profound sense of disconnection, a life threatening sense of disconnection.

- Habitat continues to be destroyed as if there is an endless supply of other places for the koala and all the species of birds and animals to live.
- The climate is being changing in ways that are already flooding the islands of the Torres Strait, and forced many of our homes, where our places unloading, farming land unusable and will lead to crippling insurance premiums.
- Our oceans are being acidified and the coral bleached as if there is an endless supply of other places on which to grow our food.

And yet our political discourse and some of the commentary provided by parts of the media continue to approach these issues as if they are not things that affect our everyday life, but are matters of ideology, opinion, or issues to be dealt with through the lens of political party identity. The earth systems are not open to being manipulated and what passes for political compromise will not make things any better.

If we don't deal with the real problem, the real consequences will flow.

**The Very Rev'd Dr Peter Cain is Dean of St John's Anglican Cathedral, Brisbane**

**Source: https://anglicanfocus.org.au/2025/09/30/appreciating-our-interconnectedness-during-season-of-creation/**

### Planting Seeds of Hope

*By Emma Warren*

At St Francis of Assisi College, our 2025 Diocesan theme Seeds of Hope reminds us that even the smallest actions – acts of kindness, sustainable choices and quiet advocacy – can grow into something lasting.

Following a special liturgy marking the 10th anniversary of Pope Francis' Laudato Si', students were gifted with plantable seed cards as a symbol of the care we are called to care in the world. This message also reached the wider community at the Riverland Field Days, where we shared these seed cards and encouraged visitors to nurture hope and care for creation.

Inspired by the vision of Laudato Si', and the spirituality of St Francis of Assisi, Seeds of Hope invites us all to live with compassion, curiosity and respect for our common home – believing that from small beginnings, beauty and life can flourish.

## FEN Global News

*Photo: Rob Overbeek*

### Caring for Biodiversity in Leuven, Belgium

*By Neil Davidson*

In Leuven, Belgium, we're midway through our northern autumn. Shorter cooler days, rising winds, falling leaves. Winter just ahead. Getting darker.

The colours are fading from the foliage in nearby Heverlee Forest, to be replaced by fungi awakening from mycelial networks and rising through the forest floor and rotting timber, amidst fallen leaves and in greening mosses.

Our organic garden has prided most of its summer produce. The last few tomatoes and capsicums remain in the greenhouse, winter crops are underway. Our water tank just carried our veggies through a dry year, though wildflowers and pollinators were scarce, not helped by invasive Asian hornets that hunt anything small except by camo.

The drought meant watering our two one-yet-Food Forest of Hope

https://www.facebook.com/groups/1175274252 for the neighbourhood by hand, though we did harvest raspberries and strawberries. It is a little island of beauty and biodiversity. www.facebook.com/groups/1175274252 for the residents of the 1072 Arrondissement. Heverlee, supplemented by SPES ( www.spes.be/ ) for our community, aligning Christianity in Economy and Society. www.facebook.com/groups/1204147847 ( City of Leuven, and Seds Leuven ) for the city.

On this website, I recently reviewed strategies in our neighbourhood have derived climate resilient trees, larger native flower gardens and even green roofs in our shops. When the rain stops we'll continue our planting for winter – we'll spread collected leaves to feed the worms, replenish soil and protect from frosts.

And then we'll turn our growing Rivers of the North Bias Bioregional Network activities, and our work in the Inner Space of the Design School for Regenerating Earth (example www.youtube.com/watch?v=E_-nWYbwaRU ).

**Among all these other networks, Neil Davidson is also an important part of the Faith Ecology Network.**

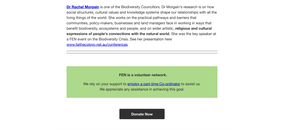
## FEN Partner News

A growing number of organisations and companies around the world are creating ways for "nature" to be represented in their governance structures and decision-making.

Why are companies using this approach, and what difference does it make to their operations? Does having a voice for nature into the board room has an impact on an organisation's culture or environmental performance?

Join FEN Partner the Australian Earth Laws Alliance (AELA) and Lawyers for Nature (LFN), as they host an online discussion about 'nature on the board', and hear from pioneers introducing and implementing this approach in practice.

More info and booking link: https://www.earthlaws.org.au/event/nature-on-the-board-what%-possible/




### Join ARRCC at Rising Tide

ARRCC has been preparing supporters who are interested in attending the 2025 Rising Tide People's Blockade at the notorious import coal port in Newcastle, 27 Nov - 12 Dec (inclusive). They would like to know the intentions of those planning to attend, so that you're kept informed and able to receive pics or an affinity group if you haven't been one.

**If you intend to participate this year, would you please complete this brief ARRCC survey?**

**Dr Rachel Mumme** is one of the Biodiversity Councillors. Dr Mumme's research is on how social structures, cultural values and knowledge systems shape our relationships with all the living things of the world. She works on the practical pathways and barriers that communities, policy makers, businesses and land managers face in working in ways that acknowledge the rights and interests of nature. Her work has been **"inspired by the creative expressions of people's connections with the natural world.** She was the key speaker at a FEN event on the Biodiversity Crisis, see the presentation here: www.faithecology.net.au/events/kinship

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We rely on your support to employ a part-time Co-ordinator to assist us. We appreciate any assistance in achieving this goal.

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