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

March 2026 Newsletter

Greetings for 2026!

This is our first newsletter for the year. We have kicked off the year by planning a conference in Melbourne in partnership with Australian Earth Laws Alliance (AELA) among other activities. *Please put Saturday 3 October in your diaries and keep an eye out for the details.*

Our hearts and senses continue to be bombarded with violence locally and globally. These problems seem to be generating a culture of division, blame, and authoritarian responses. Our hearts ache when we think of the harm being done to people, creatures and ecosystems. It is at times like these that we in the FEN network can and must continue to hold onto the strength of our relationships and our shared values. We need to keep on strengthening our connections across faith traditions and the sciences, in the face of destructive practices, we continue to be creative in bringing about a shift in ecological consciousness which in turn helps to bring about social cohesion. Ecology is about interconnectedness and interdependence.

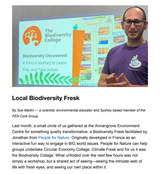
Another of our plans for 2026 is to launch the Ten Ways To Care for Biodiversity E-Resource at the October Conference. Peter Brainerdson, our wonderful communications officer, is just waiting for you or people you know in your networks, to contact him with how you are putting one or more of the Ten Ways into practice personally or in your faith or other community. We WANT your story! Please look up www.tenwaystobiodiversity.org - particularly the "Stories" section. Peter Brainerdson is also well and going on any of the ten ways, and email us with any questions or stories.

Thank you to those who have shared items for this newsletter. We look forward to future contributions.

Anne Langer, 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



Local Biodiversity Freak

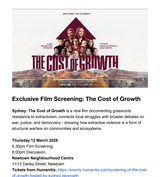
By Sue Welch — a scientist, environmental educator and Sydney based member of the FEN Core Group

Last month, a small circle of us gathered at the Annangrove Environment Centre for something quietly transformative: a Biodiversity Freak facilitated by Jonathan Keen People for Nature. Originally developed in France as an interactive tool to engage a BIG world issue, People for Nature can help groups undertake Circular Economy College, Climate Freak and for us it was the Biodiversity College. What unfolded over the two hours was not simply a workshop, but a shared act of seeing—seeing the intricate web of life with fresh eyes, and seeing our own place within it.

The Biodiversity Freak is a collaborative, science-based experience that helps participants understand how ecosystems function and how we belong to them. Through a series of interconnected cards, we traced the delicate relationships that sustain ecosystems: pollination networks, soil microbiomes, keystone species, genetic diversity, and the cascading impacts when one thread is pulled too hard. Jonathan guided us with clarity and gentleness, inviting us to slow down, reflect, and make meaning together.

As the collage grew, so did our sense of responsibility—not as a burden, but as a calling. The Freak reminded us that biodiversity is not an abstract concept, it is the living expression of our interconnectedness with all living things, the "community of creation".

Our Biodiversity Freak reminded us that ecological conversion of the heart begins with attention—attention to the living world. As we step into Climate Action Week, Earth Day, and the months ahead, may we continue to cultivate this attentive, courageous love for creation.



Rat Poisons Kill Birdlife

By Holly Parsons, Manager of Priority Sites for Bird Life Australia

Scientists have released the findings of a study into the cause of death of Masked Owls collected across Perth. At 13 birds from the south-west and three from metropolitan Perth, had been exposed to long-lasting 'second generation' anticoagulant rodenticides (SGARs), commonly known as 'one-dose kills' poisons available in common household brands. This Masked Owl research was conducted independently by Edith Cowan University and Birds Friendly, Margaret River.

Australia's native birds, wildlife, and even family pets are being poisoned by Second-generation Anticoagulant Rodenticides (SGARs), a dangerous class of chemicals which are still readily available in supermarkets and online. BirdLife Australia is calling for all SGARs to be removed from public sale and restricted to licensed professionals.

You can go to BirdLife Australia https://birdlife.org.au/protect-aussie-birds-from-deadly-rat-poisons/ to see how you can take advocate but Bill Scarlett Submissions close on Monday 16 March 2026.

Exclusive Film Screening: The Cost of Growth

Sydney: The Cost of Growth is a new film documenting grassroots resistance to extractivism, connects local struggles with broader debates on war, justice, and democracy - showing how extractive violence is a form of structural warfare on communities and ecosystems.

Thursday 12 March 2026
6.30pm Film Screening,
8.00pm Discussion,
Newtown Neighbourhood Centre
111-3 Oxley Street, Newtown
Tickets from Humanitix https://events.humanitix.com/screening-of-the-cost-of-growth-hosted-by-sydney-degrowth

Growing a Sense of Place

By Dr Zulaiha Rahman, President of the Muslim Women's National Network of Australia, and member of the FEN Core Group

Using the Ten Ways to Care for Biodiversity – the framework for hopeful, holistic and practical actions for diverse communities – I have chosen, "Grow a sense of place" as my focus for this month. Our connection to place can be easily disrupted and fruitfully practiced by our communities. Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) taught environmental stewardship through actions and words, emphasizing moderation and care for the Earth by conserving resources like water, planting trees and greening the earth, protecting animals, keeping surroundings clean, and avoiding wastefulness This could be practiced by all of us through feeling mindful of our actions:

- in our daily food consumption and electricity usage across appliances
- in our daily needs, to Reduce, Reuse, Recycle
- planting trees to improve the quality of the air as well as water as the trees helps by absorbing pollutants, releasing oxygen, and reducing carbon dioxide, cooling the surrounding environment, improving atmosphere by transpiring and providing shade for humans and animals alike.
- keeping the environment clean and safe is part of the duty.

Imam Ali Tazim Ali and his wife Mrs Ikuna who originally came from Fiji, are literally "Growing in their sense of place". through the care of their environment, growing their fresh vegetables in a small backyard garden patch. (See above photo) This not only provides their fresh consumption needs but also grows them and their growing family, the pleasure of having organic, wholesome fresh supply, for good health and mental fulfilment.

FEN Global News

This tree (Eucalyptus Haemastoma) was planted at St Anthony in the Pelvis church, Sydney by Rabbi Moshe Gerstner

Planting Trees in Frightening Times

A Meditation on a traditional story from the Talmud adapted by Rev Cameron Trimble from Canada https://cameronrtrimble.com/

A rabbi once told a story that people have carried through centuries of upheaval.

Someone asked him a frightening question:

"What should a person do if they know the world would end tomorrow?"

It was not a philosophical question. It was the kind of question people ask when history begins to feel unstable. When wars spread. When leaders make decisions that place millions of lives at risk. When the future no longer feels dependable.

The rabbi did not dismiss the fear. He did not say the person was exaggerating. He did not rush to reassure them that everything would be fine.

He simply answered:

"Then today," he said, "you should plant a tree."

At first the answer sounds strange. It the world ends tomorrow, why plant anything at all? Why place something fragile into the soil if there may be no future to receive it?

But the rabbi understood something about the human soul.

When people begin to believe the future is lost, they stop tending life. They stop caring for the earth. They stop caring for one another. Fear slowly shrinks the boundaries of their humanity.

The rabbi refused to let fear have that power.

Plant a tree.

Plant it even if the news grows darker.

Plant it even if leaders act recklessly.

Plant it even if the future feels uncertain.

Plant it because tending life is who you are.

Many people I speak with right now are carrying grief. You can feel it in conversations. You can feel it in the quiet pauses when people try to describe what this moment feels like. Wars rage. Even if we are not bombs fall far away, our spirits know something sacred has been broken.

Grief is not weakness. Grief is what happens when love refuses to be ignored.

But grief can slip into despair. St. Thomas Aquinas taught that despair was the most dangerous of all human conditions. Despair tells us a dangerous lie: that nothing we do matters anymore.

The rabbi knew better.

Plant a tree.

Plant a tree that because compassion still matters.

Plant a tree because truth still matters.

Plant a tree because the future—even an uncertain future—is still worthy of care.

This is the same wisdom the prophet Jeremiah gave to a people who believed their world had collapsed. Jerusalem had fallen. Their leaders had failed them. They were living in exile under an empire they did not trust.

And the prophet told them something surprising.

Build houses.

Plant gardens.

Seek the welfare of the place where you live.

In other words: keep tending life.

Good religion has always known this truth. We cannot control the great movements of history. None of us can stop the machinery of war alone. But we are not powerless.

We can decide who we will be while history unfolds around us.

We can keep loving our neighbours.

We can keep telling the truth.

We can keep protecting the vulnerable.

We can keep tending the earth.

We can keep planting trees.

We don't know what tomorrow will bring. But we know who we are called to be today.

We are in this together.

A dead gibbie fish at Wallpinga, south of Victor Harbor, has been uploaded to iNaturalists to form part of the data. (ABC South East SA, Caroline Harris)

South Australian Harmful Algal Bloom and Global Connections.

By Neil Jones from South Australia. He recently presented an online talk to the Canadian Association of the Club of Rome on the dramatic example of persisting large scale biodiversity collapse of uncertain ongoing duration.

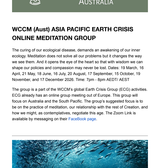
I have discerned that this ecological disaster represents a "Canary in the Coalmine" and that no further warnings or indicators are needed. The required action is clear: an immediate and drastic reduction in our use of fossil fuels.

I use **science** to show that we are at or rapidly approaching tipping points and that recent ecological and climatic changes affecting the atmosphere and the oceans in the Southern Ocean and Antarctica can be linked, including the Harmful Algal Bloom. What happens in this remote area of the world does not stay there. It has global ramifications. Recently confirmed 3.1 degree C of global heating by 2100 is the outcome of our current fossil fuel policies where the ocean is also turbulent, leaves no wriggle room for negotiation or procrastination - rapid melting of the most consequential glacier on Earth is actually happening right now.

The **Indigenous communities** have been greatly impacted by this algal bloom disaster - for example, the Peramangk people of Yorke Peninsula, who have been living on this land for millennia. They have an enduring very strong sea connection but their waters have been affected by the algal blooms. They are known as the Southern mob (the dusky Morwong), a fish that has been their totem for millennia. The Ngarrindjeri people have also been greatly impacted and the two South Australian Gulfs impacted by this catastrophic The algal bloom therefore threatens their identity and wellbeing. The effects of climate change are acutely felt by the Ngarrindjeri people, yet they have not contributed to the crisis.

I have also discerned that other actions are needed, essentially revolving around the need for radically different relationships with Gaia/Mother Earth, each other and energy - a conversion. **Different faiths, traditions and spiritual practices** will provide varying interpretations of this and of what is required. For example, the Catholic faith provides the understanding and guidance in Pope Francis' 2015 encyclical Laudato si'", Laudato si'"

The awe and wonder of nature and our universe, and the discernment of what energy flows from the Big Bang have and continue to create, through emergence and self-organization, reinforce the necessary and inevitable enlievement of science and faith.



WCCM (Aust) ASIA PACIFIC EARTH CRISIS ONLINE MEDITATION GROUP

The coming of our ecological disease, demands an awakening of our inner ecology. Meditation does not solve all our problems but it changes the way we see them. And it opens the eye of the heart to see what needs to be done, shape our policies and compassion may never be lost. Dates: 16 March, 16 April, 21 May, 18 June, 16 July, 20 August, 17 September, 15 October, 19 November, and 17 December 2026. Time: 7pm - 8pm AEDT AEST

The group is a part of the WCCM's global Earth Crisis Group (ECG) activities. ECG already has an online group meeting out of Europe. This group will focus on Australia and the South Pacific. The group's suggested focus is to be on the practice of meditation, our relationship with the rest of Creation, and how we might, as contemplatives, negotiate this age. The Zoom Link is available by messaging on their Facebook page.

United Nations Agreement on Marine Biodiversity (BBNJ)

FEN believes United Nations bodies are relevant and vital for care of Earth our common home. (Despite the long-winded titles of many of these bodies). The **BBNJ Agreement entered into force on 17 January 2026.** The BBNJ Agreement becomes the third implementing agreement to the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea and is good global news – if only the hegemonic powers would respect the international order. This video is a very good description to cut through all the jargon: An introduction to the BBNJ Agreement (Video)

FEN Partner News

Join AELA for a fascinating and timely discussion, about the role of rights and duties in Australia's legal system and wider society. This seminar will explore legal, philosophical and current environmental and social justice issues. With guest speakers, the Hon. Justice Brian Preston AO (author of Australia's first book on environmental litigation), Dr Mary Graham (Kombumerri and Wakka Wakka thinker, philosopher, and governance expert, and Director of Future Dreaming Australia) and Dr Michelle Maloney, this special seminar is not to be missed.

Tuesday 31 March
9.30am to 11.30am
Gilbert & Tobin, Woodstock Room,
Level 35, 2/200 Barangaroo Avenue, Sydney

BOOKINGS ARE ESSENTIAL: https://events.humanitix.com/aela-31mar

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Australian Religious Response to Climate Change

International Fossil Fuel Non-Proliferation Treaty

Why this Treaty matters

No mechanism currently exists to address fossil fuels and manage a fair transition away from oil, gas and coal. The Paris Agreement, while a monumental step in addressing climate change and setting up the temperature limit, isn't structured or equipped to deal with the transition from fossil fuels. It doesn't even mention coal, gas or oil. Not only that, when there are efforts to get phasing out coal and gas into UN summits, it faces enormous pushback from countries like Saudi Arabia and Russia.

A fossil fuel treaty would bring on board the most willing first of all and build momentum from there instead of constantly being held back by those who want to block action.

International momentum for such a treaty is building with the first ever global summit for a phase-out of fossil fuels taking place in Colombia on April 28 and 29.

Join in!

ARRCC is encouraging all people of faith to get involved in one of all of these ways:

- Sign the global multifaith letter for a Fossil Fuel Treaty as an individual or faith leader, and as a religious institution.
- Help make this massive by spreading the word
- Sing a song or two in support
- Organise with others in your town or city:

  Meet others in your part of the country where people like you will be getting things going:

  Queensland: Wednesday 11 March, 1 - 2pm
  https://us02web.zoom.us/j/84658760737

  South Australia: Thursday 12 March, 8 - 9pm
  https://us02web.zoom.us/j/86199633772
  Passcode: climate

  Victoria: Thursday March 12, 1 - 2pm
  https://us02web.zoom.us/j/89568942360

  Illawarra and South Coast: March 18, 9.30 - 10.45pm
  https://us02web.zoom.us/j/880795644472?pwd=zi4WoHvqn9perjCCTKSn4Us8vPYDEV.1

Biodiversity Council

Webinar: Preparing for a More Volatile Future

The Biodiversity Council recently held a webinar on Preparing for a More Volatile Future which looked at how Australia can build resilience, protect nature, and support community wellbeing in a future with more frequent and severe natural disasters. You can watch the recording here:

https://biodiversitycouncil.org.au/news/webinar-preparing-for-a-more-volatile-future

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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.

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