**“LET’S MAKE OUR PLANET GREAT AGAIN!"**

**Proposal for Earth Ethics Conference**

**Faith, eco-spirituality and eco-theology**

**15 minute paper for presentation within a panel session**

This response by President Macron to President Trump's decision to pull the US out of the Paris climate accord succinctly advocates the need for climate change policies to transcend national political interests. It also encourages reflection on Australia’s political agenda and priorities.

Such reflection, however, requires consideration to be given to how values and worldviews shape that agenda, and whether that agenda reflects changing attitudes within Australia towards the environment. Tim Winton, for example, writes that in his lifetime *the environment has started to make the kind of claims upon us that perhaps only a family can* but that *twenty first century governments continue to make decisions based on the assumptions of the nineteenth century*.

In a post-secular society like Australia, faith inputs are increasingly being recognised as adding value to the richness of the debate surrounding climate change, which Ross Garnaut describes as a *wicked problem*. There is also much common ground between faith and secular groups in environmental ethics, in how the environment is valued and in how this should be reflected in environmental policies. The challenge lies in how to achieve political reform.

Dr Dalton will present the case that what is occurring is *a change in the sphere of the spirit, in the sphere of human conscience*, noting that with regard to environmental policies it is not enough just *to develop new machines, new regulations, new institutions* (Vaclav Havel former president of Czechoslovakia). One precedent for this is the decision by the New Zealand Parliament to grant legal status to the Whanganui River. This prioritises treatment of the environment in terms of a relationship rather than as an object of human utility

He will also draw on a case study of the regulation of mining Coal Seam Gas in Australia, and evolving eco-theological perspectives.

Dr Chris Dalton

Dr Dalton is a member of the Queensland Churches Environmental Network. Prior to his retirement he worked for many years at a senior level in both the public and private sectors, advising on policy and regulatory issues. In 2015 he was awarded a doctorate by CSU for his thesis which explored how the church might provide a value-added input to the policy debate surrounding CSG mining. It was published in March 2017 under the title “*From Terra Nullius to Beloved Companion: Reimagining Land in Australia*”.  Further information can be found at [www.daltonline.com](http://www.daltonline.com/).