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Committee Secretary
Senate Standing Committees on Environment and Communications
PO Box 6100
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600

Dear Senators

Submission to Senate Inquiry into Galilee Basin (Coal Prohibition) Bill 2018

Thank you for the opportunity to make a submission on the potential future of coal mining in the Galilee Basin, and, by implication, elsewhere in Australia. Founded in 1833 as NSW's first congregationalist church, Pitt Street Uniting Church is a congregation of the Uniting Church in Australia. Located in the heart of Sydney we are a vibrant Christian community seeking to follow the Way of Jesus in all areas of our lives. Our concerns include social justice, human rights, diversity and inclusion, and ecological sustainability.

The objective of the Bill is stated in Clause Six as follows:

Prohibition on mining of thermal coal in the Galilee Basin. A constitutional corporation commits an offence if: (a) the constitutional corporation carries out a thermal coal 28 mining operation; and (b) the thermal coal mining operation is carried out in the Galilee Basin.

In broad terms we support the intent of this Private Members Bill, which is to prohibit the further development of coal mining in Australia.

We make our submission as leaders of a local Christian faith community. This does not confer any technical or scientific expertise. As people seeking to follow the Way of Jesus we are aiming to discern that which is good and just for the life of the human community and planet Earth which we understand, theologically, as the good creation of a loving God.

Formed in 1977 as a union of the Congregationalist, Methodist and Presbyterian churches, the Uniting Church in Australia (UCA) has sought to reflect on the particular circumstances and challenges faced by Australian society. A visionary 1977 Statement to the Nation declared, *inter alia*, that:

We are concerned with the basic human rights of future generations and will urge the wise use of energy, the protection of the environment and the replenishment of the earth's resources for their use and enjoyment.¹

In Australia's bicentennial year, 1988, the 1977 Statement was re-affirmed and strengthened with the following words:

We affirm our belief that the natural world is God's creation: good in God's eyes, good in itself and good in sustaining human life. Recognising the vulnerability of the life and resources of creation, we will work to promote the responsible management, use and occupation of the earth by human societies. We will seek to identify and challenge all structures and attitudes which perpetuate and confound the destruction of creation.²

In 2006 the national Assembly of the Uniting Church adopted a formal statement on climate change called "For the Sake of the Planet and all its People". The statement included the following policy:

Encourage Uniting Church members to advocate for government to implement policies that significantly reduce our dependence on fossil fuels and increase our use of non-nuclear renewable energy sources.³

Since that resolution Uniting Church synods (state bodies owning UCA property and governed by Acts of State Parliament) have either commenced or concluded divestment in fossil fuels.

Accordingly we believe that Australia should be actively making a transition from thermal coal to renewable energy and that the *Galilee Basin (Coal Prohibition) Bill 2018* is a constructive move in assisting the Australian transition to renewable energy.

Yours sincerely



Allison Forrest
CHAIRPERSON



Rev Dr Margaret Mayman
MINISTER

¹ For a comprehensive compendium of Uniting Church statements on society, including the environment, see Cynthia Coghill and Elenie Poulos (Eds), *For a World Reconciled: Justice Statements from the Uniting Church in Australia 1977-2015*, Sydney: Uniting Church in Australia Assembly, 2016, pp 6.

² Ibid., p.9.

³ Ibid., p.246.