

# Pacific Ecologist

ISSN 1175 6543

[www.pirm.org.nz](http://www.pirm.org.nz)

[www.pacificecologist.org](http://www.pacificecologist.org)

Journal of the Pacific Institute of Resource Management (PIRM)

in association with *The Ecologist* (UK)

Director EDWARD GOLDSMITH

Editor KAY WEIR

Editorial committee Noeline Gannaway, Peter Healy, Dennis Small

Layout & cover Matthew Bartlett

Printer Astra Print, Wellington

**Photos** Inside front cover: [www.kiritours.com/Kirifoto.htm](http://www.kiritours.com/Kirifoto.htm); contents page & back cover: Ministry of Environment, Lands and Agriculture Development, Kiribati; others: Peter Isaac, Joanna Santa Barbara, R.R. Thaman.

**Cartoons** Bas van der Schot, Amsterdam; Chris Madden, UK.

## Contact addresses:

*Pacific Ecologist*/PIRM

PO Box 12125, Wellington, Aotearoa New Zealand

Editorial office: +64 4 939 4553

[pirmeditor@paradise.net.nz](mailto:pirmeditor@paradise.net.nz)

[pirmoffice@paradise.net.nz](mailto:pirmoffice@paradise.net.nz)

[www.pirm.org.nz](http://www.pirm.org.nz) [www.pacificecologist.org](http://www.pacificecologist.org)

## The Ecologist

[www.theecologist.org](http://www.theecologist.org) [editorial@theecologist.org](mailto:editorial@theecologist.org)

Editor Pat Thomas

Founding editor Edward Goldsmith

Director Zac Goldsmith

Art Director Sam Franks

Green Pages editor Matilda Lee

Green Pages assistant Laura Sevier

Health editor Pat Thomas

Science editor Peter Bunyard

Reporters Mark Anslow, Anna daCosta

Researchers Ed Hammer, Alex Baillie, Maggie King,

Merlin Sheldrake, Rebecca Bold, Rosalie Portman

Sub-editors Maggie Allen, Dominic Burns

## Pacific Ecologist Advisory Board

**Jon Barnett** Development Studies, University of Melbourne, Australia

**Sharon Beder** professor, Science, Society & Technology Programme, University of Wollongong, NSW, Australia

**Sunitha Bisan** president, Management Institute for Social Change (MINSOC), Malaysia

**Ron Crocombe** founding Professor of Pacific Studies, University of the South Pacific

**'Atu Emberson-Bain** editor, *Sustainable Development or Malignant Growth?* Suva, Fiji

**Moana Jackson Te Hau Tikanga** the Maori Law Commission, Wellington, Aotearoa/New Zealand

**Penehuo Fatu Lefale** Manager, International Cooperation & Development Unit, National Weather Service Dept, Meteorological Service, NZ

**Constant C Mews** director, Centre for Studies on Religion & Theology, Monash University, Victoria, Australia

**Helena Norberg-Hodge**, International Society for Ecology & Culture

**John Peet** University of Canterbury, Aotearoa New Zealand

**Wendy Pond** Manu Waiata Restoration & Protection Society for springs and streams, Orewa, Aotearoa, New Zealand

**Ian Prior** founding member, NZ affiliate International Physicians for Prevention of Nuclear War (IPPN) 1984

**David Robie** Associate professor & director, Pacific Media Centre, Auckland University of Technology, Aotearoa/New Zealand

**Dennis Small** founding member GATT Watchdog, Christchurch, Aotearoa New Zealand

**Teresia Teaiwa** Pacific Studies, Victoria University of Wellington, Aotearoa New Zealand

**Denys Trussell** a founding director, Friends of the Earth (NZ) Ltd, Auckland, Aotearoa New Zealand

**Peter Willis** associate professor, Physics Dept, University of Auckland, Aotearoa New Zealand

## Subscription rates for four issues (2007/08):

New Zealand \$50

South Pacific & Australia A\$50 or NZ\$60

UK £22 or NZ\$60

USA US\$45 or NZ\$60w

## EDITORIAL

## Don't cry for Kiribati, Tuvalu, Marshall Islands, parts of Papua New Guinea, the Caribbean, Bangladesh, Africa...

"It may be too late for Kiribati," said Kiribati's President Anote Tong gently at a public meeting at Victoria University on World Environment Day, hosted in Wellington, NZ, 05/06/08. But perhaps if action is taken other countries can avoid a similar fate, he added. Emissions from global warming already in the atmosphere are enough to submerge his country's low-lying coral atolls when they take effect in a few decades, perhaps within 60 years, he said. Tong is planning for the time his people will no longer have a country and was appealing for more countries to help resettle his people. The highest point on most islands is just two metres above sea level and parts of Kiribati are already underwater, forcing some of its 94,000 people living in shoreline village communities to be relocated from centuries-old sites. For a leader to have to make plans to move his people from celestially beautiful islands, where their ancestors have lived successfully for thousands of years is tragic, even more so when you know it's not an act of nature, but through global warming caused by the lifestyles of people in rich countries like New Zealand and Australia. Tuvalu and the Marshall Islands are similarly affected, Tong said. So also are parts of Papua New Guinea and low-lying islands of the Caribbean and Bangladesh. Africa too is badly affected by drought, preventing crops from growing, a predicted effect of higher temperatures caused by warming (see p.31). For people in small island nations, ultimately there's no effective adaptation techniques other than an exodus to other countries hopefully willing to take them, because there are no high mountains for retreat. For Africans, little can be done to adapt once temperatures rise above the level at which food can grow. You simply starve, which is what is already happening.

Would any of us like to be in the position of people starving in Kenya, or Kiribati's people, begging for countries who have caused the problem to give you a place to live? It's pleasing New Zealand is taking some Kiribati families – 75 people yearly – and is offering more aid. But it's unpleasant knowing New Zealand has done little to reduce its emissions, which continue to rise, as do Australia's and other rich industrial countries. Ten years have been lost, while countries talked about climate change but didn't act. Now the situation is worse. According to the authoritative 2007 IPCC report, 80% cuts in global emissions are now needed by 2050 to avoid the most terrible outcomes. Australia's Interim Garnaut report commendably supports these cuts, and advises the Australian government it can be done without marked economic cost. But as Ted Trainer inquires in his article (p.25), how will it be possible to cut dependence on fossil fuels by 80–90% by 2050 and shift to alternative energy while the economy, under current economic imperatives, becomes four times as big by 2050? Trainer challenges anyone who doesn't agree with his calculations to show how this can be done. How can it be done in any consumer society?

President Tong, a graduate of the London School of Economics, said climate change "is not an issue of economic development, but an issue of human survival." According to the mad utopia of growth economics and the dogma of unregulated free markets, economic development is more important than human survival and the environment on which economics and all life depends. Biological, geological realities are looming however, to bring our castle in the air crashing to earth. Fossil fuel oil and gas are depleting, and there's no getting away from it, and no alternatives to replace the vast amounts of energy required by continually growing consumer societies on a global basis. We would need nine earths to do it, as the UN Human Development reports (p.12). Additionally, as Geoffrey Glasby says (p.15), if economic growth continues to rise over the next decades, we are on course within this century: "to overwhelm the natural environment on which we depend for our tenure on this planet." The question is, as Richard Heinberg says (p.5), will societies contract and simplify intelligently, or in an uncontrolled, chaotic fashion? ■ Kay Weir