

*Women's International League for Peace and Freedom  
Ligue internationale des femmes pour la paix et la liberté  
Liga Internacional de Mujeres por la Paz y la Libertad  
Internationale Frauenliga für Frieden und Freiheit*

**Consultative Status with United Nations ECOSOC, UNCTAD and UNESCO**

**Special Consultative Relations with FAO, ILO and UNICEF**

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31 January 2008

Hon Peter Garrett MP  
Minister for the Environment  
PO Box 6022  
House of Representatives  
Parliament House  
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Dear Minister,

Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF) is a ninety-two year old, non-government organisation campaigning on disarmament, resolution of conflict by non-violent means, sustainable environment and women's rights.

We write now on behalf of the Australian Section of our organisation to congratulate you on the election result of November last year and also to congratulate you on your appointment as Minister for the Environment.

We welcome your appointment as a person with a profound understanding of the environment and as a former President of the Australian Conservation Foundation. We believe that it is fair to say that no Federal Environment Minister has ever had the understanding and experience on these issues that you now bring to the Ministry. Climate change, acidification of the oceans, melting of ice caps, irresponsible mining (particularly uranium mining) rather than husbanding of fisheries, forests, water and soils, the pollution of air, land and waters are all matters demanding very urgent redress. In last November's Federal election, the Australian people indicated that they wanted a new government to effectively address these pressing concerns.

WILPF welcomes your government's ratification of the Kyoto Protocol.

We recall Barry Commoner's distinction between the three basic systems - the ecosystem, the production system and the economic system. For too long, precedence has been given by politicians both in Australia and elsewhere to the economic over the ecosystem. We hope that your new government will not delay in signalling a new direction for interactions among the three basic systems.

To quote Barry Commoner again:

“The environmental crisis tells us that the ecosystem has been disastrously affected by the design of the modern production system, which has been developed with almost no regard for compatibility with the environment or for the efficient use of energy. ... In turn, the faulty design of the production system has been imposed upon it by the economic system, which invests for increased profits rather than environmental compatibility or efficient use of resources. ... Thus what confronts us is not a series of separate crises, but a single basic defect – a fault that lies deep in the design of modern society.”

Barry Commoner's words (from *The Poverty of Power*) were penned more than thirty years ago. The problem he described is even graver and more urgent today. WILPF hopes that, even in your first term, your government will be able to address the “single basic defect. ... The governing influence should flow from the ecosystem ... not the other way around.”

WILPF hopes that you will be pleased to receive our submissions on these and related matters from time to time.

Once again, our best wishes for your appointment as Minister for the Environment.

Yours sincerely,

Cathy Picone and Ruth Russell  
Joint National Coordinators