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**World Vision-Political Engagement Workshop**  
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Thank you for the invitation to speak with you this afternoon. I am very encouraged and excited by the evidence all around me this year of young people campaigning passionately for a better world. Young people urging me, and my parliamentary colleagues and other public policy makers, to have more regard for people less fortunate than ourselves around the world, to have more regard for the kind of world we are handing on to our children and grandchildren. Young people urging us to be less greedy, less selfish, less obsessed with money.

Let me give you a few brief examples of this flowering of activity by young people. On the evening of Anzac Day, a bitterly cold night, I went to Royal Park to speak with hundreds of young people from Invisible Children, which is dedicated to rescuing the child soldiers enslaved by the Lord's Resistance Army of Uganda.

The commitment of those young people to that remote, yet incredibly important cause, was outstanding.

And just two and a half weeks ago the Micah Challenge Voices for Justice came to Parliament House in Canberra and spent the week campaigning around Parliament in support of an increase in Australia's overseas aid budget to the United Nations 0.7% target, and campaigning in support of action to achieve the Millennium Development Goals.

Then there is the work of Australia's United Nations Youth Representative Chris Varney. Chris is an incredibly impressive young man who has been travelling around Australia listening to the views of young people and making it his mission to see that those views get heard in the corridors of power in Canberra, and indeed right round the world - he is taking them all the way to New York. Chris and I held a Forum at Box Forest Secondary College a few weeks ago to give senior students from that school, and from Fawkner Secondary College also, the opportunity to put their views. It was a great thing to see students taking this chance, tentatively at first, but with increasing confidence and conviction as the morning unfolded.

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One project I want to particularly congratulate you for is the youth climate vote - a joint project of the Australian Youth Climate Coalition and World Vision.

There is no doubt in my mind that climate change - global heating - is the great moral challenge of our time. We have been living beyond our means. We have been treating the earth as a business in liquidation. It has to stop.

And you should be proud of the fact that it is young people who are most aware of this issue. One of my constituents, Admir Bajrami, who happens to be a Humanitarian and Emergency Affairs Program Officer with World Vision Australia, sent me an email to bring to my attention the results of this national youth climate change vote - Australia's first - called Youth Decide. Over 36,000 young people voted in Youth Decide, a mighty response reflecting both the level of awareness and concern young people have about the issue, and also the hard work put in by World Vision Australia and the Australian Youth Climate Coalition. 91.5% of the 36,000 voted to support greenhouse gas cuts of 40% or more by 2020, 6% voted for cuts between 25 and 40% by 2020, and 2.5% voted for cuts of 4-24% by 2020.

So it is very clear that young people want drastic action to tackle an urgent problem.

It is impossible to exaggerate the importance of the forthcoming conference in Copenhagen. The last climate change conference of comparable significance was in Kyoto in 1997, when the famous Kyoto Protocol was hammered out, which sets targets for developed countries for the period ending 2008-12, called the first commitment period.

Copenhagen is about what we do after 2012 - the second commitment period. Now scientists are saying that our chance to halt global temperature rise at less than 2 degrees Celsius turns on action to halt the carbon concentration in the atmosphere during a 20 year window, and we're already half way into the 20 years, so Copenhagen is incredibly important.

In the battle to tackle climate change, every country must play its part. There cannot be any passengers. Developing countries must be part of the solution. I understand absolutely their irritation, bordering on disgust, that wealthy countries, having damaged the atmosphere by pumping carbon into it in their pursuit of affluence, now look like they want to pull up the drawbridge and leave the poorer countries locked into perpetual poverty. I understand that indignation completely. But there is no point in the developed countries cutting their emissions if the developing countries simply take up the slack by increasing their own emissions. There needs to be a path to prosperity for the developing countries which does not involve more carbon emissions and does not involve trashing the planet.

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So developing countries must be part of the solution. But developed countries have a role to play in enabling this to happen. We need to provide financial support to protect tropical rainforests as carbon sinks, and promote renewable energy such as solar, wind and geothermal technologies.

For this reason, and for others, I support Australia lifting its international aid contribution. As most of you will know, in 1970 the United Nations General Assembly adopted an international aid target of 0.7% - that richer nations like Australia should devote 0.7% of their national income in aid to poorer countries.

In the forty years since then most developed nations have failed to reach the target, and Australia is well down the list at around 0.35% - only half of what we agreed to back in 1970. Australia has committed to raise this to 0.5% by 2015. What would it take to meet the 0.7% target? Make Poverty History and Micah Challenge produced a report in 2008 proposing a lift from \$3.8 billion in 2009-10 (0.35%) to \$9.2 billion (0.7%) by 2015-16. The rate of increase under this proposal, set in constant prices, would be around \$350 million in 2010-11 and a bit over \$1 billion in 2011-12. Now this money has to come from somewhere. Options which have merit in my view include scrapping the \$1.5 billion fringe benefit tax concession for company cars, and also trimming fat from the defence budget by buying off the shelf military equipment rather than engaging in incredibly expensive modifications – for example, the Air Warfare Destroyer project cost double the initial estimate of \$3.5 to \$4.5 billion, to be \$7.5 billion. So too did the Amphibious Vessel project, initially estimated at \$1.5 to \$2 billion, and finishing at \$3 billion. The benefits from achieving this would be great indeed. Australia could hold its head up high in the international community, and encourage other developed nations to also meet the target. The extra money would help us meet the Millennium Development Goals, and help us promote renewable energy and protect tropical forests.

Another thing that needs to be done to get serious outcomes from Copenhagen is to put population on the Copenhagen agenda. I know questions of population growth and overpopulation are controversial and fraught with peril, with difficult religious and racial overtones. I also know that population is not the only factor driving carbon emissions - lifestyle and technology are of course also critical. But Al Gore correctly identified it as one of the big three drivers of increased carbon emissions. And cutting emissions by 60% or 80% by 2050, while population rises by 60% by 2050, is like trying to fight a battle with both hands tied behind your back. It is like trying to go down the up escalator. Some of you will have heard of voodoo economics - well claiming there is no link between population numbers and carbon emissions is voodoo environmentalism.

Population needs to be talked about at Copenhagen.

Thank you.