

STUDENT CLIMATE STRIKE

STATEMENT BY BISHOP PETER STUART

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Response from Bishop Peter Stuart, the Anglican Bishop of Newcastle

I grew up in Tasmania and was in school when the community debated the proposal to Dam the Franklin. I recall a student march in 1979 or 1980. My memory is that we didn't have to strike to be part of this student march. The voice of the people was an important part of changing that reckless proposal. I was one of the 45% of the voting population who wrote "no dams" in the 1981 referendum.

Today's students will become tomorrow's leaders. Their voice makes an impact right now. It is important that they have a voice on things that affect them now and into the future. Our society is enriched when our young people care about issues and give voice to their concerns. One of the highest priority issues has to be climate and the sustainability of our world.

I am interested in the best of both worlds. I don't think it should be necessary for students to strike as if their teachers, their families and their schools don't share deep ecological concern for the planet. I worry when students lose educational time where their knowledge, creativity and critical thinking are developed. I am challenged by the fact that we have fewer forums for young people to express their views than we once did. Perhaps we need a student 'getup'! It would be good for schools to rejuvenate opportunities for student voice especially on significant issues.