

Using a synod motion to advocate for lower carbon emissions

In 2020 the AARCC (Auckland Anglican Response to the Climate Crisis) Group put forward Motion 14 on Climate Change Risk Disclosure to the November Synod. The motion was carried:

"THAT this Synod, supports the proposal by the New Zealand Government, in accordance with international best practice, to require mandatory, publicly-available climate change risk disclosure by publicly-listed companies, banks, general insurers, asset owners and asset managers, finance firms, and large non-listed companies."

Then, in April 2021, the Financial Sector (Climate-related Disclosures and Other Matters) Amendment Bill on this topic was introduced to Parliament with the first reading on 15 April.

The AARCC Group drafted a submission on the proposed Bill and then discussed it further to agree that we supported the Bill but it would be much stronger if threshold criteria were lowered and crown entities were included (submission attached). As a faith community we are greatly concerned by the implications of climate change for vulnerable communities and on the environment and this Bill did not go far enough.

Bishop Ross then wrote a letter to the Prime Minister in support of the Bill while advocating for more business entities to be involved.

Submissions to the Economic Development, Science and Innovation Committee closed on 28 May and the Select Committee then heard oral submissions in June. Vicky Mee spoke on behalf of AARCC on 24 June and the oral submission is attached.

The Select Committee heard our concerns about the Bill not being ambitious enough. This position was further reinforced by the Climate Change Commission's final report coming out and reminding us all that the pace of change needed to ramp up if New Zealand is to reach target emissions. The committee understood that our concern was with the big picture (the health of the planet and justice issues) and not the technical details of the Bill which was the focus of most submitters.

The Committee asked about the size of the group and the core support and Vicky was able to tell them a little about AARCC (including the work of ACAN for many years) and the support of Synod for the motion. There was also time to explain about the Diocese having a Sustainability Field Worker and Sustainability Champions in many ministry units and talk about what we as a church were doing. The Committee said that our concerns would be considered when they brought together all submissions on this Bill to begin the task of assessing any changes before the second reading.

The report from the Committee is due by 16 August and it will be interesting to see if our recommendations that the threshold criteria be broadened, and crown entities included is picked up on.

Synod 2020's Motion 14 highlights the power of synod motions to raise awareness of issues in our church community and to strongly position ourselves as advocates for change using an agreed position that we, as Synod, have voted on and passed.

Note: The AARCC Group came about through collaboration between the Anglican Climate Action Network (ACAN – now disbanded), Adjust and the Social Justice Group.