

## **BISHOP PETER STUART'S RESPONSE TO A REQUEST FROM THE AUSTRALIAN FOR COMMENT ON DIVESTMENT OF SHARES IN COMPANIES INVOLVED IN FOSSIL FUEL EXTRACTION – 17 OCTOBER 2014**

Dr Peter Stuart said,

*The way the Anglican Church is organised in Australia means that each Diocese considers an idea or recommendation from the General Synod when or if it wants too. This means that Dioceses consider proposals at different times and in different ways.*

*The Synod for the Diocese of Newcastle is not considering any proposal this year in relation to how fossil fuel industries might feature in our investment portfolios. The Synod has listened carefully in the past to major presentations on the environment most recently on the damage posed by coal seam gas extraction.*

*For us any action like disinvestment is more than a powerful symbol. We would be speaking directly to parishioners and communities whose livelihoods would be profoundly changed if coal-mining ceased. No one is yet putting forward viable alternatives that could be embraced in this region. Our region already experiences significant youth unemployment. It is already seeing the huge social impact from a mining downturn yet alone its cessation. At the same time I have heard personally from bishops in the South Pacific who make it clear that climate change is not a future possibility but a present reality that is devastating their island communities and is only set to get worse.*

*I am so disappointed that neither the current or previous government has put forward a vision for an ecologically sustainable future through which they invest the resources that are necessary for communities like ours to make the profound changes that moving away from fossil fuels require.*

*Anglicans in Newcastle are committed to environmental responsibility. We need government to offer leadership that enables people of Pacific communities and our community to embrace a positive, sustainable future.*

Dr Peter Stuart has been the Assistant Bishop of Newcastle since 2009 and is a member of the Anglican General Synod and its Public Affairs Commission.

Disclosure

Dr Stuart places on record that he is related by marriage to a senior executive with Thiess - Australian Mining but advises that this matter has never been the subject of conversation between them.