

## Election forum 2020: Young people question political representatives on climate change

Wellington Archdiocese's Ecology, Justice and Peace Commission organised a pre-election forum on climate change on 1 September. Chaired by Areti Metuamate, there was a small live audience and others watching online then or later. Much of the preparation, and all the questions to politicians, were in the hands of Catholic students - Xyryll Gayagoy, Joel Tebbs, Lewis Johnson, Morgyn Jakob, Aurélie Bray, and Sithmi Sathruwani. Political parties represented were New Zealand First (Taylor Arneil), the Māori Party (Debbie Ngarewa-Packer), the Greens (James Shaw), the Opportunities Party (Geoff Simmons), National (Scott Simpson), and Labour (Angie Warren-Clark).

Cardinal John (beautifully supported by a St Mary's College waiata group) opened with a reminder that climate change has the most impact on those who do least to cause it, and stressed the importance of thinking beyond a 3-year electoral cycle. He urged everyone listening to bear young people's commitment in mind on voting day.

The party representatives were questioned on their commitment to education on climate change, to reducing agricultural emissions, to policies shaped by the Māori values of kaitiakitanga and manaakitanga, to supporting the economically disadvantaged, to drastically reducing plastic waste, and to reforming transport policy.

Discussion was thoughtful. James Shaw observed that the student strikes for climate last year were instrumental in the Zero Carbon Act being passed in its final form, and Scott Simpson stressed that young people were educating their elders. Science and ethics met constructively; there was general agreement about the need to engage people and build consensus, while encouraging significant social and economic change.

Climate change is an urgent problem, and students noted that there is no shortage of information, nor of understanding about what needs to happen. There are comprehensive reports from entities like the Parliamentary Commissioner for the Environment and the Productivity Commission. Cardinal John, in closing, urged politicians to listen to 'the active, urgent voices of today's young people... to be very bold'.



Photo credit: Mareta Tana, Caritas Aotearoa New Zealand Ecology, Justice and Peace Commission's Election Forum on environmental and climate change issues.

Left to right: Areti Metuamate (Chair), Taylor Arneil (NZ First), Debbie Ngarewa-Packer (Māori party), Hon James Shaw (Green party), Geoff Simmons (TOP), Hon Scott Simpson (National), Angie Warren-Clark (Labour), Cardinal John Dew (standing), St Mary's College waiata group.