



POLICY

Ecological Stewardship

September 2020

1. Vision/Mission

*'To Yahweh belongs the earth and all it holds,
Creation and all who dwell in it.'* Ps 24:1

The mystery of God's love is present throughout the cosmos. The story of the universe is the story of God's imagination made manifest. Through Scripture, God invites us to participate in the infinite beauty and goodness of creation. Humanity has a responsibility to honour and recognize our inextricable link to the universe, our common home. As a Catholic community, we are called to be stewards of God's universe. This requires us to experience creation as a call to ecological justice, peace and deep communion. This is embedded in the wisdom of the mystics including Hildegard of Bingen, Meister Eckhart, Julian of Norwich and Teilhard de Chardin.

Today, Pope Francis challenges us to hear the cry of our earth in crisis that has grown out of human greed and exploitation. Humanity must come to a place of deep spiritual conversion that recognises our oneness with God's creation. We also learn from the wisdom and knowledge of Aboriginal spirituality. The Aboriginal people model for us, the importance of interconnection, custodianship and identity that helps define their relationship with country.

2. Purpose

To encourage a new imagination for ecological stewardship that incorporates education at its core. To develop the understanding of sustainability which acknowledges that there is an integration between all living things. This relates to the social, political, natural and economic aspects of today's world. Sustainability promotes careful use of all resources so they are not depleted or permanently damaged.

Aims

At the Sandhurst Catholic education office, we are committed to a sustainable future for all. This policy aims to:

- promote and celebrate creation through education.
- assist in developing sustainable attitudes and practices that grow out of the wisdom found in Scripture and the Catholic tradition.

- invite CES staff to become authentic witnesses who are confident in their understanding of sustainability and their moral responsibility towards God’s creation.
- ensure that ecological stewardship becomes central to prayer, liturgy, pedagogy and wellbeing.
- assist CES staff to set attainable targets that respect coexistence, acknowledge interconnectedness and reduce the abuse of creation.
- encourage the celebration of our covenant relationship with God.

Audience

The target audience for this policy is the Catholic Education Sandhurst office staff.

*“But ask the animals, and they will teach you,
or the birds in the sky, and they will tell you;
or speak to the earth, and it will teach you,
or let the fish in the sea inform you.
Which of all these does not know
that the hand of the Lord has done this?
In his hand is the life of every creature
and the breath of all mankind.”*

Job 12: 7-10

3. Principles

Ecological Stewardship

- acknowledges all of creation as a sacred expression of the living God
- calls all to promote care for creation and acknowledge the interconnected nature of every element that makes up creation
- challenges all to give witness to Christ’s vision of justice and inclusion for all of creation
- recognizes ecological stewardship as a fundamental element of our Christian heritage found in Scripture and tradition
- acknowledges care for creation as a central aspect of Catholic Social Teaching
- invites humanity towards a change of heart that celebrates conversion leading towards a new creation

Sustainability

- acknowledges the importance of living sustainably for the good of all
- recognizes the essential element of all organisms and their fundamental interconnectedness within the intricate and beautiful network of creation
- encourages all to live and act in a manner that reflects a love for creation
- recognizes the dire situation of creation as a result of humanity’s irresponsible actions and behaviors
- promotes humanity’s thoughtful and responsible use of resources

- nurtures a new self-awareness capable of offering our world a radically new way of being that places God and creation at the centre of our being.

4. Roles and Responsibilities

4.1. Approval Authority

Approval by the Director of Catholic Education, in consultation with the Directorate

4.2. Responsible Officer

Deputy Director: Catholic Mission and Identity

Other Roles

All CES staff members have a responsibility to comply with and follow the procedures outlined in this policy.

The sustainability reference group chair will be responsible for communication with CES staff, raising awareness with office staff and the chairing of meetings with the sustainability reference group.

The sustainability reference group will support the leader of sustainability and assist with the promotion and communication of best practice in sustainability.

5. Review

Implementation date: 1 September 2020

Review Date: 1 September 2022

6. Revisions made to this document

Date	Description of Revision(s)
13/8/20	New Document approved by Director of Catholic Education

Procedures

The following procedures outline how CES office staff will respond to the stewardship of creation policy.

At the Catholic education office we will:

Promote

- embed the principles of *Kinship With the Earth* into our daily lives at work
- educate office personnel about ecological justice, stewardship of creation and care for our common home
- educate office personnel about Church documents including *Laudato Si* and other key resources linked to creation

Lead

- value and promote a sustainable future for all
- develop and enact an ecological stewardship policy
- embed creation spirituality into the prayer and liturgical life of the office
- make ethically sound choices about energy, water and waste
- access sustainability grants to improve sustainable practice
- use a green procurement checklist when purchasing resources
- develop an office sustainability leadership team
- incorporate sustainable design and practice in master planning
- ensure that all improvements in sustainability are celebrated
- provide staff personnel to represent the office at the *Victorian Catholic Cross Diocesan Sustainability Reference Group* and other key stakeholders
- ensure that the role of sustainability leader is an ongoing role in the office

Refuse, Reduce, Reuse

- work towards all catering resources becoming plastic free and sustainable where possible
- set targets to significantly reduce single use plastics
- promote the use of personal keep cups, water bottles and tap water wherever possible
- reduce the use of paper where possible (ecommunication, eprayer and liturgy and two sided printing)
- making use of mobile phones and ipads for accessing documents
- promote the shredding of paper to be recycled for other means
- harvest water through the introduction of water tanks, if possible

- reduce our food waste through introducing a 4 way waste stream (soft plastics, paper and glass, organic matter and landfill)
- reduce food waste, in particular, with office catering
- considered use of our vehicles and where possible to conduct meetings online to prevent excess car use and the pollution they cause.

Appendix 1: Glossary

Aboriginal Spirituality

Aboriginal spirituality is the philosophical basis of a culturally derived and holistic concept of 'personhood'. It refers to the nature of relationships to others and to the natural world and the core of 'Indigenous Knowledges' for the country and the people.

Catholic Social Teaching

Catholic Social Teaching refers to the Catholic doctrine on matters of human dignity and common good in society. It address oppression, the role of the state, subsidiarity, social organization, concern for social justice and issues of wealth distribution. Its foundations are widely considered to have been laid by Pope Leo XIII's 1891 encyclical letter Rerum Novarum that advocated economic distributism. Its roots can be traced to the writings of Catholic thinkers such as Thomas Aquinas and Augustine of Hippo.

Conversion

In the context of the Catholic faith conversion finds its roots in the Greek term, metanoia. It is understood as a transformation of heart. The term suggests repudiation, change of mind, repentance and atonement. It also refers to a radical reorientation of one's whole life from sin, and toward God. This change of heart is a central element of Judaism and Christ's preaching, of the Church's ministry of evangelization and of the Sacrament of Penance and Reconciliation.

Cosmos

The cosmos refers to the universe as a complex and orderly system or entity. The cosmos and our understanding of the reasons for its existence and significance, are studied in cosmology – a very broad discipline covering science, religion, and philosophy. Within the Catholic faith there is a recognition of the integral role evolution played in the development of the cosmos. God's presence is central to this 14.6 billion year old story that celebrates hope, promise and eternal life.

Covenant

Covenant is defined as a solemn agreement between human beings or between God and a human being involving mutual commitments. The Bible refers to God's covenants with Noah, Abraham, and Moses as leader of the chosen people, Israel. In the New Testament Christ established a new and eternal covenant through his own sacrificial death and Resurrection.

Ecological Stewardship

'Creatures exist only in dependence on each other, to complete each other, in the service of each other.' (CCC, n. 340) *This understanding lies at the heart of ecological stewardship. Any concept of humanity's superiority over nature, which has led to the destruction of ecosystems and the environmental services they provide, must change. Humanity holds a God given responsibility to care for our common home as a thing of gift, beauty and Sacred mystery. This call to stewardship finds its origins in Scripture which celebrates humanity's deep interconnection to creation and the value of every creature that contributes to the intricate network of possibility that comprises the entire cosmos.*

Mystics

The term mystics is derived from the Greek word 'mysterion' meaning mystery. It describes individuals whose deep prayer life includes meditation from which they gain wise spiritual understanding and insight. Mystics have made a significant contribution to Catholic spirituality throughout the ages.

Scripture

Scripture is comprised of the inspired writings found in the Old and New Testament. These writings were compiled into the Bible in the 4th century. All writings found in Scripture are considered sacred. Throughout history, the scriptures have been influenced by their surrounding socio, political and religious context. Today, Scripture is understood as a key source of God's revelation to the world alongside creation, Christ and humanity.

Sustainability

Sustainability encompasses many areas of human life and development. These areas include the economic, environmental, social and political aspects of our reality. Currently, there is a strong emphasis on the integration of thinking and action around ecological, social, political and economic systems. Acknowledgement of the complex relationships between these four systems is understood as critical to achieving a sustainable future for all. At the heart of sustainability is the call to use all resources wisely and with prudence. Living sustainably invites all to live well and leave the earth in a better place than we found it.