



Laudato Si School Reflection

St Patrick's Catholic Primary School, Port Kembla

March 9, 2022



Introductory Statement

St Patrick's Catholic Primary School is a Catholic systemic co-educational school which has serviced the educational needs of the community of Port Kembla for over nine decades. Throughout the period of operation, St Patrick's has maintained a commitment to the delivery of a primary schooling experience in the best Catholic tradition.

Currently a single-streamed primary school, the school has an enrollment of about 170 students spread in class cohorts from Kindergarten to Year 6. The majority of students are second-generation Australian, come from increasingly diverse socio-economic backgrounds and from a large feeder area encompassing 12 suburbs.

Thanks to funding from the National Partnership program a permaculture garden was established in 2014 with the official opening of the garden in 2016. It was named The Living Classroom and this space is central to many of the ecological and sustainable actions and activities of the school community.

Here at St Patrick's students are encouraged to perpetuate the Josephite and Franciscan charisms of the school's founding Religious orders. Central to this is the Franciscan call to environmental stewardship of the planet and the MacKillop commitment to meeting the needs of the disadvantaged. The school's commitment to its traditional charisms is evident in its policies, social justice programs and in the prayer life of the community.

This School Environmental Management Plan (SEMP) is a tool that will enable us to document, implement, reflect and celebrate sustainability as we respond to the challenges from Laudato Si' to walk our own journey of ecological conversion. At St Patrick's we understand that we have a missionary and ecclesial mandate that impels us to participate and respond to the call to care for our common home with strategic planning, formation and concrete actions and it is within this context that this SEMP is formulated.

About the Local Environment and Community

The school is located between O'Donnell and Kembla Streets, in the industrial heart of the Illawarra. St Patrick's is surrounded by picturesque beaches and also heavy industry, such as BlueScope and thus has had a history of environmental issues that have impacted on the school community in various ways. The creation of The Living Classroom in 2014 has been a significant response to the call to care for our common home in a challenging location.

St Patrick's is a deeply multi-cultural community that has been shaped and formed by the establishment of industry and employment opportunities from post war immigration and the growth of the steel industry.

The school has undergone major building works that include a new school building encompassing K-6 general learning areas, new canteen, outdoor learning area and toilets. There are break-out spaces and a reading recovery space. The existing buildings have been renovated with some areas becoming Parish property with others becoming an Office administration and Staffroom.

The Living Classroom was not impacted by the building project. There are plans for the development of a COLA on the school site. This is under consideration.

St Patrick's Catholic Primary School, Port Kembla belongs to the system of schools in Catholic Education Diocese of Wollongong

Since 2015 following the release of Laudato Si', Catholic Education Diocese of Wollongong has taken seriously Pope Francis' prophetic call for an ecological conversion and has proactively responded in a strategic, planned approach whereby sustainable practices and ecological values are promoted and supported across the system of schools in the Wollongong diocese.

Engagement with eco-spirituality, environmental education and action is a key component of our mission, of being Catholic and is viewed as "core business", not an "optional or a secondary aspect of our Christian experience" (LS n217)

This strategic approach has involved our school, St Patrick's Catholic Primary School embedding ecological values into school programs and practices that promote an ecological and sustainable culture, encouraging everyone to live out his/her ecological vocation and engage in caring for our common home.

St Patrick's Catholic Primary School has been involved in:

- Implementation of CEDoW Environmental Education Action Policy
- School Environment Management Plans (SEMP). We are currently in the process of SEMI
- Our school has been involved in Professional Development- WEN Teacher Contact PD Days and Primary Student WEN Days. This has supported our school in responding to Laudato Si' and implementing environmental stewardship and sustainability
- Our school has also been involved in Staff Formation in eco-spirituality, eco-theology and ecological conversion
- We are a Level 3 Certification Earthcare School

Overview of SEMI Actions and Environmental Education Achievements

- Procedures written for waste management, garden maintenance and Nude Food

Initiative.

- Document the incorporation of ecological themes in liturgy and prayer and acknowledge some key environmental days.
- Introduction of 'Nude Food' as a daily action across the school community.
- Encouraging staff ownership and responsibility in promoting and supporting the school's ecological conversion journey.
- Environmental/Ecological themes integrated into Teaching and Learning Activities. Stronger identification and connection of the cross curriculum priority of sustainability with teaching and learning programs that connect to outdoor spaces.
- Continuation of the permaculture garden - "The Living Classroom". This a "no dig" garden that incorporates exclusively organic materials with no pesticides, poisons and only uses natural fertilisers. It is self-sustaining where the compost generated from the school community is used to build the garden beds and planting. All dead plant debris and matter is reused as "chop and drop" mulch which is integral to a permaculture garden.

[Link to our permaculture garden on our School Website](#)

- Harvest Market - twice a term students harvest produce from the garden and sell it to the community. All funds go back to the maintenance of the garden. BYO bags and "only take what you need".
- Each year the Year 4 class become the Garden Ambassadors. This involves three whole day experiences per term with Sam Mattas and/or Aaron Sorensen.
- Continued use of the school garden as a 'living classroom' incorporating all KLAs.
- Christian meditation in the garden
- Whole School Recycling that includes RED bin - general waste, YELLOW bin - paper, cardboard and GREEN bin - used for composting that goes to the garden.
- Celebration of liturgies with environmental themes.
- Solar panels on the new classroom building and Office Administration building.
- Water tank installed.

The values of our school is highly inspired by:

- [Cry of the Earth, Cry of the Poor](#)
- **Adoption of Simple Lifestyles** - sobriety in the use of resources and energy, avoid single-use plastic, adopt a more plant-based diet and reduce meat consumption, greater use of public transport and avoid polluting modes of transportation
- **Ecological Education** - re-think and re-design educational curricula and educational institution reform in the spirit of integral ecology to create ecological awareness and action, promoting the ecological vocation of young people, teachers and leaders of education
- **Ecological Spirituality** - recover a religious vision of God's creation, encourage greater contact with the natural world in a spirit of wonder, praise, joy and gratitude, promote creation-centred liturgical celebrations, develop ecological

catechesis, prayer, retreats, formation

- **Emphasis on Community Involvement and Participatory Action to care for creation at the local, regional, national and international levels** - promote advocacy and people's campaigns, encourage rootedness in local territory and neighbourhood ecosystems