



LSAP Reflection - 2022

St Mary's Star of the Sea Primary School Milton

Overview

St Mary's Star of the Sea Catholic Primary School belongs to the Catholic system of schools in the Wollongong Diocese. Catholic Education Diocese of Wollongong (CEDoW) is a vibrant learning community made up of 38 Catholic systemic schools – 29 parish primary schools, eight secondary schools and one K-12 school – across the regions of the Illawarra, Macarthur, Shoalhaven and Southern Highlands.

Our school, St Mary's is situated on the lands of the Yuin People. The traditional owners of the lands upon which all of CEDoW schools are built are the Aboriginal peoples of the Dharawal, Tharawal, Gundungurra and Yuin nations. To this day, our Catholic systemic schools are greatly influenced by the life and culture of Aboriginal communities and continue to pay respect to elders past and present.

CEDoW understands that Catholic Schools have a missionary and ecclesial mandate that impels them to listen to the cry of the earth and the cry of the poor. 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)

We are called to respond to the environmental crisis of the 21st Century by proactively engaging with Pope Francis' challenge from *Laudato Si'* for an ecological conversion. Since 2016 CEDoW has intentionally engaged in a strategic, planned approach whereby sustainable practices and ecological values are promoted and supported across the system of schools.

This involves schools embedding ecological values into school programs and practices that promote an ecological and sustainable culture that encourages everyone to live out his/her ecological vocation and engage in caring for our common home.

Key Actions of CEDoW

- Appointment of Professional Officer in 2016 to lead system response to Laudato Si' and the promotion of ecological conversion
- Development and implementation of an Environmental Education Action Policy
- School Environment Management Plans (SEMP)
- Professional Development and Staff Formation in eco-spirituality, eco-theology and ecological conversion
- CEDoW Environmental Education Grants Program
- The [Wollongong Environment Network \(WEN\)](#) that aims to support school communities respond to Laudato Si' and implement environmental stewardship and sustainability
- [WEN Environment Matters Blog](#) - documenting, celebrating and sharing the ecological conversion journey of schools and system

Context for St Mary's Catholic Primary School

Introductory Statement

St Mary Star of the Sea is a one stream Catholic Primary School that is located within the Parish of Milton/Ulladulla and is one of the 30 systemic primary schools that belong to Catholic Education in the Diocese of Wollongong. The school caters for students in Years K-6 and has a current enrolment of 140 students.

St Mary's Star of the Sea Catholic Primary school has a unique history. Originally a part of the Canberra-Goulburn Diocese, it was 1914 when four sisters of the Order of St Joseph arrived to teach the children of the district. During this time the church was used as the school building.

The school remained until 1925 when it closed due to small enrolment numbers. In 1951 with an enrolment list of 64 children the sisters resumed their work providing a Catholic Education for children of the district in a small school located around the corner where the service station is today.

With the establishment of a new Diocese in 1952, St Mary's became a part of the Wollongong Diocese and in 1963 a new school was built in Corks Lane opposite its humble beginnings, the parish church.

Our traditions, values and beliefs are inspired by the charism of St Mary of the Cross and the Sisters of St Joseph and our school community understands the importance of ensuring the school reflects this. Mary MacKillop's words of "Never see a need without doing something about it" hold particular relevance for the ways in which St Mary's responds to the environmental challenges outlined in Laudato Si'.

St Mary's school life operates around our motto, *Help One Another* that inspires us to be of service to our community and our world. We understand the importance of being helpful in our commitment to be sustainable stewards and responsible citizens that contribute to the building of a better future for humanity and our planet.

The Patron Saint of our parish school is St Mary Star of the Sea and her example invites us to consider the ways we care for each other, the world and our environment. We are called to be God's stewards which means managing responsibly the God-given resources we have – our time, our talent and our resources, our treasure. A stewardship lifestyle enhances the relationships we have with God and with one another. Being God's steward means trying to live out a commitment to be more Christ-centred and less self-centred. It involves a conversion of our heart and Laudato Si' Care for Our Common Home calls us to have an ecological conversion, a change in the way we live on this earth.

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 Joseph'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.

Environmental Education Achievements

At St Mary Star of the Sea we have been engaged in various environmental actions and initiatives. The following is an outline of past environmental action:

- Year 6 Environmental Group - involved in education initiatives at assembly, waste surveys, and bin monitoring meets weekly.
- Through the School Chaplaincy Program, the Pastoral Support Worker engages the students in the watering, planting and watering of the vegetables gardens.
- School Families participate in local and state initiatives such as National Tree Day, NAIDOC celebrations, Blessing of the Fleet, Milton Show, Milton Scarecrow Festival.
- School has worked closely with National Parks around their Shore Birds project which aims to raise awareness of endangered shore birds that nest in the local area.
- Waste management includes: RED General Waste, Paper / cardboard into Recycling tub to recycle skip bin, organic waste collected to go into compost spinners, Pink Bin for recycled soft plastics. . RED and PINK (In playground). There is a need to formalise procedures around this and extend the waste management into the Staffroom and Administration areas.
- "Munch and Crunch", whole school green waste is collected daily and the compost is managed by a designated class member.

- Eight vegetable garden beds - strawberries, tomatoes, pumpkins, snow peas, zucchinis, herbs. These are harvested and have been used for soup days, market stalls and general consumption.
- The school has been involved in whole school liturgies connected to environmental themes ie. World Environment Day, Harmony Day, World Day of Prayer for the Care of Creation and the Season of Creation.
- Filtered water stations that encourage the filling of re-useable water bottles that count the number of single use plastic bottles saved.
- To offset the increased use of air conditioning the school has installed solar panels on the roof of Stage One and Two building. Sensor lights are throughout the office and admin areas and Early Stage One and Stage Two classrooms.
- There has been substantial investment in outdoor learning education for Kindergarten and Year Five. This has involved weekly sessions facilitated by Dr Amanda Lloyd plus inservicing for all staff in outdoor learning and education principles. Students have been trained in appropriate behaviour for engaging in outdoor learning environments particularly safe use of sticks when constructing shelters. Shelter building has been strongly embraced not just in outdoor learning lessons but also in general play during lunch time.
- The school has engaged closely with the local Aboriginal community and this has included the celebration of significant days and events. Uncle Noel has visited classes two - three times each term and this is culminating in the Year 4 Indigenous Environmental Camp scheduled for Term Four 2018.
- Staff formation in Laudato Si', eco-theology and spirituality (Who is my Neighbour? Called to Ecological Conversion, Environmental Action Staff Meeting).

This plan fits into whole school planning through the following:

St Mary Star of the Sea is involved in the Catholic Education Office 'School Review and Improvement' process, as are all schools in the Wollongong diocese. Through this we review all aspects of school life, seeking to make improvements in all areas to the betterment of our students. This ongoing improvement continues, especially in the area of sustainability.

This plan connects to whole school planning through the following:

- The school's SRI plan
- Part of the school annual plan
- Reported on in the school annual report
- Integrated with curriculum programs
- Links to extra-curricular activities for students

Environmental Vision

St Mary Star of the Sea School aims to provide programs and practices that care for our common home embedding within the school community a commitment to ecologically sustainable actions that promote and nurture ecological conversion.

Environmental education and action, challenges our perception of teaching and school life, that we might be alert to and create opportunities through the integration of curriculum, prayer and liturgy, resource management, grounds management, whole school planning and school community that contributes to the betterment of our environment and our relationships with one another.

Focus Area Goals (ASSISI Framework)

Across the focus areas the goals of this plan are:

1. Whole School Planning

Environmental Plan (SEMP), Strategic Plan, Governance, Policy, Environmental Team

2. Religious Dimension

Catholic Social Teaching, Celebration, Liturgy, Prayer, Embedding of eco-theology and Catholic Social Teaching principles in RE Curriculum, Formation in eco-spirituality & theology

3. Teaching & Learning

Curriculum, Syllabus Perspectives & Materials, Professional Development, Environmental education integrated into all stages and KLAs, Scope & Sequences for environmental education, Curriculum links to environmental action in school

4. Ethical Resource Use

Individual and School Ecological Footprints, Administrative Practices, Waste Management – recycling, Green catering, purchasing, audits

5. Caring for Country

Physical surrounds & Maintenance, Biodiversity - Grounds developed to enhance environmental education – eg. “Outdoor Living Classroom”, outdoor education, landscaping (equipment, shade, safety and seating reflect an awareness and consideration of environmental impact)

6. Community Relationships

Networks and Partnerships, Student Life

Celebrating Progress

Our school will celebrate progress by:

- Reporting progress in the annual school report.
- Regular updates in the school newsletter and website.
- Relevant displays and events at locations inside the school.
- Student awards and acknowledgment for environmental action.
- Promoted at school assemblies.

- Grants and competitions applied for.
- Sharing the skills, positives and challenges of our school's journey with other schools.