



St John the Evangelist Catholic High School LSAP Reflection



St John the Evangelist High School in Nowra is a systemic co-educational Catholic High School whose purpose is to provide a Catholic education for students from Year 7 to Year 12. The School serves the Shoalhaven and surrounding regions.

The motto of the school is “Pax Christi” - the peace of Christ. We strive to have peace in our hearts, be peace makers, both within the school and the wider community. Our understanding of the Peace of Christ and its implication for living will have an influence on the world at large and on our lives as individuals.

The motto of “Pax Christi” invites each of us to take seriously the call of ecological conversion to live in peace with God’s creation. We need to take seriously the challenge from Laudato Si’ to care for our common home. At St John’s we see that it is crucial that we take action to be sustainable stewards and responsible citizens that contribute to the building of a better future for humanity and our planet.

The school community is also informed by the Benedictine charism of the first Archbishop of Australia, John Bede Polding, which reminds us that all things are holy since they come from the hand of God and so we have a duty ‘to cultivate and take care of’ the good things of God’s creation. This influences our engagement with stewardship and environmental action and education at our school.

Our vision is that St John the Evangelist High School will become known as a compassionate and just educational community based on Catholic traditions.

This School Environmental Management Plan (SEMP) is a tool used by St John’s 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 John’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 our SEMP is formulated.

St John the Evangelist 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.

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 schools embedding ecological values into school programs and practices that promote an ecological and sustainable culture, encouraging everyone involved within the school community to live out his/her ecological vocation and engage in caring for our common home.

At St John's the Evangelist (SJE), we have implemented the CEDoW Environmental Education Action Policy. The CEO Environmental Education and Action Policy states that schools MUST provide regular opportunities for students to engage in ecological learning experiences in outdoor settings within the school grounds or local context. At SJE we have actioned this by creating an outdoor classroom which acts as a space for reflection and learning in nature. Many faculties within our school have used this space as an opportunity to teach about ecological sustainability as well as reflect and meditate on the why behind our ecological conversion journey.

St John's is a member of Wollongong Environment Network (WEN) that aims to support school communities respond to Laudato Si' and implement environmental stewardship and sustainability. This includes involvement at WEN contact days and professional development opportunities along with working closely with the WEN Coordinator to write and implement our School Environmental Management Plan (SEMP).

We have recently completed our first School Environmental Management Plan (SEMP 1) and are in the process of writing SEMP 2 which will take us through until the end of 2024. Some of the environmental achievements SJE thus far include the following:

- Solar panels on Library
- Water tanks from past Government Grants that provide grey water for toilets and also utilised in the Agriculture Curriculum.
- Agriculture is offered as a subject up to the HSC. Garden (viticulture, aquaponics system) and Animal systems in school (Chickens, goats, alpacas) connected into Agriculture curriculum.
- Bushcraft Outdoor Education - Years 9 and 10 (Stage 4)
- Whole School Waste Management system includes - paper recycling, co-mingled recycling, composting and worm farms, plus recycling of printer cartridges, compact fluorescent and batteries.
- Student Environment Group - “JAG” (Johnnie's Action Group)- has conducted waste audits, involvement in garden projects, creation of educational posters and videos and a number of other environmental initiatives. Students have also been involved and represented SJE in a number of environmental conferences and webinars with other schools and the wider community.
- Creation of student films related to environmental issues - “Green Flicks”.
- Sustainability “short” course for Year 9 students in Science - involves small scale waste audits.
- Construction and ongoing use of our school sustainable permaculture garden to produce fruit and vegetables for use in the school canteen and food technology/hospitality classes.
- Construction and use of outdoor classroom across a broad range of key learning area's to promote learning in nature and ecological sustainability.
- Collegiality with social justice coordinators to create an environmental calendar to highlight environmentally important days throughout the year.
- Running the Vinnie's Return and Earn program collecting bottles to return for recycling and then donating any money raised back to St Vincent de Paul.

In addition to the SEMP, St John's has run staff formation in eco-spirituality, eco-theology and ecological conversion through our Staff Spirituality Days in 2021. In 2021, our staff spirituality day was focused around Indigenous culture and through this as a school staff we were engaged in activities that highlighted the Aboriginal people's inherently strong connection to land and country. Through this, staff were moved to reflect on their own connection to country, reflect on their personal and collective impacts on the earth and strive to make change to protect the environment.

This year's school spirituality day is focussed entirely on ecological conversion and staff will participate in a number of environmental sustainability activities around the school such as composting, maintenance of the school sustainable garden and zero waste workshops. The goal of this professional development is to inspire staff to become involved in the environmental initiatives at SJE and realise that it is a collective responsibility to participate in the actions of Laudato Si'.

St John's has been the fortunate recipient of two CEDoW Environmental Education Grants (2019 and 2020). Through acquiring these grants we have been able to construct an outdoor classroom and a school sustainable garden. During 2019, our environmental coordinator along with support from students and staff planned and planted our sustainable garden. The garden follows the practices of permaculture and sustainability and directly relates to the goals of our SEMP and Laudato Si' Action Platform. Our outdoor classroom was constructed in 2020/21 with a goal to create a spiritual space where students can reflect, learn and practice ecological sustainability and conversion. This classroom has been utilised by many faculty areas over the past year.

During 2021, St John's was also successful in receiving a Level 3 Certification as an Earthcare School.

At SJE, we are inspired by the Australian Catholic Bishops' Social Justice Statement – Cry of the Earth, Cry of the Poor and Bishop Brian's Diocesan Pastoral Message. Our school values and initiatives connect directly with the Laudato Si' Goals as listed below.

1. Response to the cry of the earth

- Student environmental committee (Johnnie's Action Group)
- Compost and worm farms
- Other waste management systems including recycling
- Flick the Switch initiative linked to energy efficiency and Earth Hour
- Solar panels on roof of library

2. Response to the cry of the poor

- Initiatives that support and donate to Project Compassion, Vinnies through Christmas Appeal and Winter Appeal, along with other social justice programs.

3. Ecological Economics

- Sustainable permaculture garden
- Petitioning of canteen to use more sustainable products
- Solar panels to reduce reliance on fossil fuels

4. Adoption of sustainable lifestyles

- Promotion of utilising a more sustainable waste management system (eg: composting, comingled recycling, paper recycling and Vinnies return and earn)
- Ongoing education about how to be a more sustainable consumer in students and staffs own lives outside of school.

5. Ecological education

- Sustainability units of work in geography, science and religious education.
- Engagement in WEN Day and other ecological sustainability related professional development

6. Ecological spirituality

- Staff spirituality day linked to ecological conversion
- World Day of Prayer for Care of Creation - whole school liturgy
- Season of Creation activities in the month of September

7. Community resilience and empowerment

- Ongoing upskilling of staff and students to participate in the schools environmental sustainability initiatives
- Participation in community events, conferences and webinars such as Clean Up Australia Day for schools.
- Collaboration with other CEO schools and environmental coordinators in the area.

