



St John's Catholic Primary School

*Encountering Christ through a love of learning,
love of others and service to all*

Laudato Si' Action Platform Reflection

St John's is a three stream Catholic Primary School that is located within the Parish of St John's in Dapto 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 approximately 600 students.

The school vision at St John's is 'Encountering Christ through a love of learning, love of others and service to all' which encourages every student, every staff member, our parents and friends to encounter Christ through all that they do. One of the ways we see this being lived out and experienced is through our 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.

Our community understands the importance of ensuring the school reflects its long tradition in the Josephite charism established by St Mary MacKillop. Her words of "Never seeing a need without doing something about it" hold particular relevance for the ways in which St John's responds to the environmental challenges outlined in Laudato Si'.

St John's 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.

Our school has been actively engaged in the following initiatives:

- Implementation of CEDoW Environmental Education Action Policy
- St John's School Environmental Management Plan (SEMP)
- Professional Development and Staff Formation in eco-spirituality, eco-theology and ecological conversion
- Involvement in CEDoW Environmental Education Grants Program
- Level 3 Certification Earthcare School - Catholic Earthcare Australia wants to acknowledge the good works happening in schools and nurture their development, growing abundance in addressing our ecological challenges so that, we as a church, can lead by example and follow our well-formed hearts with practical steps which engage the whole community in caring for our mother earth.
- Member of Wollongong Environment Network (WEN) that aims to support school communities respond to Laudato Si' and implement environmental stewardship and sustainability

Our 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 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 this SEMP is formulated.

Across the focus areas St John's Catholic Primary School 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

Wollongong Environmental Network

Each year, the WEN contact from each school around the diocese meet so we have a chance to network, share ideas and environmental actions as well as initiatives. This is part of Professional Development throughout the year as well as other 'connection' days with local schools. Our school also participates in Spirituality Days and Environment Days, such as Clean Up Australia Day and World Environment Day. This information is shared with staff and students through Assemblies and Staff Meetings and of course by leading by example. In many cases, staff and students have taken up practices in their homes that they otherwise would not have done.

CEDoW Environmental Education Grants Program

CEDoW's Environmental Education Grants aim to support Diocesan school communities in their journey of ecological conversion, assisting schools in specific environmental projects that are strategically planned for and connected to each school's SEMP (School Environment Management Plan).

These grants support schools to continue to, in the words of Pope Francis, "**care for our common home**" with "simple daily gestures which break with the logic of violence, exploitation and selfishness, [and] actions that seek to build a better world".

St John's have been fortunate to be awarded a grant, to continue to 'Care for our common home'. In 2022, we will use the grant to install a sensory garden area for all students to access.

St John's Catholic Primary Schools Response to the Laudato Si' Goals:

RESPONSE TO THE CRY OF THE EARTH: We have started an environmental committee to address issues of biodiversity and sustainability around the school.

RESPONSE TO THE CRY OF THE POOR: Our school is involved in St Vincent de Paul, the winter appeal and Caritas and Project Compassion which raises funds and connects our students with world wide issues.

ECOLOGICAL ECONOMICS: Staff are encouraged to make sure all lights, projectors and air conditioning is switched off at the end day. Our air conditioners are set to come on and off at set times with minimal flexibility to temperature changes.

ADOPTION OF SUSTAINABLE LIFESTYLES: Staff practises: We are encouraged to reduce printing that is not needed. Staff have been given limits for photocopying. The school has paper recycling containers in each classroom and staffroom. FOGO has been implemented across the school.

Student practises: The environmental committee has tried to encourage at assemblies the reduction of use of single use plastics and correct use of the bins around the playgrounds. The environmental Committee met with the canteen about the reduction of single use of plastics and containers.

ECOLOGICAL EDUCATION: We have established an ecological leadership team with our environmental club and WEN teachers. This student team works with the Religious Educational Coordinator to assist with Environmental Masses and Liturgies. A school wide teaching audit has been completed to ensure ecological understanding and learning across all stages within the school.

ECOLOGICAL SPIRITUALITY: Our school has participated in spirituality days that have an ecological focus eg Who is my neighbour. A call to ecological conversion. The school plans to participate in further spirituality days in the future. Religious Education programs have ecological themes embedded into them.

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 to live out his/her ecological vocation and engage in caring for our common home.