

# Educating for Sustainable Futures in Catholic Schools in Queensland

## Position Statement

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### Introduction

Pope Francis released an encyclical letter, *Laudato Si'* (2015) which calls on every person living on the planet to care for creation (our common home) and take collective action as the world faces global environmental degradation. As stewards of creation the Encyclical offers a unique opportunity for the Catholic community to enter into dialogue on important spiritual, social and environmental issues.

Pope Francis raises the question, “What kind of world do we want to leave to those who come after us, to children who are now growing up?” (*Laudato Si'*, 160).

### Definition

Sustainability addresses the ongoing capacity of Earth to maintain all life. Sustainable patterns of living meet the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their needs. (Australian Curriculum, Sustainability Overview)

Education for sustainability is both present and future oriented. It is about learning to design and implement actions for the present in the knowledge that the impact of these actions may be experienced in the future. (Sustainability Curriculum Framework, 2010)

### Rationale

The duty of protecting the natural environment is shared by all and this challenge should be faced with renewed and concerted commitment so as to hand down to coming generations the prospect of a better future for all. This duty is a life-long learning process necessary to understand and appreciate the interrelatedness of all creation.

A vision for education that encompasses education for sustainability seeks to empower people of all ages to assume responsibility for creating a sustainable future. It enables students to become effective citizens and active change agents by helping them deal with complexity and uncertainty. It also helps them understand that there is rarely a single solution because new knowledge is continuously generated, and diverse viewpoints exist in society. (Sustainability Curriculum Framework, 2010)

In *Laudato Si'*, Pope Francis highlights the important role that education plays... “There is a nobility in the duty to care for creation through little daily actions, and it is wonderful how education can bring about real changes in lifestyle. Education in environmental responsibility can encourage ways of acting which directly and significantly affect the world around us...” (211)

### Position Statement

The Queensland Catholic Education Commission aspires to the creation of a sustainable future through the support of Catholic schooling authorities who take responsibility to establish long-term goals and targets that build capability to create sustainable futures.

“Environmental Education ... needs educators capable of developing an ethics of ecology, and helping people, through effective pedagogy, to grow in solidarity, responsibility and compassionate care.” (*Laudato Si'*, para 210)

## Implications

Catholic school authorities and schools in Queensland may give consideration to:

- developing an ethic of personal responsibility and stewardship which is expressed through caring for God's creation
- understanding and cultivating a sense of spirituality which acknowledges the interconnectedness of all creation (spiritual, social, cultural, economic and ecological dimensions at local, national and global levels, with particular attention to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures)
- adopting a holistic approach to the implementation of sustainable practices which become embedded in all practices, procedures and operations
- providing a curriculum that enhances the learners' understanding, knowledge, values, skills, and competencies for sustainable living which intrinsically includes social justice and participation in society
- developing responsible resource management and innovation, including utilities, facilities and environs
- establishing partnerships, alliances and networks with government, communities, businesses and other school authorities which have as their goal the enhancement of ecologically sustainable practices
- reviewing, communicating and celebrating sustainable practices and achievements with the school community.

## References

Australian Curriculum *Cross-curriculum Priorities Sustainability Overview*

Laudato Si' Encyclical Letter of His Holiness Pope Francis 2015

Sustainability Curriculum Framework - A guide for curriculum developers and policy makers Australian Government Department of the Environment, Water, Heritage and the Arts 2010

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