

Catholic Earthcare Steps of Ecological Dialogue



A Certification Process for Catholic Schools

Catholic Earthcare Australia first initiated the idea of Earthcare schools with the publication of *On Holy Ground* (2005), a seminal document which laid out the case for us to Care for Creation based on the teachings of our church including Pope John Paul II who called us to an ecological conversion.

Now, in 2020, we will trial a certification process for Earthcare schools spirited on by the teachings of Pope Francis, especially in the encyclical of *Laudato Si'*, *On Caring for Our Common Home*, amid an increasingly difficult geo-political environment and state of a Climate Emergency.

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.

A national trial of the certification process for schools and parishes is happening during 2020, with a full program roll out in 2021.

Invitation to be a trial school site.

There will be different criteria set for schools and parishes, reflective of both capacity and opportunity. Trial sites will need to register contact and address details with Catholic Earthcare Australia for monitoring and support purposes, therefore a key contact person must be nominated as well as a representative of the governing body such as the school principal or parish priest.

About Catholic Earthcare certification

Catholic Earthcare schools and parishes is based on a behaviour change methodology and as such requires a whole of organisational engagement around a shared goal for a shared benefit.

In short, if someone was to ask me what is a Catholic Earthcare school, I would describe them as:

- A school that understands the importance of connectivity to nature and local ecology demonstrated through curriculum options for staff and student.
- a school that equips its staff and students with an age appropriate theological and moral understanding of the issues affecting our common home
- a school prepared to evaluate how it has, and will care for our common home through faith inspired actions
- a school whereby students take the lead supported by teachers wherever possible to grow the Catholic leadership of the future.
- a school that ultimately becomes what it professes, aligned to its charism through ecological eyes.
- lastly, it is a school that celebrates, communicates, includes, translates and evangelises others, within and beyond its school fence.

[As Cardinal Turkson in his message to Bishops world-wide, from Portugal \(Feb, 2016\)](#) has said, Laudato Si' relates to the important principles of Catholic social teaching—the common good, human dignity, justice, solidarity, subsidiarity and sustainability. All these come together in an *integral ecology* “which clearly respects its human and social dimensions”. This is necessary because “everything is closely interrelated, and today’s problems call for a vision capable of taking into account every aspect of the global crisis” (§137).

Catholic Earthcare program sites must therefore, ultimately reflect this transformative state through an educative process.

As Pope Francis has written, *Ecological education can take place in a variety of settings: at school, in families, in the media, in catechesis and elsewhere. Good education plants seeds when we are young, and these continue to bear fruit throughout life. [LS 213]* As such, Catholic Earthcare program supports ‘student led change’ as a means of developing the leaders of the future, empowering action from within and releasing their potential.

About the Trial

As a trail site, the school will initiate an audit of their site for current practices in order to celebrate and share current successes. This audit will form the basis of an on-going management plan to direct positive actions. A self-evaluation of the actions will determine effectiveness.

There is no rush to achieve higher certification levels. Level 4 and 5 would be for those sites who have already achieved level 3. What is most important, is setting in place the organisational systems and processes to ensure student led change, based on deep formation of staff and students to drive your Earthcare programs.

*For sites already engaged with an existing sustainability programs such as Victoria’s Resource Smart schools, then during this trial period we want to engage with you to see what works best as far as integrating the two processes. Our principles include recognition of other environmental education program provided the Formation of the Heart and celebration is documented.

Calendar of dates for the trial

Registration:	By the end of February, 2020
Benchmark Audit:	By the end of term 1, 2020
Implementation of Steps	By end of term 3, 2020
Evaluation:	By end of October, 2020
Certification:	By start of December, 2020

Support

Face to face and on-line/ phone support is available upon request with regular contact planned to monitor and support key contact people. Call Bernard on 0400 156 249 or email Director@catholicearthcare.org.au