**Catholic Earthcare Steps to Ecological Dialogue**

**A Certification process for Catholic organisations**

Catholic Earthcare Australia initiated the conversation on becoming an accredited Earthcare school with the publication of On Holy Ground (2005), a seminal document which laid out the case for us to Care for Creation in the teachings of our church back to Pope John XXIII, including Pope John Paul II and Patriarch Bartholemew 1.

In 2020 we will acknowledge 5 years since the publication 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 parishes, schools and health facilities and nurture their development, growing abundance in addressing our ecological challenges and enthuse congregations so that, we as a church, can lead by example, follow our hearts with practical steps which engage the whole community in caring for our mother earth, within our local catholic community and beyond.

In 2005, ‘On Holy Ground’ challenged schools to become Earthcare schools. In 2020, Catholic Earthcare will trial an accreditation process whereby parishes and schools will undertake 8 steps to ecological dialogue to demonstrate a commitment and real outcomes aligned to church teachings and sound ecological practice. Catholic Earthcare is therefore trialling a certification process and criteria during 2020 to set up full program roll out in 2021.

Initially, schools are the first trail process followed by Parishes and health facilities, who have already undertaken much reform because of the positive financial impact it can have on a 24/7 operation.

Please note that Catholic Earthcare certification is based on a national program approach, with dates pinned to state based timeframes.

**Invitation to be an Earthcare registered organisation.**

There will be different criteria set for schools and parishes, reflective of both capacity and opportunity.

Organisations 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.

[As Cardinal Turkson in his message to Bishops world-wide, from Portugal (Feb, 2016)](https://catholicclimatemovement.global/the-essential-message-of-laudato-si-cardinal-peter-turkson-message-to-bishops-worldwide-from-portugal-in-february-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 aims towards reflecting 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]*

A such, the philosophy of our Catholic Earthcare program supports ‘student led change’ as means of developing the leaders of the future, empowering action from within and releasing the potential of our youth and young people.

**About the Earthcare School Program process**

Level 1 The school registers with Catholic Earthcare Australia sharing the Laudato Si’ journey undertaken to date.

This achieves Level 1 (one star) for Catholic Earthcare certification.

The school will then initiate an audit of their site for current practices in order to celebrate and share current successes.

This achieves Level 2 (two star) for Catholic Earthcare certification.

The school will then identify which level of achievement they would then want to achieve in their trail year using the certification criteria.

Level 3 (3 star) would be for those just starting out and level 4 (four star) for more experienced sites.

Level 5 (5 star) is for those schools demonstrating they have a Living an Ecological Vocation culture across the school.

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 drives your Earthcare programs.

\*For sites already engaged with an existing sustainability rating program 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 and recognition.

**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 Gwen on 0432-716577 or email CatholicEarthcare@caritas.org.au