

Long Term Plan for Generational Change of the Australian Catholic Bishops' Conference

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The Australian Catholic Bishops' Conference is an assembly of bishops (32) who are responsible for proclaiming the Catholic faith to the 5 million Catholics who live in Australia. Each bishop (sometimes assisted by auxiliary bishops) is the leader of a diocese of which there are 22. Each bishop is chair of an agency dealing with a specific area of concern for the Church. Agencies are grouped into Commissions for practical purposes and this Plan is presented on behalf of Catholic Earthcare Australia, under which concern for ecology falls.

No bishop has the authority to implement changes in another diocese but each Conference agency can encourage others to adopt its recommendations. This Plan is produced to encourage all dioceses in Australia to incorporate care for the environment into their teaching and practice.

Summary of Recommended Commitments.

We encourage all Catholics to:

Faith-consistent use of assets

- Undertake individual and organisational environmental audits, such as those developed by Catholic Earthcare, for tracking and reporting their progress towards reducing their ecological footprint.
- Undertake an ethical purchasing policy as part of the organisations strategic and environmental management plan (EMP).
- Cultivate and manage land in an ecologically sensitive way.

Education and Young People

- Facilitate formation of adults by providing appropriate learning processes for all co-workers in ecological conversion and sustainability, such as through the ASSISI initiative offered by Catholic Earthcare Australia.
- Develop a sense of awe and wonder for creation in our young people across all subject areas and ground them in a spiritual awareness of the need to care for creation through already existing resources and by keeping these updated and expansive.
- Actively practice green living, gardening and food in all our schools and places of education. We encourage all to develop their "ecological vocation".
- Enable the community to share their experiences/ideas and challenges of undergoing an "ecological conversion".
- Encourage community members to experience intensive transformation programmes and courses, such as those promoted by Catholic Earthcare Australia.

Pastoral Care – theology, tradition and wisdom

- Re-discover and learn more about prophets and saints who cared for creation.
- Re-discover and learn more about scripture and Catholic Social teaching on ecology.
- Use the Sacraments as a means to a deeper understanding of our relationship with God through the gifts of nature.
- Introduce creation centred theology into seminaries.
- Promote environmentally sensitive pilgrimages and discover new routes that deepen our understanding of our past, present and future spiritual relationship with the natural world.

Lifestyles

- Adopt a simple life style that recognises the importance of local, fresh and organic foodstuffs, in their homes and in community outreach.
- Establish a transport policy that incorporates car sharing, cycling or public transport.
- Cut down on, or eradicate if possible, plastics, high energy use, use of hydrocarbons, luxury items from abroad, the use of bottled water and to buy ethically made and produced clothing.
- Observe Lent and Advent as a time of reflection on all our relationships, including creation.

Media and Advocacy

- Explore new media and its potential for informing and inspiring the Catholic community about a spiritual approach to Earth.
- Use Catholic media to its best advantage to inform and disseminate information about what is happening and how we can respond.
- Establish an environment section in communication departments to spread the good news about what is happening and best practice.

Partnerships and Eco-Twinning

- Form collaborative partnerships within and without the Church to gain a greater understanding of ecological issues and how they are affecting local, national and international issues.
- Form eco-twinning relationships with other Catholic communities to learn about environmental issues and share what has been learned on the journey towards sustainability in your own Church community.
- Engage in inter-faith dialogue to learn from other Christian and faith traditions about their approach to ecology.
- Support Catholic Earthcare Australia and the other Justice and Development Commissions agencies and their work on justice, including ecology.

Celebration

- Celebrate local beauty, diversity, challenges and connections in local parishes and communities.

- Recognise a Creation Time in the year and celebrate it with relevant liturgy, prayer and music.
- Celebrate the beauty of creation that is reflected in the local Church grounds and cultivate the grounds with native endemic species so that people enjoy nature where they worship.