



# ST Benedict's Catholic College

## LSAP Reflection



### Introductory Statement:

St Benedict's is a Catholic, systemic co-educational College whose purpose is to provide a Catholic education for students from Year 7 to Year 12.

St Benedict's College offers a comprehensive NESA (NSW Education Standards Authority) curriculum, as well as offering a range of extracurricular activities, to meet the varied needs of our students' development from an academic, personal and social sense of being. The school strives to be an inclusive and pastorally caring place of learning where, in the words of St Benedict *"the strong have something to strive for and the weak have nothing to run from"*.

The St Benedict's school community is informed by the Benedictine charism which reminds us that all things are holy since they come from the hand of God and so we have a duty 'to cultivate and take care of' the good things of God's creation. This influences our engagement with stewardship and environmental action and education at our school.

The motto of the school is "Be My Light" and invites each of us to take seriously the call of ecological conversion to be a light for the world in the way we live with God's creation. We need to take seriously the challenge from *Laudato Si'* to care for our common home. At St Benedict's our Mission statement highlights that we develop a love of learning, a love of neighbour and a love of God and one of the ways we do this is by "practising stewardship". As we listen and respond with the ear of our hearts 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.

This 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 Benedict'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.

### Environmental Vision:

St Benedict's Catholic College 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.

## *Working in Solidarity with schools in the Catholic Diocese of Wollongong*

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.

Through dialogue with the Catholic Diocese of Wollongong, St Benedict's Catholic College has responded to Pope Francis' Prophetic call by:

- Implementing the CEDoW Environmental Education Action Policy.
- Developing a School Environment Management Plans (SEMP) responding to the ecological needs of our local community.
- Engaging in Professional Development and Staff Formation in eco-spirituality, eco-theology and ecological conversion. In 2021, all staff attended a compulsory workshop facilitated by Beth Riolo titled: 'Who is my neighbour? A Call to Ecological Conversion'.
- Engaging in CEDoW Environmental Education Grants Program to assist in putting SEMP goals into action.
- Being an active member of Wollongong Environment Network (WEN) that aims to support school communities to respond to *Laudato Si'* and implement environmental stewardship and sustainability.
- Creating dialogue with all teaching and support staff on environmental initiatives and steps towards implementing SEMP goals.
- Achieving Level 3 Certification Earthcare School.

## *Sources on Catholic Social teaching*

[Australian Catholic Bishops' Social Justice Statement: Cry of the Earth, Cry of the Poor](#)

[Bishop Brian Mascord's Diocesan Pastoral Message](#)

## *The Rule of St Benedict and Laudato Si' Goals*

**The pillars of our Benedictine charism are based on: 'Love of God, Love of Learning, Love of Neighbour'. Together with the values contained within the Rule of St Benedict, our college strives to embrace ecological spirituality, respond to the cry of the earth and poor and foster a resilient Christian community empowered by the teachings of Christ to be a light to the world.**

### **LOVE OF CHRIST AND NEIGHBOUR**

Benedictine life, like that of all Christians, is first and foremost a response to God's astonishing love for humankind, a love expressed in the free gift of God's beloved Son, Jesus Christ. Love, the motive for monastic life and its goal, tops St. Benedict's list of tools for good works (RB 5:10, 7:67-69, 4.1-2). Yet the Rule recognises many ways in which monastics can fail to ground their lives in love. It sets up personal and communal practices that deal directly with human selfishness wherever it occurs and seeks to heal the resulting harm to one's self and others. Ultimately it is the power of God's love that is decisive. Indeed, the crowning good work for the monastic is "never to lose hope in God's mercy" (RB 4:74).

### **STEWARDSHIP**

At its core the Rule seeks to foster a fundamental reverence toward the creation that God has made. St. Benedict exhorts his followers to regard all the tools and goods of the monastery as the sacred vessels of the altar (RB 31.10). Benedictine monastics do not simply use up what has been given to them, nor do they aim to live in poverty. Instead, they prize good stewardship, the respectful use of material things for the good of all, with a special eye to frugality, integrity of form and function, and the capacity of beauty to communicate the presence and power of God.

### **JUSTICE AND PEACE**

The aim of the Benedictine life is to find peace. It is not something that we sit about and wait for - we must pursue it, work for it, set out trying to achieve it. Peace is not another word for passive or disengaged or removed from the world. It is an active ordering of life so that peace is the outcome. Benedict is offering us a way to find peace in our hearts and beyond. Peace is a feature of just communities - disharmony and injustice create tension, jealousy and annoyance. Peace cannot exist in that environment. For peace to reign, justice is fundamental. So a Benedictine community has an inherent desire to bring about justice. This means that we recognise that there is nothing in the world that is not first in the human heart. In all hearts and in our communities, we must seek peace and pursue it.

### **COMMUNITY**

Benedictine monastic community is rooted in a particular place in which mutual service, especially in the mundane areas of everyday life, is demanded of all with no expectation of individual reward. It is a challenge to contribute to a living, flesh and blood community on such terms. The qualities of character that are required are nurtured by the individual community's sense of its mission, the witness of monastic forebears and the broader communion of saints across the ages. The imagination to persevere and thrive in such a life is enriched through the example of communities across the world - monastic and nonmonastic, Christian and non-Christian, religious and non-religious - that make sustained practical efforts to foster human well-being, often in the face of overwhelming obstacles. Though directly grounded in a particular place, the commitments and aspirations of Benedictine life can only bear fruit if they stretch to horizons that are truly universal.

## Focus Area Goals (ASSISI Framework)

Across the focus areas the 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

*Networks and Partnerships, Student Life*

## SEMP Actions:

### Issue 1: Encouraging staff ownership and responsibility in promoting and supporting the school's ecological conversion journey.

**Action:** Sharing of SEMPs and promotion of specific environmental actions that staff can be involved in.

**Action:** Sharing of activities and major projects of “BEARs” with the school community. Recognition of BEARs involvement and commitment.

**Action:** Create a google site that becomes a central point for environmental action, information, policies and procedures.

**Action:** Sharing of good green news stories to a wider audience via the WEN Environment Matters Blog.

### Issue 2: Need for Staff to continue on their ecological conversion journey through formation in eco theology and eco spirituality addressing EEA Policy Expectation 2.4.

**Action:** Staff engage in Spirituality Day exploring ecological conversion, eco theology and eco spirituality with links to the Benedictine charism.

### **Issue 3: Whole School Engagement with the Laudato Si' Action Platform, the seven-year journey towards addressing seven Laudato Si' Goals.**

**Action** Staff engage in professional development on the seven goals of the Laudato Si' Action Platform.

### **Issue 4: Need to ensure that learning and teaching programs reflect ecological themes and the learning across curriculum priority of sustainability. Environmental education is integrated into all stages and KLAs**

**Action:** Staff to identify in their KLA units of work with environmental and sustainability themes and connection with the cross curriculum priority of sustainability of the NESAsyllabuses.

### **Issue 5: Connecting environmental and sustainability themed learning and teaching with a garden/outdoor learning space.**

**Action:** Planning for the construction of the garden expansion.

**Action:** Application for CEDoW Environmental Education Grant.

**Action:** Construction of the garden takes place.

**Action:** Develop whole school procedures outlining roles and responsibilities for garden maintenance and management.

### **Issue 6: To extend and streamline the waste management system (compost, yellow recycling, landfill, Return and Earn, REDcycle soft plastics, batteries) and develop a more shared school involvement, awareness and ownership of waste management and maintenance.**

**Action:** Investigate possibilities for streamered waste management system across the school community.

**Action:** Develop whole school procedures outlining roles and responsibilities for the waste management system and management.

**Action:** Educate and communicate to students, staff and wider school community about the new waste management system compost, garden maintenance and management and procedures.

### **Issue 7: Need to further reduce the School's Ecological Footprint.**

**Action:** WEN Contact to liaise with Principal, administration, school caterers and the canteen supervisor and devise strategies to reduce the waste generated by the canteen, catering for events and the students.

**Action:** Possible development of Green Catering Procedures written for school (P/T and PD days), sporting (Cross country & Athletics carnivals) and hospitality events.

**Action:** Explore possibilities of Waste-free food days and paper-free days for staff and students.

**Action:** Monitoring and reducing electricity usage (lights, computers, air conditioning, fans, data projectors, standby off).

## *Environmental Education Achievements*

At St Benedict's we have been engaged in various environmental actions and initiatives. The following is an outline of past environmental action:

- Solar panels on many of the buildings.
- Water tanks that are currently not in use.
- Whole School Waste Management system includes - paper recycling, co-mingled recycling, worm farms, plus recycling of printer cartridges, and batteries.
- Student Environment Group - BEARs (Bennie's Environmental Representatives) "Sowing the Seeds of Change". Activities have included: introduction of paper recycling, tending and maintenance of vegetable garden, external competitions ie. Speaking 4 the Planet, creation of educational posters and videos and a number of other environmental initiatives (War On Waste competition)
- Scheduling environmental activities on a yearly basis by the BEARs.
- World Day of Prayer for the Care of Creation and Project Compassion involvement, Clean Up Australia Day, World Tree Day
- Recycling of bread tags.