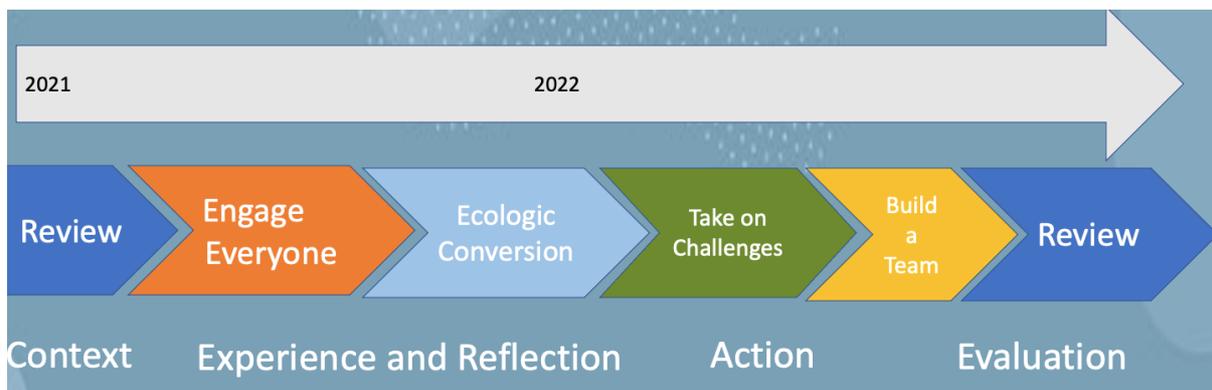


## Caring for Our Common Home: An Ignatian Perspective



*Education in environmental responsibility can encourage ways of acting which directly and significantly affect the world around us. (LS 211)*

Saint Ignatius' College, Riverview is a Jesuit school for boys in Sydney, Australia. In response to the Global Jesuit Network's *Caring for Our Common: An Ignatian Perspective* document, Saint Ignatius' College began developing a strategic plan to engage the whole school community in caring for creation. The Australian Jesuit Ministries *Laudato si'* planning process of review, ecological conversion, engaging everyone and taking action provides the steps for developing the Riverview Caring for Our Common Home Strategic Action Plan. The strategic plan embodies the elements of Ignatian pedagogy: context, experience, reflection, action and evaluation.



The process began last year with conversations with members of the College Executive, Faculty, Parents and Friends group as well as our Alumni (Old Ignatian Union) and the Sustainability Co-ordinator to review our current context and gain an understanding of the sustainability strategies and programs that are already in place at the College.

Ecological conversion is at the heart of engaging everyone in the Riverview plan as through spirituality and education we to come to see, know and love creation as God intended and so bring about a change in heart and change in habit that is needed to reconcile with creation. In Terms 3 and Term 4 last year staff and student prayers focused on various environmental events and days such as the Season of Creation, International Day for Rural Women and World Wetlands Day. This will continue this year with ecological spirituality imbedded in prayers, liturgies, Examens and Masses for both staff and students.

Our first Professional Learning Day of the academic year on Thursday, 27 January provided all our staff the opportunity to engage with the *Caring for Our Common Home: An Ignatian Perspective* document. The workshop was held online for 250 staff and the three goals of the workshop were:

- Building on Catholic identity
- Engage staff in the “Caring for Our Common Home: An Ignatian Perspective” document by looking at the framework provided in the document, why are we adopting it and how we could implement this document at Riverview
- Develop individual and collective staff action

Staff were initially asked to think about the meaning of the word “care” by using images on their phone of a person or place that was special to them and identify the emotions connected to the concept of care. Staff shared their ideas via chat in Zoom and this activity connected to the importance of love and nurturing when we care for creation.

Staff considered the reasons why the document is significant in our context at Riverview where the First Nations Gaimariagal people lived, sourced food and educated their children in their rich culture. Kaleb Taylor, the First Nations Coordinator, spoke about “sweet mother earth” and his obligation to give back to country. Kaleb emphasised that we are all connected to country, and we have a responsibility to look after mother earth and when we come to Riverview we are not just coming to work we are coming to “be” and look after each other. Riverview has a responsibility to protect the sacred sites of the Gaimariagal people that are on this land and engages experts to ensure this occurs.



Indigenous hand stencils on the rock face at the foreshore of the Lane Cove Riverview at Riverview estimated to be 10, 000 years old

Catholic Social teaching on stewardship of creation was also explored by looking at references from writings by Pope Benedict and Pope Francis’ Encyclical *Laudato si’* being a particular focus. Staff were asked to consider the impacts of technology and economic development on the environment and also the poorest in society.

The Jesuit infographic was used to highlight how Caring for Our Common Home is integrated into the Living Tradition identifiers and the purpose of Jesuit education as a mission of reconciliation and justice, developing people of conscience, compassion, commitment and competence.

The link between the Universal Apostolic Preference of “Journeying with Youth” and “Caring for Our Common Home” was explored by looking at research on how student well-being is adversely impacted by concerns about the condition of the environment. The University of Bath in the UK, researched 10, 000 students across 10 countries, all of whom were between the ages of 16 and 25, to gauge how they feel about climate change. The study concluded

that there is a correlation between negative emotions, such as worry, and beliefs that government responses to climate change have been inadequate. In the light of this research providing opportunities for young people to have a positive impact on the environment also benefits well-being.

Staff were provided with time to move outside and engage in reflection focusing on the questions in the *Individual/self* section (page 5) of the *Caring for Our Common: An Ignatian Perspective* document and shared their thoughts on the importance of caring for creation and being connected to nature. Some comments included:

*Our common home is wherever we are, leaving the smallest possible imprint and most connected when by the ocean.*

*I want a conscious way of living for and by all so that our children's children can live in and enjoy what God has designed for us. I am most connected to nature when I am surrounded by it and having no distractions like devices with me.*

*Common home is where we live and work. Most connected to nature when out walking along tracks near water and bushland. We care by reducing plastic and reducing rubbish, planting natives, and ensuring green spaces are maintained.*

*A place of mutual ground of respect and appreciation of what we are given and what we can share back.* The responses reflected a sense of the importance of our global and local home and the impact of our actions.

*Caring for Our Common: An Ignatian Perspective Staff/Faculty* section (page 7) provided the stimulus to move from individual reflection to collective collaboration. Using Zoom breakout rooms Padlet was used to collect ideas suggested by the staff. These will now form the basis for further discussion in staff focus groups to take on important and challenging changes in our actions.

The next steps in our action plan include engaging all our students, families, and Alumni in the framework so that we work toward a change of heart and change of habit to care for creation and find God in all things.

<https://www.educatemagis.org/caring-for-our-common-home/>

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