Educating for Sustainable Futures in Catholic Schools in Queensland

A position statement of the Queensland Catholic Education Commission

1. Introduction

The United Nations General Assembly proclaimed the years from 2005 to 2014, the Decade of Education for Sustainable Development (DESD). Since then national and state governments and Catholic education authorities in Australia have supported initiatives to document and enact sustainable policies and reforms.

2. Definition

Sustainability is meeting the needs of the present generation without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. (Our Common Future, The Brundtland Report, 1987)

Education for sustainability is both present and future oriented. It is about learning to design and implement actions for the present in the knowledge that the impact of these actions may be experienced in the future. (Sustainability Curriculum Framework, 2010)

3. Rationale

Education for sustainable futures in Catholic schools is a life-long learning process of recognising values and clarifying concepts in order to develop skills and attitudes necessary to understand and appreciate the interrelatedness of all creation: to know of creation as a gift from God which requires equitable sharing and wise stewardship. It also entails practice in decision making for living a life that is ecologically and ethically sustainable. (On Holy Ground, 2007)

Pope Benedict XVI pointed out in his message for the celebration of the World Day of Peace on January 1 2010, that the environment must be seen as God’s gift to all people and that protecting the natural environment in order to build a world of peace is thus a duty incumbent upon each and all. It is an urgent challenge, one to be faced with renewed and concerted commitment; it is also a providential opportunity to hand down to coming generations the prospect of a better future for all.

4. Position Statement

The Queensland Catholic Education Commission advocates that Catholic schooling authorities establish or enhance long-term goals of education for sustainable futures by:

- adopting a whole school approach to implementation of sustainable practices which become embedded in all aspects of schools’ operations
• developing in learners, the knowledge, attitudes, skills, and values supporting the integrity of all creation and the dignity of the human person which are conducive to the achievement of a sustainable future
• understanding and reflecting critically upon the interconnectedness of spiritual, social, cultural, economic and ecological dimensions at local, national and global levels
• developing an ethic of personal responsibility and stewardship towards all aspects of the environment
• promoting awareness of and respect for spirituality, cultural diversity, values and traditions of other cultures, with particular attention to Australian indigenous culture.

5. Implications

Catholic schooling authorities and schools in Queensland will give consideration to the following:

• cultivation of a sense of spirituality which acknowledges the interconnectedness of all creation, and which is expressed through caring for God’s creation
• enhancement of communities of learners’ understanding of sustainability to include social justice issues
• management that supports sustainability policies, procedures and programs
• curriculum that is developed and delivered on the principles of education for sustainable futures
• responsive resource management and innovation, including utilities, facilities and environs
• partnerships, alliances and networks with government, communities, businesses and other school authorities which have as their goal the enhancement of ecologically sustainable practices
• implementation, communication, celebration and evaluation of strategies and actions to reduce schools’ ecological footprints.

References

*Called to be stewards of creation* Keynote Address, Queensland Catholic Education Commission Sustainability Forum, Sr Mary McDonald March 2010


*Our Common Future* The Brundtland Report 1987

*Peace with God the Creator, Peace with All of Creation* Message of His Holiness Pope John Paul II 1990

Statement on Sustainability for all Queensland Schools “*enough for all forever*” Department of Education Training and the Arts 2009


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