



Archdiocese of Canberra-Goulburn, Australia

***Laudato Si'* Action Plan**

2023 - 2030

Version 1.0

8 May 2023

Cover artwork: Anthony (Tony) Liston (2023), a proud Wiradjuri man and a member of the Aboriginal Catholic Ministry of the Archdiocese of Canberra-Goulburn, whose western part is on Wiradjuri land.

The background colours represent ocean, rivers, bush and deserts. On the right a man with a spear and shield is yarning over the campfire with an old woman elder on the left with digging stick and coolamon, about the poor state of country. They send mob out in four directions to spread the word about fixing it up.

VISION

Sharing the Christian message of God's goodness and love, and of God's desire for an abundance of life and salvation for all is the mission of the Archdiocese of Canberra and Goulburn.

The teachings in Pope Francis' 2015 Encyclical letter, *Laudato Si' – On Care for Our Common Home* [1], is intrinsic to that mission of bringing people to know God and his saving power in the world today. In the words of Pope Francis there is an inseparable 'bond between concern for nature, justice for the poor, commitment to society, and interior peace' (*Laudato Si'* paragraph 10).

Not only must we seek to better understand the goodness of God's creation, but we must also act with urgency to care for our common home and all living creatures – to bring and sustain abundant life to the most vulnerable.

BACKGROUND

The Archdiocese of Canberra and Goulburn covers some 88,000 sq kms, encompassing high country peaks and headwaters, forests and woodlands, western plains and rivers, coastal forests and coastal waters. It contains rural regions, towns and cities, with a population of 732,000. It contains 55 parishes attended by about 17,000 parishioners, as well as 56 Catholic schools with 21,000 school children. It is close to the earth because of its wide rural makeup, but being centred on the national capital, Canberra, it is particularly sensitive to national and international perspectives.

This *Laudato Si'* Action Plan is based on wide consultation by the Archdiocese's Caring for Creation movement. The Action Plan builds on the background and values outlined in Archdiocese's Reflection on the *Laudato Si'* goals [2], with which the Archdiocese committed itself to the Vatican's global *Laudato Si'* Action Platform [3] in May 2022. A primary source of community input was the Caring for Creation Conference hosted by the Holy Spirit Parish, Gungahlin in 2022 [4], which involved participants from across the Archdiocese.

In its *Laudato Si'* action planning, the Archdiocese aims to walk alongside similar initiatives by fellow Bishops around the world [5] and by other faith communities. The Archdiocese aims to accompany and encourage its parishes, schools, individuals, and other organisations – and so assist them to develop their own action plans in the coming years.



Photos: Alison Weeks

WHY URGENT ACTION IS NEEDED

Inspired by *Laudato Si'*, the Archdiocese seeks to engage others on the journey to enable effective practical responses to the ecological and social crises facing us all in caring for our common home. It is vital we all start to initiate action plans as soon as possible.

For example, the Archdiocese has endured years of natural calamities, which science tells us are clear signs of global warming – including drought, heat waves, dust storms, ferocious and destructive bushfires, hailstorms and record-breaking floods.

In their 2021-22 statement *Cry of the Earth, Cry of the Poor* [6], the Australian Catholic Bishops demonstrate a commitment to action as a crucial social justice imperative. They emphasise that we are facing interconnected social and ecological crises – that require responses to both aspects.



Photo: Karyn Thompson

The 2022 Plenary Council of the Church in Australia [7] also urges action through Decree 8 by:

- a. recognizing the sacred duty to care for and protect the Earth as a common home for all God's creatures, including the generations to come;
- b. encouraging all Catholic people, families, parishes, dioceses,to accept Pope Francis' invitation to join the *Laudato Si'* Action Platform and either develop *Laudato Si'* Action Plans, or participate in existing *Laudato Si'* Action Plans, as a vehicle for their ecological conversion; and
- c. promoting initiatives in Church and society which promote and defend human life from conception to natural death, especially those who are most vulnerable.

More recently, the Catholic Bishops Conference of Oceania stated in 2023 that:

the unique face of Oceania has called us together for deeper ecological conversion and to respond from the heart. Embracing the teaching of *Laudato Si'* and the challenge of integral ecology, we recognize that our economic systems need to be in balance with the pulse of life [8].

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

- Respect for all of God's creation, including the generations to come.
- Synodality – listening deeply to one another and to the Earth, in particular seeking the wisdom and advice of our First Nations peoples.
- Practical action leading to measurable change, and a willingness to adapt plans as necessary.

AREAS OF FOCUS

The first *Laudato Si'* Action Plan for the Archdiocese will focus on three key focus areas to enable and assist the development of actions plans by parishes, schools and other organisations:

1. Ecological Education
2. Ecological Spirituality
3. Ecological Economics promoting Sustainable Lifestyles

These focus areas will help encourage:

- immediate planning and action across all archdiocesan entities, emphasising reducing, recycling and reusing strategies;
- a greater understanding of what integral ecology means for us in faith and in life;
- the opportunity to implement sustainability in all we do while also considering ethical investment opportunities and how to influence them.

Adopting these specific focus areas will also impact on other *Laudato Si'* goals and help set the baseline for measurable, effective actions. Action on these focus areas will best utilise the available resources to establish reasonable data and measures of progress. This also recognizes the challenge of establishing comparative data sets across the Archdiocese.

To genuinely fulfil the requirements of the 2022 Plenary Council Decree 8, in reference to walking in partnership with our First Nations sisters and brothers, our first steps must include further listening to their voices and understanding their perspectives.

Scope

It is important that action plans are developed by the entities that will implement them. This plan is designed to operate at the archdiocesan level and its scope is twofold:

- Actions that can be taken by archdiocesan entities such as the administration.



Photo: Alison Weeks



Photo: Alison Weeks



Photo: Megan Thompson

- Actions at the archdiocesan level that encourage and help entities such as parishes, schools, and movements to develop and implement their own action plans.

ARCHDIOCESAN OBJECTIVES

Specific objectives that are measurable and achievable for the Archdiocese, as advised by the Caring for Creation Conference 2022 include:

1. Achieve a net-zero carbon footprint by 2030 and go net-positive by 2035
2. Embed the Integral Ecology teachings and response action in the culture of all Archdiocesan bodies, and particularly our schools and parishes.
3. Walk together with our First Nations peoples, respecting and learning from their spirituality and deep attachment to the land. Support and promote their right to a Voice in Parliament, in parishes and the Archdiocese.
4. Create and collectively walk a synodal path with our ecumenical brethren to jointly share the commitment to care for all creation and to act together to achieve positive change.

ACHIEVING THE ARCHDIOCESAN OBJECTIVES 2023 – 2030

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Benchmark the Archdiocese’s carbon footprint using a consistent template. • Set main priorities for achieving net zero, including: solar panels, batteries, electric vehicles (EVs), and reduce, reuse and recycle programs.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish public awards for innovative programs for schools and parishes. • Commence shift to EV vehicle fleet and relevant infrastructure. • Heighten awareness of creation theology in the liturgical celebration and prayer life of the church.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Distribute professional development and learning materials for clergy, teachers, parents and lay leaders on Integral Ecology and action. • Establish ‘twinning’ arrangements with vulnerable parishes in Australia and the Pacific .
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Focus on how to live a modest, sustainable lifestyle at corporate, parish, school and personal level. • Promote concern and action for our vulnerable Oceania sisters and brothers.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lobby to disengage from fossil fuel investments through relevant bodies . • Allocate grants and any investment funds to enterprises of social and economic benefit to the community.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conduct independent evaluation of progress and advise on future steps at halfway point and in 2030.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Achieve a carbon neutral footprint by 2030.

DETAILED *LAUDATO SI'* ACTION PLAN

<i>Laudato Si'</i> Goal	Archdiocesan Milestones	2024	2025	2026	2027	2028	2029	2030
<i>Sustainable Lifestyles</i>	Achieve a net-zero carbon footprint by 2030 and go net-positive by 2035.	Use one tool to measure carbon footprint of Archdiocesan administration and parishes. Catholic Education to do same. Produce ' <i>How to Get to Net Zero</i> ' Action Kit.	Prepare, consult and publish strategies on how to reduce carbon footprint across all entities. Distribute action kit to 50% of parishes	Promote ways to develop the circular economy in parishes and schools. Act to: Reduce, Recycle, Reuse. Distribute action kit to remaining 50% of parishes	Collect and publish mid-term report and review progress.	50% of administration, parishes and schools to be carbon neutral.		
<i>Sustainable Lifestyles</i>	By 2028 develop a network of support to help vulnerable parishes manage biodiversity and climate change.	Identify and invite Archdiocesan parishes affected by climate change to link with other Archdiocesan parishes.	Identify potential for our Archdiocese to twin with Diocese of Oceania . Identify and invite national and international parishes (specifically the Pacific) to twin with Archdiocesan parishes.	Appoint taskforce of CatholicCare, Caritas, Catholic Mission and St Vincent de Paul to identify effective support and action at parish and school level to support local and international vulnerable parishes.			At least 15 parishes to be twinned for support with another experiencing impacts of climate change.	
<i>Sustainable Lifestyles</i>	Convert car fleet to EVs with charging infrastructure.	Obtain advice on transfer from ACT Fleet Advisory Service.						

<i>Laudato Si'</i> Goal	Archdiocesan Milestones	2024	2025	2026	2027	2028	2029	2030
<i>Sustainable Lifestyles</i>	Assist the building and running of community gardens and/or native biodiversity areas.		Circulate background for setting up community gardens and native biodiversity areas and promote models through those already operating.	Unite with ecumenical community on shared projects, e.g. sustainability markets, information days and conferences.	50% of schools and parishes have community gardens or biodiversity areas.			

<i>Ecological Economics</i>	By 2025: Provide materials for all Archdiocesan bodies to calculate financial savings from ecological action. Convene meeting of stakeholders to identify resourcing and strategies to implement Plan. Divestment of any Archdiocesan moneys in fossil fuels by 2030.	Research investment strategies of CDF. Develop policy of divestment from fossil fuels and ethical re-investment guidelines for archdiocesan entities and parishioners.	Provide briefings and guidance on divestment and ethical investment strategies for Archdiocesan parishes, schools, communities and individuals. Hold Archdiocesan Conference of stakeholders to share implementation options.	Place ethical investment strategies on national catholic agenda. Examine feasibility of small ecological levy to finance sustainability projects.				
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<i>Laudato Si'</i> Goal	Archdiocesan Milestones	2024	2025	2026	2027	2028	2029	2030
<i>Ecological Education</i>	Homilies or reflections on <i>Laudato Si'</i> and integral ecology in Archdiocese and parishes.	Conduct on-line (or in person) seminar series on the <i>Laudato Si'</i> Encyclical and its meaning today.	Assist parishes prepare homily and reflection notes for clergy.	Where appropriate, support Catholic Education in development of Integral Ecology curriculum materials for schools, teachers and students.	At least 2 homilies or reflections per year on <i>Laudato Si'</i> and Integral Ecology in all parishes.			
<i>Ecological Education</i>	The Integral Ecology Network in schools and communities to reach half of schools in the Archdiocese.	Provide rewards, awards & incentives for schools to join the Integral Ecology Network.	Hold Archdiocesan Conference on Integral Ecology and invite ecumenical input.		50% of schools and communities in Archdiocese practice Integral Ecology.			
<i>Ecological Education</i>	In partnership with Catholic Education, design and distribute ' <i>How to Care for Creation</i> ' Action Pack.	Design ' <i>How to Care for Creation</i> ' Action Pack.	Distribute Action packs to 50% of school communities.	Distribute Action packs to remaining school communities.				

<i>Laudato Si'</i> Goal	Archdiocesan Milestones	2024	2025	2026	2027	2028	2029	2030
<i>Ecological Spirituality</i>	<p>Extend the Season of Creation (Sept) to become a pre-eminent ecumenical month of action and celebration.</p> <p>Deepen relationship with First Nations sisters and brothers.</p> <p>Celebrate Mass for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Sunday in every parish.</p>	<p>Grow Season of Creation to embrace majority of parishes and faiths; focus on liturgy and small acts of integral ecology.</p> <p>Actively campaign for the Indigenous Voice</p>	<p>Prepare theological and liturgy materials for sharing with parishes and schools.</p> <p>Develop joint projects with Australian Catholic University to reach Youth Ministers and older students.</p>	<p>Develop Caring for Creation walks on local country across the Archdiocese, accompanied by First Australian knowledge holders.</p> <p>Examine opportunities to combine above with <i>Laudato Si'</i> retreats.</p> <p>Promote Indigenous Voice in Parish Pastoral Councils.</p>	Expand walks on country to at least three across the Archdiocese.			

REFERENCES

- [1] Francis (2015) Encyclical Letter "*Laudato Si' – on Care for Our Common Home.*" Holy See. www.vatican.va/content/dam/francesco/pdf/encyclicals/documents/papa-francesco_20150524_enciclica-laudato-si_en.pdf
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- [3] Dicastery for Promoting Human Development (2021) *Laudato Si' Goals.* Laudato Si' Action Platform website, <https://www.laudatosi.org/laudato-si/laudato-si-goals/>.
- [4] Caring for Creation Conference outcomes, Holy Spirit Parish, Gungahlin: [Laudato Si ACT \(www.care4creation.org\)](http://www.care4creation.org)
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- [6] Office of Justice, Ecology and Peace (2021) *Social Justice Statement, 2021-22: Cry of the Earth, Cry of the Poor.* Australian Catholic Bishops Conference, <https://socialjustice.catholic.org.au/2021/09/24/social-justice-statement-2021-22/>
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- [8] Federation of Catholic Bishops' Conferences of Oceania (FCBCO) (2023) *The oceans of the world are interwoven with the future hopes of all people.* CathNews, <https://cathnews.com/~documents/media-releases/media-releases-2023/230215-fcbco-the-oceans-of-the-world-are-interwoven-with-the-future-hopes-of-all-peoples/?layout=default>.