• develop and promote school policies, structures and practices that nurture peaceful relationships and restorative justice;
• critically review and monitor the complexity and worth of experiences offered by the school in light of Jesus’ call to justice;
• embed sustainable practices consistent with a Biblical understanding of Christian stewardship in all aspects of school life;

Curriculum and Pedagogy
• ensure that Church social teaching and a biblical understanding of justice is taught in a systematic effective way within and beyond the religion classroom;
• develop learners’ knowledge, deep understandings, skills and values about justice, peace and ecological stewardship across the curriculum;

Formation and Professional Learning
• promote an authentic culture of peace where values of love, compassion and forgiveness are modelled in the daily life of the school community;
• provide school staff, particularly teachers of religion, with regular opportunities for professional learning and formation in, and about, justice, peace and ecological stewardship;

Religious life of the school
• respond to issues of justice education through the school’s religious life especially its liturgy, prayer and ritual;
• review and implement service learning programs, immersions and retreats that are focused on an action-reflection cycle and grounded in a biblical understanding of justice and Church social teaching.

References
FOREWORD

This policy statement reflects the Archdiocese of Brisbane’s commitment to the principles and practices of justice education within its Catholic schools. It has been developed through a consultative process involving classroom teachers, school principals, senior administration staff, and others in the Archdiocesan community.

As far as the Church is concerned, the social teaching of the Gospel must not be considered a theory but above all else a basis and a motivation for action. Inspired by this teaching, many men and women have devoted themselves to the needy and to those on the margins of society, convinced that Christ’s words “as you did it to one of the least of these my brethren you did it to me” (Mt 25:40) were not intended to remain a pious wish, but were meant to become a concrete life commitment. (John Paul II, Centesimus Annus, n.57)

Given the extent and insistence of this teaching, it is not only appropriate but incumbent upon Catholic schools to educate all aspects of the person towards a commitment for justice understood not as a human ideology but as a divine gift. The Archdiocese affirms its commitment to the promotion of justice education through implementing this policy within its schools. As stated in Centesimus Annus: “The Church’s social teaching is itself a valid instrument of evangelisation” (54).

One of the Second Vatican Council’s seminal documents, “The Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World” (Gaudium et Spes), states that it is the right and responsibility of the followers of Christ to defend the essential dignity of each person. Catholic schools have the responsibility not simply to protect their students from the injustices of the wider society, but also to mobilise their resources to act against such injustice. In short, Catholic schools should educate their students towards taking a just stance on the central social issues of the day, and so become “an irreplaceable source of service, not only to the pupils and its other members, but also to society.” (C.S., n.62)

I commend this policy to all staff engaged in the ministry of Catholic education in our schools. I have no doubt that through the implementation of this policy our commitment to justice education as part of the overall mission of the Archdiocese will be renewed.

As always in the Lord

Archbishop of Brisbane

July 2012

INTRODUCTION

What does the Lord require of you?
To act justly and to love tenderly and to walk humbly with your God. (Micah 6:8)

Catholic school communities engage in the mission of the Church in the world through daily active living of the Gospel and by teaching for, and witnessing to justice education.

Justice education is at the heart of the Catholic school shaping its identity as a learning community and reflecting the vision and mission of Jesus. Justice education grows beyond Christian service programs; it is foundational to the identity of the school, shaping its policies, structures, curriculum and pedagogy.

Within the context of this policy justice education is about teaching for and witnessing to three distinct but complementary elements: justice; peace and ecological stewardship.

RATIONALE

A Catholic Christian understanding of justice emerges out of communal love of God as Trinity; it is because we are called to love the other that we seek justice, peace and ecological stewardship. Thus, the call to justice is a call to respond to the command of love across all aspects of the school’s curriculum.

An essential element of justice in a Catholic school is the application of the principles and processes of restorative justice. These are evident when school communities search for solutions that promote, reconcile and rebuild right relationships with God and with one another. (cf. Economic Justice for All, 68-71).

Challenged by the Gospel of Jesus Christ, the Catholic school seeks to be faithful to a biblical understanding of justice and the rich tradition of Church social teaching. Key themes of Church social teaching include but are not limited to: respect for the human person; a preferential option for the poor; political and economic rights; promotion of the common good; subsidiarity; political participation; promoting ecological stewardship; global solidarity and promotion of peace.

A just school is marked by compassion, a fullness of love, reconciliation, inclusion and peace. An authentic culture of peace grows in a Catholic school community that strives to create a climate permeated with harmony and respect for justice.

This authentic culture of peace begins with a stewardship of heart and is sustained through forgiveness and reconciliation. Such a culture of peace enriches not only the school but wider community.

In Biblical Revelation, peace is much more than the simple absence of war; peace is the fruit of justice and an act of love. It produces fruitfulness, wellbeing, prosperity, absence of fear and profound joy (Catechism of the Catholic Church #1807, #2304, #2305)

The challenge for all Catholic schools is to continually monitor their culture and practices to ensure they are ecologically and ethically sustainable. The Church has a specific way of expressing this imperative: ecological stewardship. This involves recognition that the call to Christian stewardship requires both an active and a spiritual response; that all of creation is a sacrament, vivified by the Creator Spirit. It implies a stewardship of head, heart and hands in working towards ecological stewardship for all.

CONSEQUENCES

In teaching for, and witnessing to, justice, peace and ecological stewardship our community of schools in partnership with families, parishes and others work to

Policies and Structures
• ensure school policies, structures and practices are faithful to Church social teaching;

JUSTICE EDUCATION POLICY

We are committed to creating learning communities that teach for, and witness to, justice, peace and ecological stewardship shaped by biblical understandings and Church social teaching.