

*In January 2011, Jesuit Social Services along with its partners and friends organised an “experiential workshop” to reflect on the JCAP (Jesuit Conference of Asia Pacific) document of “Our Environmental Way of Proceeding”. Reflections on gratitude, belonging, connectivity, and care for our environment formed the basis for drafting Jesuit Social Services’ **An Environmental Way of Proceeding**.*

Rooted in our Ignatian heritage and in our deep respect for aboriginal people and their lands, Jesuit Social Services recognises and celebrates that we are people who belong as a community where all persons matter and are interrelated.

This document outlines Jesuit Social Services’ processes for social and ecological justice engagements, which are reflected in three domains:

- a. Human spirit*
- b. Practice framework*
- c. Business processes*

This document seeks to encourage the broad Jesuit Social Services community to strengthen relations with self, others and environment as we progress our engagement and commitment to social and ecological justice.

AN ENVIRONMENTAL WAY OF PROCEEDING
Jesuit Social Services, Australia
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In a finite world characterised by increasing population and expanding geographic spread of populations, people are called to have a new value of viewing what is necessary and sufficient. Amidst a growing materialism there is a pressing need for a 'just' distribution of resources and development of appropriate environmental management.

Injustice is often reflected through poverty, conflict, displacement, migration and over-exploitation of natural resources. These feed into a deeper cycle of impoverishment leading to an ever downward spiral, which further divides and increases disparity between the "rich" and the "poor".

In these circumstances people, most especially the poor lacking access to resources, have increasingly diminished capacity to respond to unpredictable natural and human created catastrophes. These catastrophes include floods, bushfires, earthquakes, volcanic eruptions, drought, nuclear accidents, biosphere pollution, forest destruction, over-farming and over-fishing.

As human beings cognisant of our actions and their consequences, we are called to behave and act responsibly seeking the greater common good within our society. In the contemporary world, the notion of society should encompass not only people and their social milieu but also their natural environment. As a society, we are dependent upon the environment for our very existence and the expression of our socio-economic-political activities and cultural identity.

Humans have developed such advanced technologies and extensive and growing material demands that now threaten the ecological processes, diversity, and integrity of the earth. Driven by self-interest, there is a tendency to forget the connectivity and interdependence that exist within our environ.

This connectivity, sense of belonging, and being supported by the environment is a source of great gratitude. From this starting point, humans can increasingly recognise their responsibilities as stewards of the earth. This is in line with an emerging understanding of 'eco-justice' and human dignity that consider human development along with environmental sustainability.

The healing nature of this broader notion of 'eco-justice' is expressed in many social justice programs across the world. Troubled individuals and communities have turned to community gardening, environmentally-oriented activities and other environmental development and engagement programs. These programs assist those who suffer and are marginalised to find solace and meaning in a world beyond the interminable grind of social injustice. Also, these initiatives provide opportunities to empower individuals and communities to be responsible in the management of their environment and encourage people towards a change of heart that is more positive and welcoming. The skills and knowledge acquired by these undertakings lead to an improved personal and community self-esteem, fostering better health, socio-cultural and socio-economic integration into society.

Coming from an understanding that social justice is exemplified through the integration of human development and natural ecology, Jesuit Social Services commits to a more integrated approach where all our activity promotes social and ecological justice. Over the years, Jesuit Social Services has had many initiatives that promote human dignity, dialogue, partnership, and sustainability, including programs at Abbotsford and Burnley (under Brosnan Youth Services and later Gateway) and The Outdoor Experience (TOE).

AN INCLUSIVE ENVIRONMENTAL STRATEGY

As a Jesuit organisation, Jesuit Social Services commits to the central theme of the Jesuit mission since 35th General Congregation (GC35) on *Reconciliation with Creation*, which calls for all Jesuit ministries to develop concrete programs and initiatives concerning our environment.

The organisation seeks to fully align its ‘way of working’ to the Jesuit global and regional mission on ecology, which is to deepen our understanding of the web of relations between people and their environment.

The publication in September 2011 of “**Healing A Broken World**”¹ through *Promotio Iustitiae* encourages Jesuit people to engage more deeply and strategically with our environment by first knowing oneself in relation to God, neighbours, and all creation.

Reflecting on the “Healing A Broken World” document, “**Our Environmental Way of Proceeding**”², provides a framework for Jesuit organisations within the Jesuit Conference of Asia Pacific (JCAP) to deepen our response to the challenge of integrating social justice and natural ecology in our lives and institutes.

Building on our earlier ecology initiatives, Jesuit Social Services organised an Ecology Workshop in January 2011. Pedro Walpole SJ, coordinator of JCAP-Ecology, facilitated the workshop at the “Bush Hut”, a Jesuit Social Services site in Melbourne, Australia.

Following the workshop, a group of staff and friends of Jesuit Social Services was established to work together on how to progress the introduction of environmental and ecological awareness and practice across all Jesuit Social Services’ domains of activity. The working group developed the following approach and commitment to our environment:

OUR COMMITMENT TO THE ENVIRONMENT

- Jesuit Social Services acknowledges with deep gratitude the environment and web of life that we are part of and which sustains us and we are committed to responsible sustainability management, operating in a manner that protects and improves our environment and our communities. The strategies that we adopt in this regard are

¹ <http://www.sjweb.info/documents/sjs/pjnew/PJ106ENG.pdf>

² http://jcap.essc.org.ph/?page_id=1803

consistent not only with Australia's state and national standards but also with our Jesuit tradition and mission, and Catholic Social Teaching.

- Jesuit Social Services acknowledges that sustainability is not an add-on to our mission and practice, but an integral part of who we are, how we manage our organisation and meet the needs of the community we serve. We will work with our staff, participants, volunteers, friends, stakeholders and the Jesuit community to raise awareness of and gain support for this along with our environmental initiatives and for the ongoing success of our strategy.

Catholic Social Teaching³ spells out teachings on social justice and practical actions for people to consider. The social teachings include three main principles: (1) principles for reflection, (2) criteria for judgment, and (3) guidelines for action.

Today there is solid scientific evidence along with technical responses to many of our concerns but the commitment and courage to be morally responsible in supporting effective action is still lacking. We recognise the need to develop appropriate alliances in order to promote this priority and to work collaboratively to determine new modes of development.

OUR OBJECTIVES

Jesuit Social Services has a “way of proceeding” that calls for integrity across a range of domains: (1) human spirit, our (2) practice framework and our (3) business processes. This model is applied to all aspects of our activity and is relevant at the individual, team and organisational levels. It is also the framework we use to understand and drive our engagement with ecology.

To honour and protect our environment we will implement organisation-wide initiatives across these three domains to ensure:

1. **Human Spirit** - formation and deepening of our capacity to engage and sustain our commitment to social and ecological justice, based on a deep gratitude and our appreciation of the interconnectedness of all life
2. **Practice Framework** - promotion of environmental awareness and initiatives across our practice framework (our programs and advocacy) that reflects our commitment to social and ecological justice.
3. **Business Processes** - adoption of environmentally sustainable business practices and processes.

ENVIRONMENTAL GOVERNANCE

³ http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/benedict_xvi/encyclicals/documents/hf_ben-xvi_enc_20090629_caritas-in-veritate_en.html

Jesuit Social Services is committed to the Jesuit mission on ecology, ensuring that our organisation is sustainable and that our environmental initiatives are integrated into our daily activities. We will achieve this through a process of continuous improvement, which will incorporate ongoing education, consultation, measurement, benchmarking, monitoring and evaluation. The specific environmental objectives and targets that are established across the organisation will be closely monitored, reported, and evaluated.

The Board of Jesuit Social Services approves the strategic direction of the organisation incorporating its commitment to operate in a responsible and sustainable manner and adopting appropriate ecological initiatives with clear targets.

The Chief Executive Officer has ultimate responsibility for our environmental policies, performance, and evaluation, with the Ecology Working Group supporting and promoting environmental initiatives through its three Task Forces i.e. human spirit, practice framework, business processes. The working group acts an informal body that helps the CEO develop strategic directions and activities integrated into the three domains of human spirit, practice framework, and business processes.

Jesuit Social Services is committed to collaborating across the Province to share good ecological practices.

OUR WAY OF PROCEEDING

Jesuit Social Services' "**Identity and Culture**" document defines the organisation's vision, mission, values, purpose, its spirit and culture. It outlines how we strive to fulfil our vision to build a just society by influencing hearts and minds to be in right relationship with God, each other and all creation (GC35).

We value every person and seek to engage respectfully with all people in a way that acknowledges their experiences and skills, and gives them the opportunity to harness their full potential. Our practice framework is based on a belief that all people are inherently relational, are formed in family, and are part of a wider community.

In keeping with this approach, our commitment to our environment will be addressed through our programs, research, policy, advocacy, communications, broader community engagement and management of resources. Accordingly, we strengthen and build constructive relationships for:

- Effective services by partnering with people most in need and with those who support them to address disadvantage.
- Education by providing access to lifelong learning and development.
- Capacity building by refining and evaluating our practice and sharing and partnering for greater impact.
- Advocacy by building awareness of injustice and advocating for social change based on grounded experience and research.
- Leadership development by partnering across sectors to build community expertise and an increased commitment to justice.

The JCAP document, “Our Environmental Way of Proceeding” provides a framework to guide our approach in integrating social justice and natural ecology. In this framework, gratitude is the foundation that enables us to seek for hope and solidarity with others.

Jesuit Social Services has a way of proceeding, which strives for integrity within and across the three domains of a) human spirit, b) practice framework, and c) business processes of our work.

A. THE HUMAN SPIRIT

Jesuit Social Services not only aims to establish best practice standards in contemporary human resource management, but we also aspire to a culture of ‘care of persons’ in the Jesuit tradition. In acknowledging and honouring the human spirit, we recognise that people are constantly in search for meaning – in their desires, their sense of belonging, gratitude, self-giving, being at peace with themselves, building relationships, in openness with others as well as with the transcendent.

We are aware of the value of a behavioral attitude that commits to ‘eco justice’. Change of attitude leads us to a change of heart, not just a change of mind. Change of mind relates to the way we think but not necessarily our actions. Our spiritual heritage fosters an approach that is rooted in our experience of faith and love that allows us to become aware of our calling as individuals and as a community. It enables us to generate new vision and energy in service with others.

Our approach acknowledges that we ourselves need to be transformed and sustained in our commitment to social and ecological justice. Fundamental to our approach is our starting point of gratitude for the beauty of our environment, the inter dependence of all life, and all we have been given. Simply, we are invited to become increasingly aware of the ways in which we encounter and engage with ourselves, with others and with our environment and to be generous in how we respond to this growing insight. We acknowledge the urgency and importance of being responsible in protecting our environment beyond science and development agendas. We seek to internalise, analyse with others, and discern what is needed for change and action.

B. PRACTICE FRAMEWORK

We seek to establish a community of practice that facilitates the deepening of our environmental commitment and ecological awareness across Jesuit Social Services’ programs and advocacy. We aim to build environmental principles into what is already being undertaken - through our services, education, capacity building, advocacy, and leadership development activities - in the effort to strengthen our relationships and connectivity. Our hope is to work towards a 21st century model of leadership that addresses the pressing concerns of social and ecological justice.

Our practice framework outlines ‘our way of working’ through our direct services for disadvantaged people and communities and ‘our way of influencing’ through capacity building, advocacy, and leadership development. All these are grounded in our practice wisdom, research, and our Ignatian heritage.

Jesuit Social Services' TOE (The Outdoor Experience) program, for example, already successfully employs immersion in remote natural environments to assist in improving the mental health and wellbeing of young people. The learnings from TOE and other initiatives can be further shared across our programs. The intention is to provide opportunities that invite growing environmental awareness and responsibility by all staff, volunteers and program participants.

Specifically, through 'our way of working' Jesuit Social Services:

- Teaches the importance of valuing self and others so that our participants can develop the capacity to establish and maintain meaningful and respectful relationships in their personal lives.
- Engenders hope and affirms goals and aspirations through establishment of supportive and mutually participatory relationships.
- Delivers programs that provide support for participants to realise their potential by working with them to overcome the barriers they face in achieving social and economic inclusion.
- Supports participants to build capacity through delivery of education and training programs that promote skills development and assist in accessing vocational and employment pathways.
- Increases civic participation through sustained long-term engagement, and partnering with others to increase access to opportunities.

As we embed 'care for our environment' into our practice framework we seek to:

- Document and disseminate our practice and learnings in relation to practice models that incorporate an ecological dimension.
- Develop a research, policy and advocacy agenda that promotes awareness of and commitment to ecological justice in the community, our sector and the church.
- Undertake specific projects within the Australian Province and across the Jesuit Conference of Asia Pacific. For instance, we will strengthen our partnership with Environmental Science for Social Change⁴ (ESSC) in the Philippines and develop new strategies for addressing environmental concerns associated with various cultures, migration, and governance of natural and mineral resources e.g. mining.

⁴ <http://essc.org.ph/>

C. BUSINESS PROCESSES: ADMINISTRATION AND BUSINESS PROCESSES OF OUR WORK

Jesuit Social Services' business processes are concerned with the infrastructure that ensures that the organisation is viable, efficient, accountable, transparent, and appropriately resourced. For us, 'the administration of temporal goods', is guided by the principle that 'our home is the earth', where we all share the limited resources available and that we need to demonstrate the same responsible freedom we claim for ourselves toward our environment.

Responding to the call to "get our house in order," Jesuit Social Services commits to implement an environmental sustainability plan. Initial priorities will ensure that:

- Environmental sustainability awareness is promoted;
- Measures to improve energy efficiency are adopted;
- Efficient waste reduction and resource use initiatives are implemented;
- The emission performance of our vehicle fleet is improved and environmentally friendly transport arrangements are promoted; and
- An environmental management framework that incorporates realistic goals and targets and complies with established standards is developed, implemented and maintained.