OUR ENVIRONMENTAL WAY OF PROCEEDING

MOVING FORWARD OUR ECOLOGY STRATEGY AND ACTION PLAN
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In August 2010 the Jesuit Conference of Asia Pacific (JCAP) together with its lay apostolic partners laid out the Ecology Strategy and Action Plan towards achieving “Reconciliation with Creation” drawn from the discussion of the decree on mission, 35th General Congregation of the Society of Jesus.

The Conference acknowledged the need for finding ways in which our experiences could interact with our institutes, and our research and advocacy could have strategic practical benefits for our society and environment. Reconciliation with Creation is a concern of the whole Conference and it seeks expression in how we live and what we do.

The Ecology Task Force of Asia Pacific met in February 2011 and finalized Our Environmental Way of Proceeding as the overarching introductory document for us to connect our diverse efforts in ecological relations and ground our values. It is rooted in our spirituality seeking deeper relations with creation. This document serves as the basis to move forward our ecology strategy and action plan.
A CHALLENGE TO ACT WITH ECOLOGICAL RESPONSIBILITY TODAY

1] We know there are many problems and much mismanagement in how we as human societies affect the earth’s ecology. While many experts are analyzing the causes and effects of the changing ecological patterns of the world, we as individuals, in institutions and communities know we have to transform the way we live, taking responsibility for our actions. Yet, few people are confident in where to begin to take practical steps that bring us together to make a difference.

A CHALLENGE TO GO BEYOND SOLVING “THE ECOLOGICAL PROBLEM”

2] Pope John Paul II called for “ecological conversion.” Pope Benedict XVI reaffirmed this statement during the 2010 World Day of Peace by saying, “if you want to cultivate peace, protect creation.” This brings us to the deeper dimension of the relations in creation and not simply our ecological concerns. In experiencing creation as the basis for supporting and celebrating all life we realize creation is an ongoing gift in our relationships with God and neighbour. God’s initial creative action establishes all that is good and in our covenant with God as co-creators we sustain life. Christ as the new creation promises that he is with us, seeking to establish God’s reign of peace on earth and salvation of all creation. We need to share in this continuous creative action of God.

A CHALLENGE TO RESPOND

3] Humbly, we acknowledge our limitations and by sharing in the mission of the 35th General Congregation of the Society of Jesus we take up the central theme of reconciliation with creation, with neighbour and with God.

- We start from a deep gratitude for the gift of all life.
- We acknowledge that our personal decisions, witness, and commitment to establish right relations are not simply to sustain us in our comfort zone. This gives us courage to seek partnership in caring for our earth.
- We revise our sense of this being “our” earth and what our attitude needs to be in this relationship. We have learned we do not own the earth but that we belong to it.
• This relationship of belonging is foundational and dynamic, and in calling us to care draws out our deepest humanity.

4] Peace and sustainable ecology are the tight weave of our human reconciliation in creation and allows us engage in an advocacy of healing. These qualities call for change in the way we use natural and mineral resources, which have already become international sources of conflict and bases for war.

5] This approach is continuous with social healing extending to how people live on the land and with all life, where enriched relations are sought through spiritual awareness, human integrity and care for creation. In the Asia Pacific region we draw on diverse peoples, resources, beliefs, situations and learnings. There are many who are already working with deep integrity and right relations in this sphere. However, all of us, Jesuit people are asked to first establish credibility in our own homes and institutes as a basis for more effectively engaging in greater ecological responsibility with others.

ESTABLISHING OUR WAY OF PROCEEDING FOR “ECOLOGICAL CONVERSION”

6] Fr. Pedro Arrupe S.J. spoke of “our way of proceeding” as captured in the 34th General Congregation: Decree 26:1-9. In following this approach we draw out seven points deepening our response to the challenge of reconciliation with creation in our lives and institutes.

1. We acknowledge the Creator of all life and find some quiet moment each day to appreciate this with gratitude.

2. We as an organization seek to reflect and speak of what we experience and discern our relationship with and our responsibility for the earth's natural systems.

3. We recognize that the children and young people we see today inherit this living world as we now choose to sustain it by finding God at work in all things and actively seek to engage them.

4. We seek to reach out in solidarity and hope to the poor who are increasingly losing their livelihoods and ecological sustainability and incorporate their concerns in our care for the web of life.
5. We support good actions in contemporary culture and explore needed alternatives with decision, partnering with others in order to broaden our capacity to transform environmental attitudes and relations.

6. We seek the greater good of finding how people can work with the gifts of creation; we live life as a mission, to heal and share with others the fullness of life.

7. We accept the challenge of living sustainably in the world.

1. **We acknowledge the Creator of life and find some quiet moment each day to appreciate this with gratitude.**

7] If we are to succeed in responding to our global environmental crisis, our response needs to come from a deep experience of gratitude and hope. As Jesuits and partners, we begin with the attitude of finding God through creation as Ignatius did. We seek to understand, as did the Early Church Fathers, the deep relation between the Book of Revelation (the Bible) and ‘the Book of Nature’ (God’s creation around us) where God’s creative presence is felt running through all life.

8] This experience comes from a deep personal love of Jesus Christ, the gift of which runs counter to the culture of consumerism and seeks right relations with God, neighbour and creation. We continue to be dependent on the richness and constant rebirth of the land and seas. We find these relationships in creation through the Spirit who invigorates us to read carefully with hope the Signs of the Times in our care for all life.

9] We need to experience with gratitude the gift of our institutions. We operate through our institutions of learning service, research, and spiritual formation, not because of our own effort but as a product of grace, the history of working with others and the resources given.

10] Science plays a very important role in environmental research and management but it cannot encompass the whole human experience. We need to learn to take time to appreciate our beautiful mornings, children playing in the rain, a cherry tree in flower, as we move towards reconciliation with creation. Respect for life from a mystical experience, showing us the connectedness of all life. Our Asia Pacific cultures are rooted in this mystical understanding and are a source we can draw on
in renewing our attitudes, deepening our commitment and directing our human knowledge.

11] Our response to ecological crises from local to global positions cannot simply come from the power of technological resolution, policy, and application. We need to acknowledge the uncertainty of what the future holds and the interdependence of all systems, ecological and social. The problem is not to be outsourced to the experts. Rather, we are all called to seek a greater knowledge of nature and experience our interrelatedness and deeper gratitude for the meaning of life.

2. **WE AS AN ORGANIZATION SEEK TO REFLECT AND SPEAK OF WHAT WE EXPERIENCE AND DISCERN OUR RELATIONSHIP WITH AND OUR RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE EARTH’S NATURAL SYSTEMS.**

12] Reflection on our shared experiences helps form us in conscience, binds us in unity and guides us to shared and discerned actions across all our ministries. It is from the experience of gratitude, not power over creation, that our attitudes and expectations change and we learn to engage with greater resilience.

13] All of us live in relation with the natural world even when we do not recognize it. Many of us are prevented from receiving immediate feedback about the impact of our lifestyles. Complex systems provide for consumer needs based on resources from distant geographic areas where we may not be aware of our collective social and ecological impact. Short-term marketability becomes the basis for “resource development” and the greater interrelatedness is lost. We need to engage more deeply with the business world, and to discuss with them ecological concerns and quality of life, especially that of the poor.

14] The account of conscience that is a reflection on our fidelity to a shared and cared for world, bonds us with others, strengthening our sense of work and celebration. This is a bond that brings us beyond consumerism and comfort and into Christ’s mission and the service of all people. This allows us to more deeply consider others in our communication of the objectives, decisions and actions in the world. In this we share hope and seek accountability with humility.
Reflecting on our own way of doing things using the Ignatian Spiritual Exercises helps us see the conflicts between how we live—personally, in community, institutionally, and in society—and what we now know needs to be done. We come to better understand the basic justice and right relations needed, how others are working for a better environment and the choices we can make together. We find the strength for what we truly feel needs to be done by working in unity of purpose to take responsibility for the world’s natural resources.

3. We recognize that the children and young people we see today inherit this living world as we now choose to sustain it by finding God at work in all things and actively seek to engage them.

We desire to experience God as working in all of creation in such a way that we can live out this experience and relationship in all we do. In this way we acknowledge the gift of life and its goodness, and recognize how we are to work, knowing the initiative is through God. God is working, and has always been working in creation and this sensitivity draws out a human response that goes beyond immediate interests, and relates to all humanity and all generations. This allows us to recognize God while working with the problem, not simply giving thanks in the resolution of the problem.

As Christ labours in the world, we choose to join in that labour for others. We acknowledge that the world is not ours and that we live today not only for ourselves but for those around us and for the generations to come. We learn that anything we take must not be taken from others or from the sustainability of the land and seas or from the sustainability of our children and of their children.

Young people often express a freedom in asking the most truth-revealing questions and yet many are so easily captured by the things of the world and unhealthy ways of living and communicating. They are losing familiarity with all that is involved in working the land and experiencing nature. Today, fifty percent of the world’s population is urbanized. Young people are increasingly alienated from creation as the generational connection is lost.
19] As we work to strengthen the ecological dimension in our lives, this is a key opportunity for us to accompany the youth by strengthening their sense of connectivity and conscience in the world. As we listen deeply to them we may be able to encourage them to seek what is life-giving and advocate for the real changes needed to sustain their generation and those to come.

4. **We seek to reach out in hope to the poor who are increasingly losing their livelihoods and ecological sustainability and incorporate their concerns in our care for the web of life.**

20] The needs of the poor are great and in seeking reconciliation with creation, we seek anew to be reconciled with the poor, to understand their impact on the land, and address their daily needs and the hopes of their children. The world, especially the poor, the youth and those who struggle, need hope. We engage with hope and fidelity from the spiritual depth of recognizing Christ in our people and our land while listening to their story and how they seek justice and a new reconciliation.

21] Concern for the environment draws a limited response, yet everyone is now affected by environmental degradation: pollution, droughts and floods. However, the burden is not evenly spread. The poor bear the greater burden whether in overpopulated cities or marginal rural environments.

22] Urban pollution in many of our cities is something accepted as the norm. Poor air quality, urban congestion and the use of garbage dumps as locations for livelihoods of thousands of people are widespread. The quality of housing and services are not adequate to sustain dignified living for most of the urban poor. We lack not only the social prioritization and political will, but also the household-to-market economic relations and accountability to collectively transform the quality of urban living for all.

23] “Marginal environments” usually have low productivity, but are a critical source for ecological services affecting urban life. Forest degradation, increased rainfall runoff, biodiversity loss, soil erosion, poorly-managed mineral extraction and community displacement are
too often accepted as the cost of production and market competitiveness and are not given an economic value in the full cost of production.

24] We are called to be in solidarity with those who live in this urban degradation and to the other half of the world living in rural and often marginal environments.

25] We are learning of the interconnectivity of degraded environments, increased risks and disasters, resource conflicts, deteriorating ecological services, lack of livelihood security, loss of food security and quality, and forced migration. The poor bear the greater part of this burden. We know that many of our economic systems create and sustain poverty and degradation across the world and this is one of the greatest burdens we give to the next generation.

26] One of the important sources of relation with creation comes from indigenous peoples. Indigenous peoples are increasingly marginalized by the growing global demand for natural and mineral resources; they are also marginalized by the shortcomings in delivery of basic services and security of livelihood in many parts of the world; and inadequate attention is paid to their language, culture and relation to the land.

27] The training and technologies of our institutions are beginning to focus on responding to the needs of the poor. We have a long way to go in terms of establishing life-giving systems of resource use in our societies. Fundamental to this is our commitment to communities to strengthen their sense of meaning in life and increasing their resilience on the land through sustainable practices and market engagement.

5. **We seek the greater good of finding how people can work with the gifts of creation. We live life as a mission to heal and share with others the fullness of life.**

28] This is the frontier where we seek greater engagement for ecological accountability in continuing culture.

29] Today we are using all human means to understand the Earth’s ecological systems, local environments and their sustainability. We are challenged to engage with greater care and develop organizational systems and processes that centre on ecological systems. We are called
to renew our sense of identity as we transform our relations with the environment, adjust the ecological footprint of our consumption, learn to listen to others and give deeper meaning to our daily life.

30] Jesuit social and pastoral services and all ministries are engaged in this dialogue for change through civil society and governments. Many of our Jesuit initiatives in higher education are partnering in this learning and strengthening areas of critical contribution to environmental management. In line with this, our schools are developing greater ecological awareness and accountability among students, staff, and parents. We are challenged to participate and strengthen environmental responsibility. Efforts to manage our own institutes’ environment and waste are working examples of what can be done in terms of transformative actions that promote right relations with all.

31] Witnessing through personal choice in the public culture without imposing does help others engage in new opportunities for action, such as to reduce personal consumption, where excessive. As personal and public attitudes change and given the witness and credibility of individual and institutional action, the impact of lifestyle changes, training and programs are more likely to increase and connect.

32] We seek greater collaboration and networking amongst Jesuit institutions. We encourage partnering with other organizations and social strategies to broaden our capacity to impact greater social and ecological order that is in keeping with our commitment to justice. Through engagement programs we reach out with the youth to understand the lives of the poor. We learn to listen and accompany them in areas of capacity building, and livelihood options seeking a more secure and sustainable world.

33] Especially through our dialogue with indigenous peoples we learn of deep relations with the land and respect for creation. This allows us to learn the value of cultural and biological diversity, and seek new initiatives that bring about greater ecological and cultural security.
6. **We seek the greater good of finding how people can work with the gifts of creation; we live life as a mission, to heal and share with others the fullness of life.**

34] People, communities and the earth need healing. The role of the elders and the wise in our Asia Pacific region is often to heal, to elucidate virtue not simply to teach. We have to root our functional values and attitudes in our faith. We must also ensure that the poor have options that promote sustainable livelihoods and environmental security. We need to engage so that the availability of products on the market does not seduce us into immediate and seemingly easy, but short-sighted, responses that entrap us.

35] In our shared mission to heal we use our knowledge, draw on different cultural experiences, seek God’s grace, celebrate life and put this to use for the present generations with joy. We share a mission to search for the greater good and seek new ways of living out the challenge of reconciliation.

36] This is the renewed charism of seeking God in all things. It is inseparable from our charism and commitment for justice and peace. If we are to care for the common good, we cannot move forward without it being in the context of creation, without recognizing the need for good governance and management of the earth’s natural and mineral resources.

37] The mission of reconciliation with creation is present in all areas where we face change: in our social, cultural and pastoral work, in our initiatives with the youth, and the forcibly displaced, and in the educational, intellectual and organizational frontiers of our operations. Faced with many limitations, we know we have to learn a new way of living as community and as society. There are many Jesuits and partners working at the frontiers who give witness in caring for creation. We need to share much more widely and deeply in our different cultures in Asia Pacific a meaningful and faith-based ecological witness. We need to share this with those who suffer and those who yearn for peace across the land.
7. **We accept the challenge of living sustainably in the world.**

38] Today, we are faced with an uncertain future. We accept with hope the challenge of transforming the attitudes and actions that negatively impact on the environment, the options of the poor and those of future generations. Our hope and resilience come from understanding these impacts and how to work better in community and society with creation while sharing in the spirit of all life with all people. Our response is rooted in a deep desire for a just and caring society and for reconciliation with God, neighbour and creation.

39] As a result our ecological strategy is the concern of the whole Conference and seeks expression:

- through our institutions and lifestyles,
- through formation of young people, lay and scholastic,
- through governance of natural and mineral resources.

40] Our Environmental Way of Proceeding is a spiritual and social invitation to take up these three themes as a basis for moving our ecology strategy and relation with the land.
The Mekong Workshop

In July 2011, for the first time, Jesuit people in Asia Pacific met on ecology, with Reconciliation with Creation as the main theme. The workshop was held at the Bishop's House in Kompong Cham, Cambodia. The Mekong served to provide a learning environment for an experiential workshop.

The Mekong Workshop is an example of how “Our Environmental Way of Proceeding” is used as an introduction and preparation for engaging with ecology. It is a challenging approach because often we are trained to look for problems. Our immediate response is to know the issues. Rather, reconciliation with creation must start with an experience of the environment and the life of the people, with a deep sense of gratitude.

The workshop process allowed for time to walk along the Mekong, and reflect on its magnitude and acknowledge it as the source of so much life. The starting point of gratitude and love was significant and important to many of the participants. What we are missing at times is a framework that places us on a landscape, acknowledging what is good, and drawing in the relationships so we can take greater responsibility and seek reconciliation with all.

A certain shift in paradigm is needed. Ecology is not just science. We need to remember that we are talking about creation in our contemporary context: watching the flow of the Mekong, its vastness and stillness, its particular seasonal rhythm and sense of life, and the 60 million people living in this water defined area of life.

The challenge for the Jesuits is not only to bring the knowledge but also to bring out the hope and to find the basis for sharing that hope. We are also challenged to find the basis for acting in our contemporary culture, and to find a way to share this with others, so that we can live sustainably in the world.
If we are looking for an understanding of the document “Our Environmental Way of Proceeding” and an experience of reconciliation with creation with daily respect for all life that it orients us towards, we first of all need to set aside time.

Setting aside time is a little like setting aside a particular place with memory of friendship or setting aside the best of one’s harvest. When I set something aside there is, in a sense a pronouncement that this—whatever time or place—is given to something special; I am, in a manner of speaking, making it sacred, a place of deep friendship with a special one, with creation, with God, embraced by love.

Part of the process is basically acknowledging that this is going to be something different, a different emphasis on a relationship. And because this relates to all life around me, it also involves a place: a physical, living reality—an ecology of relations. Often, this is exactly what people do when they go on a retreat. They go for the calmness, the natural physical comfort, in terms of the coolness or the warmth of the landscape, the breeze, the wind or the crashing waves that gives one that lift and inspiration of something bigger than self. In the process of setting aside time and place, I am able to acknowledge that yes, I find God here. And yes, God surprises me sometimes by the beauty in creation, or when I am lost in thought and trip over a little stone, waking up to new realities. But the focus of a retreat is usually on God… in my life and maybe the society around me, and what I need to be
for others. More often, I leave un-reflected any sensitivity I may have of “finding God in all things” and recognizing that creation has an ongoing and critical relationship in all of my communications and actions with others.

In part, when I go to a retreat house and experience the beautiful grounds, I am not so conscious of how integral the life around me is and the fullness of that relationship and the gratitude that can emerge. Opening to that relationship with nature all around us is a very clear focus during the first week of the Spiritual Exercises: the expression of gratitude to God for all that we have received. It is a further step to reflect on this experience of “God in all things,” of creation that sustains me, and the gratitude and sense of responsibility that comes from a deeper spiritual and reflected life in the world.

In the same week of the Exercises I see the sinfulness and the difficulties that emerge in the world and I begin to choose where I stand. In the context of “Our Environmental Way of Proceeding”, this is a time that allows for a realization of the damage we have done, our sins against landscape and culture, and how extensive this social sin of consumption is, that has no knowledge of true costs and local degradation. This is where the focus stays with the environmental relations and the growing sense of responsibility I must share with others for the world we now manage.

How do we pray? We can use the Ignatian process of the Spiritual Exercises easily enough. But basically the first week is where we open up with gratitude very clearly not only in naming every animal, plant, and place that we go to, but also in naming the relationships that are there. That is what ecology is, what eco means—the relationships with creation that must be named and with humankind in the landscape today.

It is important to recognize, often with surprise and wonder, the complexity of each ecosystem and the history of activity in relation to the particularly located ecosystem that makes us part of the landscape. We also need to acknowledge that we are part of the landscape, sometimes in degrading ways, and also by contributing diversity and creativity. We need to understand what is happening in every part of the world, in oceans and ice caps, and understand the use and abuse of resources and peoples in these areas wherein relationships and human dignity often also suffer.
The further phase or step in the Exercises is to acknowledge our human destructiveness, our lack of time and appreciation for our dependence on nature, and how we forget where our food actually comes from. Yes we can look at global and local disasters and issues and needed advocacies, but this is not intended to be a review of one’s lifetime sins against creation and guilt. It is to find the conviction to change certain aspects of my lifestyle. There is a need to acknowledge this humbly, to confront the scientific knowledge that is part of the global conversation, to engage and to seek change.

At the same time, we acknowledge the generations that inherit this world, the needed solidarity and support for a contemporary culture of change, alternatives and partnerships needed in the transformation of society’s relation with nature. We need to accept deeply the challenge of living sustainably in the world as part of our relationship with God the Creator.

The point is that with gratitude and with the evident need for reconciliation, in line with the second week of the Exercises we experience a sense of mission: how it is we can live out our lives and not simply act, and how we live life with others with the reality of nature all around us.

If we are able to do that, we will be able to meet certain times of suffering both in terms of our advocacy and action. We can also contemplate what we will possibly be unable to attain, but that we will attain through others and the grace of God. This is where the subsequent steps of our environmental way of proceeding will help us identify that changes needed and work with others.

**THE BUSH HUT EXPERIENCE**

This was a workshop first held in January 2011 with the Jesuit Social Services’ staff and friends at the Bush Hut, South Yarra Bend Park, Melbourne. The group met in the afternoon to ease up from the week’s work and had an informal orientation to the weekend.

First they took time out to walk along the slopes, to see what’s interesting while taking in the light and the landscape. Walking around the bush enabled the group reflect on their own life in the process, to establish the goodness in life, and let the gratitude simply emerge. People often picked up something
during the walk, something they could handle. They expressed their own sentiments and gave time and space for a deeper gratitude as they gathered to share the evening thoughts.

The group continued to meet the following day and people took quite some time to acknowledge the obvious, which is usually not given time. This includes the extent of gratitude and how that supports our relationships, and relieves so many pressures, judgments, and expectations of the world around us.

Time was spent sharing about the institutions, in which people work, but sharing was mainly on our own lives and the manner in which people could actually give more time listening to others. Another walk down the slope and back up put a little physical stress and need for focus on some of the questions shared and how we go about making personal decisions. Jesuit Social Services is seen as an institute that allows such reflection and broader endorsement of life changing action. Work with the youth and with aboriginal people always creates space for other questions and time for exploration. Everything has not been done and there are the constant challenges by others that we are possibly missing in some ways. For those still around at the end of the activity, there was also a celebration of the Eucharist.

As the weeks passed, a few comments came back of what a difference it made to start out a Monday morning with a sense of gratitude. It changed peoples’ attitudes and engagements and allowed a freer flow of communications—whether this was about government policy, meetings, or just beginning the week with hope.

This process was repeated, more than a year later. This time, people were focused on how this could get translated in institutional action. There was a sense of deepening the involvement with the environment, but also of seeking the story within this work and strengthening the personal connection with social justice and ecology.

The process of engagement continued to center around an Ignatian way of looking at the world, or the “see-judge-act” framework. To “see” involves first looking at our own experience of the world and asking “how do we engage?”
The second step, to “judge”, is sometimes reframed as “assess,” which is a process of reflection on how the world and the people we engage with help connect us to the landscape of life. Finally, there is a call and challenge to “act” and we keep going through this process over time. For many, there are still questions about how we are called to respond and how we can encourage a positive response particularly from the youth.

The value of beginning with gratitude is important and the second bush hut experience called on people to reflect on how this experience of gratitude can help lead us to engage and respond to the world around us. Jesuit Social Services has three “domains”—human spirit, practice framework, and business processes—where it has posited its action and shares with others in seeking social and ecological justice.
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.
1] 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.

2] 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”.

3] 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.

4] 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.

5] 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.

6] 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.

7] 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.

8] 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

9] 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.

10] 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.

11] The publication in September 2011 of “Healing A Broken World” 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.

12] Reflecting on the “Healing A Broken World” document, “Our Environmental Way of Proceeding”, 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.

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 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.


**Environmental Governance**

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

25] 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 fulfill 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).

26] 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.

27] 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.

28] 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.

29] 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

30] 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.

31] 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.

32] 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 interdependence 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

33] 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.

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

38] 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.

39] 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.

**Sources:**

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