Advocacy, fund-raising and social action guidelines for Catholic schools in the Diocese of Wollongong

Which organisations should schools support?

Catholic schools need to make local decisions as to which organisations will receive support in a particular school year. Schools often have ongoing relationships with religious congregations, local community groups and other charities, and as long as these causes satisfy the criteria outlined in these guidelines, support for these should continue. Beyond this, though, is the need to prioritise Catholic justice, mission, health, welfare and ecological agencies that depend heavily upon Catholic school and parish support.

Schools should give particular support to the following:

Catholic Mission, known internationally as the Pontifical Mission Societies, is the only Catholic charity with a dedicated mission society for the benefit of children globally (Children’s Mission). Information on projects supported by the generosity of Catholics in parishes and schools, and on various teaching resources and programs can be found on their website: www.catholicmission.org.au

Caritas Australia is the Catholic agency for aid and development. They promote sustainable development, respond to emergencies and urge Australians to take action against structures that perpetuate poverty. Project Compassion is their Lenten appeal. In the event of a natural disaster, Caritas will also launch an appeal to provide life-saving supplies. www.caritas.org.au

CatholicCare is the official social services agency of the Church. They work alongside families and individuals in all stages of life, assisting with practical initiatives, life skills and wellbeing strategies to help people sustain positive relationships and cope with complex life transitions. Donations enable the development of new programs and services. www.catholiccare.woll.catholic.org.au

CatholicEarthcare Australia is the official ecological agency of the Australian Bishops. Its mission is to promote understanding among people that creation is sacred and endangered, and must be protected and sustained. CEA conducts research, education, advocacy and outreach programs to support the ecological conversion of the world. www.catholicearthcare.org.au

Religious Congregations work in a range of ministries in health, welfare, mission and justice. Through numerous agencies and individual efforts, religious and lay supporters do great work for the poor and marginalised. Schools may choose to support their local religious tradition or investigate other good works through the Catholic Vocations Ministry Australia website: www.catholicozvocations.org.au

St Vincent de Paul Society is a lay Catholic organisation that works to combat social injustice and to assist people in need, particularly the homeless and those in extreme poverty. Schools are able to establish their own St Vincent de Paul Conference or Mini-Vinnies program. Their major appeals each year are held in winter and at Christmas to provide resources and support to those most in need. www.vinnies.org.au

**“The Church cannot neglect the service of charity any more than she can neglect the Sacraments and the Word ... for the Church, charity is not a kind of welfare activity which could equally be left to others, but is a part of her nature, an indispensable expression of her very being.”**

Pope Benedict XVI, Deus Caritas Est, n 20, 25

"Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me."

Matthew 25:40

The GUIDELINES FOR FAITH-IN-ACTION have been developed by the Standing Committee for Religious Education to ensure the effective support for Catholic justice, mission and welfare agencies. The guidelines emphasise the need for school communities to engage with local and global issues of social concern and provide direction for assessing which organisations will be beneficiaries of advocacy and fundraising activities.
It is constitutive of their Catholic identity for schools to become knowledgeable about, engaged with and actively committed to the social mission of the Church. The Church moves through an incredible array of community services, locally and across the world, to serve the marginalized and forgotten people of the world. The work of many of these Church agencies relies heavily on donations and volunteer support.

Schools are encouraged to develop a strategic approach to supporting these agencies and for providing staff and students with practical opportunities to be of service to the community. The development of a whole school approach needs to align with School Review and Improvement processes with clear links to:

- **Key Area 1** Catholic Life and Religious Education
  Component 1-3 Catholic Life and Culture
  The allocation of appropriate personnel, time and resources should also link to local parish and diocesan initiatives enabling a more collaborative approach.

Within this context, there will be unexpected demands to respond to local or international crises. More effective programs can only be implemented as part of a larger-term strategy; short-term reactions can be effective in providing assistance to those in need, but they will not be sustainable. A strategic approach will also alleviate the pressure of responding to all requests for assistance, which will never be possible.

It is recommended that schools use the SEE-JUDGE-ACT methodology as a foundation for their planning. It is a simple approach, deeply rooted in the social action tradition of the Catholic Church. (The See-Judge-Act model was created by Cardinal Joseph Cardijn in the early 1900s for the Young Christian Workers movement)

**Principles and Practice of Catholic Social Action**

- **SEE**
  - Identify and research issues
  - Gather the data
  - Listen to the stories
  - Interact with the community

- **JUDGE**
  - Seek advice
  - Analyze
  - Prioritize
  - Corridor the choices
  - Decide priorities

- **ACT**
  - Educate
  - Promote
  - Support
  - Fundraise
  - Advocate

**Our love is not to be just words or more talk, but something real and active**

1. John 3:18

A message from Bishop Peter Ingham

Catholic schools participate in the Church’s mission “to bring the Good News to the poor” (Luke 4:18). In partnership with parents, parishes and other agencies within the Church and the broader community, Catholic schools are called to give witness to a faith which does justice with love. All have a responsibility to read the signs of the times and to respond with love and compassion, ever seeking to protect human dignity, to serve the common good and share resources and privilege.

The Church always seeks to follow the model of Jesus who served those around him with selfless love and a generosity of spirit. Pope Benedict XVI reminds us: “Love of neighbour is grounded in the love of God, that is, and found responsibility for each individual member of the body, but it is also a responsibility for the entire ecclesial community at every level: from the local community to the particular Church and the Church universal to its entirety. At the community, the Church must practice love. Love like this needs to be organized if it is to be an ordered service to the common good and share resources and privilege.

A holistic approach to service and education for social justice and peace in the world is necessary. Catholics can garner their resources to be of material assistance to the poor and needy.

The rich tradition of Catholic Social Teaching provides a practical framework within which to consider confirming social issues. I urge Catholic Schools to be in solidarity with the most vulnerable, the marginalised and those without a voice. The Australian Catholic Bishops’ Office for the Catholic community considered advice on guiding action through local and international understanding and they have established principles of ways in which Catholics can guarantee their resources to be of material assistance to the poor and needy.

I would like to acknowledge and celebrate the wonderful support which Catholic schools have given to various charities and agencies over many years. The support has had a significant impact on the quality of life of individuals and communites, both locally and abroad. It is an achievement to be very proud of. However, Catholic Schools are increasingly being confronted with competing demands from charities and agencies working within and beyond the Church. It is important that schools prioritise their responses and consider their responsibilities to Catholic agencies after a process of prayerful discernment and the seeking of wise counsel. This presents a great opportunity for Catholic schools to use their influence and to share responsibly the many talents, gifts and skills they are already rich in.

I heartily endorse the ‘see-judge-act’ methodology and the nine key principles outlined in these ‘Faith-in-Action’ guidelines as a resource for schools to use in making appropriate policy decisions within the framework of Catholic Social Teaching and a spirituality of stewardship.

If in doing so, it is my hope that we can better harness our resources for the greater good of all, and help our young people develop a solid faith approach to discipleship that will make them powerful agents for bringing about justice and peace in our world.

Most Rev. Peter Ingham DD

BISHOP OF WOLLONGONG

March 2011

For more information on the principles and practice of Catholic Social Teaching visit: www.socialjustice.catholic.org.au

Guidance For Schools

1. **CATHOLIC TEACHING**
   - Is the philosophy of the organisation or cause in accord with the Gospel of Jesus and the teachings of the Catholic Church? Some organisations may support ethical programs and projects in various areas. Does the organisation or cause respect the religious convictions of those who do not receive moral support from the Catholic Church?

2. **TRANSPARENCY**
   - Is information about the organisation or cause freely available and clear and honest about its goals, purpose and intentions? Is there responsible stewardship of funds? Is the income of a cause or organisation specifically used and do programs and operations involve support, and whether the program or processes are ethically sound.

3. **SUSTAINABILITY**
   - Does the organisation or cause intend to build sustainability within the communities where they are working? On-off charitable donations are appropriate in certain circumstances, however, it may be more effective to support programs that will be ongoing long after the initial funding has ceased.

4. **ACCOUNTABILITY**
   - Are the accounts and annual reports of the organisation or cause freely available and indicative of their costs? Catholic agencies have a tradition of ensuring that 90% of funds raised are spent on service delivery. A 10% reserve is set aside for such things as capital projects, and it is essential that this is not depleted.

5. **ALTRUISM**
   - Does the organisation or cause inspire a genuine spirit of generosity? Donors need to be encouraged to give without expecting personal reward, even to the point of disconnection or sacrifice. Unless emphasis should not be placed on giving praise or a commission, as the goal of charity and solidarity is not personal gain.

6. **EMPOWERMENT**
   - Does the organisation or cause promote collaborative projects that empower local people in decision making and implementation? Caution should be taken over projects that may place individuals at odds with their community, or which adopt a paternalistic attitude that does not respect self-determination.

7. **OTHER MEANS OF SUPPORT**
   - Does the organisation or cause receive widespread community or government support that gives them a financial advantage over lesser known bodies? Most Catholic agencies primarily depend upon the generous support of the Catholic community.

8. **HOLISTIC**
   - Does the organisation or cause fundraise directly or does it also promote education and the formation of people? A holistic approach to service and education for social change can make a greater difference than simply giving a donation. The greater goal should always be to create sustainable change.

9. **RELIGIOUS FREEDOM**
   - Does the organisation or cause use development and aid projects as a means to convert or spread one’s faith? The Catholic Church seeks to follow the model of Jesus who served those around him with selfless love and a generosity of spirit.