



# ECO JUSTICE GROUP TOOLKIT TERM 4 2021

A Primary school resource to support leaders of ecological justice groups.

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Oliva tending her garden in Zimbabwe. Credit: August Lucky

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# INTRODUCTION



Welcome to Catholic Earthcare Australia's Toolkit for Social Justice Leaders in Primary schools. This resource is to support your work with coordinating the ecological justice action group in your school. Each session is designed to be short as we know many school groups meet in their lunchbreak.

Catholic Earthcare is encouraging all schools and parishes to take action for our common home in answer to the urgent appeal from Pope Francis' encyclical and the Action Platform for Laudato Si'. We are also responding to the call from our Australian Catholic Bishops in the Social Justice Statement 2021-22, "Cry of the Earth, Cry of the Poor".



Wattle bloom. Credit: Gwen Michener

## Catholic Identity

An active and effective social and ecological justice group can contribute to the Catholic identity of your school by:

- giving prominence to the Gospel and person of Jesus Christ, as well as the Catholic Social Teaching principles
- being committed to the Christian vision of the dignity of each human person
- giving value and meaning to life, by encouraging students to aspire not to have more, but to Be More
- challenging students to understand and make sense of the world we live in
- enabling and empowering students to take action for a more just and fair world with direction, meaning, purpose and hope.

# CATHOLIC EARTHCARE AUSTRALIA

## A PROGRAM OF CARITAS AUSTRALIA



### About Catholic Earthcare Australia (CEA)

Catholic Earthcare Australia was first established in 2002 by the Australian Catholic Bishops Conference. It aims to promote an understanding among people that creation is sacred and endangered and must be protected and preserved for present and future generations.

Catholic Earthcare was incorporated into Caritas Australia in 2018 to create synergies between agencies that service the 'cry of the earth' and the 'cry of the poor'.

There are currently three programs: Catholic Earthcare Schools and an emerging Catholic Earthcare parishes and Catholic Earthcare Families program.

Our schools program aims to transform hearts and minds and enhance the Catholic identity of schools. There are five levels of accreditation with a star awarded for each level on a certificate. Professional support and resources are available.

Find out more and register to become a Catholic Earthcare School at: <https://catholicearthcare.org.au/earthcare-certified-schools-program/>

### About Caritas Australia

Caritas Australia assists marginalised communities to end poverty, uphold dignity and promote justice.

Caritas Australia works in partnership with communities in 18 countries around the world, as well as with First Australian communities. Caritas Australia provides various training programs; for example, how to grow food in a sustainable way, how to access clean water, ways to produce an ongoing income and much more.

Learn more using the "[Introduction to Caritas Australia](#)" PowerPoint.



Harvesting rice in Vietnam. Credit: Nguyen Minh Duc/ Caritas Australia

# PLANNING ACTION



## Plan how your group/school can take care of our common home.

Speak to your teachers, principal and deputy principal about setting up a Laudato Si' Group in your school. Ask one teacher to oversee the program.

Register to become a Catholic Earthcare school at <https://catholicearthcare.org.au/earthcare-certified-schools-program/>

Meet with your group and discuss which sustainability issue you would like to work on first.



## Tools to assist you

Use the environmental audits on the Catholic Earthcare website at Level 2 <https://catholicearthcare.org.au/earthcare-certified-schools-program/>

Use Caritas Australia's [Social Justice Action Planner](#) to help you plan an effective action.

## Some ideas

Create a butterfly attracting garden, reduce the amount of energy used by the school, start a soft plastics recycling system, save water or waste. The options are endless!

Contact [gwen.michener@caritas.org.au](mailto:gwen.michener@caritas.org.au) for assistance.

### SOCIAL JUSTICE ACTION PLANNER

Having group members

1. Think  
Organise tools or participants? Or is the task urgent?

2. Learn  
What do you need to know to do this? How do you find out? (e.g. from the Caritas Australia website or through research)

3. Think  
What is your group's goal? What are the steps? What are the resources? What are the risks? What are the rewards?

4. Contacts and permissions  
Who are the people you need to talk to? Who are the people you need to get permission from? Who are the people you need to get support from?

5. Set a date  
When will you start? When will you finish? When will you report back?

Justice begins with us

After we've done all we can, we'll help others. But we'll start with ourselves. How will we do that?

Reflect on faith and action  
What is the faith message that is inspiring you? How will you put it into practice? Who will you work with? Who will you support?

### ACTION PLAN

WHAT WILL BE YOUR ACTION?	WHAT TASKS NEED TO BE DONE?	WHY IS THIS A GOOD IDEA?	WHO WILL DO IT?	WHAT DATE IS IT DUE?
FUNDRAISING ACTION \$				
AWARENESS RAISING ACTION 👥				
SOLIDARITY ACTION 🌍				
JUSTICE ACTION ⚖️				

# PRAYER



*"Our common home is part of our family, like a sister with whom we share our life and a beautiful mother who opens her arms to embrace us." Francis, Laudato Si' n 1*

Creator God

Please help us to treat creation as if it were a member of our family

To understand that all parts of nature are connected

To see the beauty in the smallest of creatures and to care for all living things

To live in simpler ways to show kindness to all people

To hear the cry of the earth and the cry of the poor.

Amen



# FORMATION OF THE HEART

## WHAT IS LAUDATO SI'?



### Laudato Si'

Pope Francis has written a long letter to everyone on earth, asking us to look after the place where we all live, our common home. He called this long letter (actually a book) *Laudato Si' Mi Signore* which means *Praise to you my Lord!*

Find out more by watching the [Laudato Si' animation for children](#) from CAFOD (Caritas England and Wales).



### Discuss

Planet earth is a gift from God and it belongs to all of us.

We use all kinds of resources from our earth from the air we breathe to the food we eat.

- What are some resources we use from our common home?
- How have we treated these gifts from God?
- Do you think we are sharing the worlds' resources equally?

For more information about the Catholic Social Teaching principle, Care for our Common Home, go to [Caritas Australia's CST Toolkit](#).

# URBAN OCTOBER



**Urban October** was established by the UN General Assembly in 2013 and relates to Sustainable Development Goal 11; to make cities inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable.

**World Habitat Day is on the 4 October** and the theme for 2021 is “accelerating urban action for a carbon free world”. <https://unhabitat.org/events/world-habitat-day-2021>

**World Cities Day is on Oct 31** and the theme is adapting cities for climate resilience. <https://urbanoctober.unhabitat.org/wcd>



[This Photo](#) by Unknown Author is licensed under [CC BY](#)

- Most people in Australia live in cities and we produce a large amount of greenhouse gases. Make a list of activities that produce greenhouse gases in a city.
- Can you think of some ways we can reduce these greenhouse gases in our cities?
- What could local and state governments do to make our cities more liveable?
- What could you do at your school to make the environment more liveable? Tip: Plants absorb carbon and produce oxygen.
- Calculate your carbon footprint using the [UN Carbon Footprint Calculator](#)
- Discuss with your family how you could reduce the amount of carbon you produce.



# AUSTRALIAN WILDLIFE



*Pope Francis says we should love and respect all creatures because we all need one another. He goes further and says we are responsible for caring for this family. Francis, Laudato Si' n 42*



## Discuss the statement above

How do living things need people? Do people need other living things? Why does Pope Francis call other creatures our family? How can we love and respect all creatures?

The earth is getting drier and warmer which is changing the living conditions for Australian plants and animals. Humans clear native bush to make space for us to live or to grow food. This is making it difficult for our Australian animals to find a good place to live where there is food and shelter.



Brushtail Possum by Unknown Author is licensed under [CC BY-SA](#)

Australian Wildlife Week is commemorated during the first week of October each year, this week aims to encourage a positive relationship between humanity and nature. Further information at [Australian Wildlife Week](#)



**Create** Choose an Australian animal and find out what its habitat and environment looks like. Build a Diorama to show this environment using recycled and natural materials. Google for ideas!

## ACT

The Australian Wildlife Society is running a project called [#SnipRingsforWildlife](#)

This is an easy project everyone can get involved in; simply cut any plastic circular rings before placing them in the recycle bin.

# DISASTER RISK REDUCTION



The **13<sup>th</sup> of October** is **International Day for Disaster Risk Reduction**. There are some parts of the world that experience many high winds and tides, droughts, earthquakes and other natural disasters. Caritas Australia helps the communities we work with to prepare for disasters and to recover after the disaster has happened.

Climate change is making our weather warmer and drier which is causing unpredictable rain and less rain in many countries such as Africa. A warmer climate also causes more extreme weather like storm surges, typhoons and tsunamis. Source [CSIRO](#)

## View [Aloma's story](#)

- Why is this community planting mangroves?
- How will Aloma's children have a better future?



Aloma working in the mangrove nursery. Credit Richard Wainwright

## Discuss

- Is it a good idea to prepare for unexpected things that might happen?
- Do you have practice evacuations at school? Why do you think you have these?



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## Other Resources

[Disaster Risk Reduction](#)  
[Bushfire Resource 2020](#)

# WORLD FOOD DAY 16 OCTOBER



The world produces enough food to feed everyone but unfortunately not everyone has access to food. Sadly, up to 811 million people go to bed hungry every night. [Source](#)

- What might be some reasons for people not being able to get enough food?

A United Nations Environment Programme found that people around the world throw out 17% of the food they originally bought. That is a lot of food wasted! [Source](#)

- Can you think of some ways you could reduce the amount of food that is wasted?
- As Catholics, we believe that we are all one human family and should care for each other. This is called solidarity.
- How could you show solidarity to others who may not have enough food to eat?



Test your knowledge about food in the world with this [QUIZ](#)

## Introducing Phany:

Caritas Australia helps people around the world to grow plants and look after animals, so they can have food all year round. Let's meet Phany who lives in [Cambodia](#)

- What made it difficult for Phany to access food?
- What new techniques did she learn to help her grow food?



Phany growing rice in Cambodia. Credit: Richard Wainwright

# ERADICATING POVERTY



*"Both everyday experience and scientific research show that the gravest effects of all attacks on the environment are suffered by the poorest." Francis, Laudato Si' n 48*

**The International Day for the Eradication of Poverty is the 17<sup>th</sup> October**

- [Play this board game](#)
- [Test yourself with the Poverty quiz](#)



**Write a prayer** for the most marginalised and vulnerable people in the world.



How can you support the work of Caritas Australia and Catholic Earthcare?



# WATER



Water is very important because all living things need water to survive, the smallest of creatures and the largest, including us! Plants need water to grow and we need plants for food, medicine, wood and all kinds of things.

## National Water Week 18-24 October

- [Water Quiz](#)
- [Water board game](#)



**Write an Acrostic poem** using the word "water".  
Here is one to give you some ideas.

**W**hy did God create the sea, rivers and lakes?  
**A**ctually, it was to help all creatures to live in harmony  
**T**anks, taps and pipes bring water to our homes  
**E**veryday, we use water for cooking, cleaning and more  
**R**ejoice and thank God for the Rain!



Thandolwayo collecting water in Zimbabwe.  
Credit: Richard Wainwright

- Write down every time you use water in a day; from when you wake up, to when you go to sleep.
- How many taps, bathrooms and toilets do you have in your home?
- Now learn about [Thandolwayo](#) in Zimbabwe
- Write a few paragraphs on the similarities and differences between your life and Thandolwayos' life?

# NATIONAL RECYCLING WEEK



*“The earth, our home, is beginning to look more and more like an immense pile of filth.” Francis, Laudato Si’ n 21*

## Did you know?

The best way to create less waste is to **avoid** single use plastics and buying products with too much packaging in the first place. For example, **avoid** buying packaged fruit and vegetables, leave them loose or place them in a re usable bag.

## Raise Awareness

If the plastic can be scrunched and squashed, it is generally a soft plastic which means you can take it to a REDcycle collection bin at most supermarkets. For example, cereal bags and bubble wrap. 8 out of 10 councils find that soft plastics get caught in their recycling machinery and cause an issue. Unfortunately, only 47% of people know about this soft plastic recycling system. [Source](#)



Make a 1-2 min [video](#) to educate others about soft plastics recycling.

Have a look at this site to give you [some ideas](#)

National Recycling Week is the 8-14 November, however the **Schools Recycle Right Challenge** runs from **4 October to 12 November 2021. Get involved!** Access [lessons](#), activities and games.

The theme for 2021 is 'Recovery - A future beyond the bin'. The aim of National Recycling Week is to help reduce waste and assist people to recycle correctly.



**Recycling Plastics Right!**

**Avoid, Reduce, Re use, Recycle**


# NATIONAL RECYCLING WEEK



## Recycling Plastics Right

### Sorting out the plastic problem!

**You will need:** Gloves and a large piece of plastic you can spread rubbish on. Go outside, put your gloves on, spread your plastic out on the ground, you may need to place some rocks on each corner if it's a windy day! Tip the contents of one rubbish bin out on to the plastic!

Separate any plastic items you can find. Look for the number (1-7) and this triangle symbol  on the item. This number means the type of plastic the object is made from. It does not necessarily mean it can be recycled if it has this symbol on it, which is confusing for most people!

Generally only plastics 1 and 2 can be recycled using your council recycling bin. For more information, click on the bin



**Go home and educate your family about what you have learnt from these activities!**

**You could carry out this activity with the plastics in your home bin.**



**Raise awareness about recycling plastics. Prepare a talk to give to other classes, speak at assembly, create posters to put up near the school bins, show the videos you made on your schools website.**

# WORLD TOILET DAY



**World Toilet Day is on the 19 November each year.**

There are 4.2 billion people around the world who don't have a toilet, that is over half of all the people living in the world. [Source](#)

How many toilets do you have access to at school? How many wash basins do you have access to at school?

How many toilets do you have access to at home? How many wash basins do you have access to at home ?

**Did you know** 2 out of 5 people don't have a hand washing facility. It is very important to wash our hands after using the toilet to prevent the spread of germs. It is also important to help stop the spread of the COVID-19 virus. [Source](#)

## Arsad's Story

I'd like to introduce you to a man living with his family in Indonesia, his name is Arsad.

Arsad is a farmer from Indonesia. His family had no toileting facilities in their home. With the support of Caritas Australia, Arsad took part in hygiene and sanitation training and built a toilet in his own home. Now, he is teaching others in his community to build toilets too.

Watch his [story](#) and then complete the "Think/Pair/Share" activity.



Arsad washing his hands at his new toilet in Indonesia. Credit: Laz Harfa

## Think/Pair/Share

Think about how your life is different to Arsad's life?

Think about how your life is the same as Arsad's life?

Pair up with someone and talk about the similarities and differences.

What have you learnt from these activities?

How could you teach others in your school about this issue?



# SOIL



## The 5 December is Soil Day.

*“The entire material universe speaks of God’s love, his boundless affection for us. Soil, water, mountains – everything is, as it were, a caress of God.” Francis, Laudato Si’ n 84*

**Did you know** that one square metre of soil can have one billion creatures living in it!

- Can you name 4 living things you might find in soil? [Source](#)

### Become a Soil Sleuth!

You are more likely to find critters in the top compost layer, in moist soil in the morning. You will need a small ice cream tub or a tray, a magnifying glass, a paddle pop stick, a digging stick or small gardening trowel for each pair of students. If your school has a microscope that would be the best way to look at the animals. Remember to be gentle with all God’s creatures and return them to their home when you are finished looking at them.

Use this [Field guide App](#) to help you identify what you find. There is one for each state and it’s free. There are many other references you can Google to assist you or to carry out extension work after this activity.



Planting beans in Cambodia. Credit: Sam Rinang

Soil comes from broken pieces of rocks, so you can imagine how many thousands of years it has taken for our soil to form on earth. Soil is really important because it is the first place our food comes from. Plants absorb nutrients from the soil, then animals and humans eat these plants and/or other animals to obtain their food.

- Can you draw a diagram or a food chain to show this?

# COASTCARE



The ocean covers 70% of our common homes' surface. It is very important as it absorbs carbon and produces 50-80% of our oxygen. It also provides a home and food for many animals, as well as food for us!

Learn about Landcare Australia's Coastcare groups [Coastcare Landcare Australia](#)

Unfortunately, we see a lot of litter along the beach and in the water. 80% of the plastic found in the ocean comes from the land, very small amounts are from fishing and shipping litter, which means we can do something about it! Source: [EcoWatch](#)

Australians love spending time at the beach for swimming, playing and relaxing, so let's keep our beaches and water clean for us and the animals that live there.

**Watch** "What is [Plastic](#) Pollution?"

- Write down 3 facts you learnt.
- What can you do about this? Take a bag with you to collect litter whenever you go to the beach.
- Avoid, Reduce, Reuse and Recycle whenever you can. (see the slide on recycling in this kit to learn more)



Photo by [Dustan Woodhouse on Unsplash](#)

## Clean up your beach!

If your school is close to a beach, organise a clean up for an hour. This might only include your social justice group or you may want to include a few year levels or even make it a whole school event. You will need to give people a few weeks notice, ask them to dress appropriately for the weather on the day, bring gloves, tongs and a few big bags for your litter.

Use the action planner at the start of this kit to help you. For some tips on organizing a beach clean up. Visit [NEEF](#).

# SOLIDARITY



*"We need to strengthen the conviction that we are one single human family. There are no frontiers or barriers, political or social, behind which we can hide, still less is there room for the globalization of indifference." Francis Laudato Si' n 52*

**International Human Solidarity Day is observed on the 20 December.**

Learn more about [Solidarity](#)

**Watch** the video clip on [Solidarity](#)

- Explain what solidarity means to a friend
- How can you be a Laudato Si' leader in your school? (Look back to page 7 if you have forgotten about Laudato Si')
- How can your ecological justice group become leaders in your school?
- Pope Francis says "Less is More". What does this mean and why do you think he wants us to live with less?



Tawonga (centre) is the youngest of six children and was born with one weaker leg, so she walks with the aid of crutches. Credit: Pilirani Chimombo



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# THANK YOU!



[catholicearthcare.org.au](http://catholicearthcare.org.au)