

## Social Justice Policy

### Definition & Aspects of Mission Statement:

The scriptures provide the Christian understanding of social justice. Central to the life and preaching of Jesus is the reign of God which symbolised God's intentions for humankind and all creation – love and fullness of life, wholeness and holiness, community and interdependence, values personal and social, spiritual and political, to be “done on earth as in heaven.”<sup>1</sup>

The John Paul College vision challenges its members to be disciples of Jesus: *With Him is the fullness of life*. It is imperative for a disciple of Jesus to work for justice in the world.

### Policy

The John Paul College community seeks to be people who are formed, informed and encouraged to action in the ways of justice. “My mother and my brothers (and sisters) are those who hear the word of God and do it” (Lk 8:21).

Our Gospel values informing this policy include: Dignity of the Person; Community; Equity; Inclusiveness; Reconciliation; Justice; Freedom; Non-Violence; Peace; Option for the Poor.

Gospel Values along with the major themes of Catholic Social Teaching<sup>2</sup> are central to social justice at John Paul College:

1. The Dignity of the Human Person
2. The Common Good and Community
3. The Preferential Option for the Poor
4. Rights and Responsibilities
5. Role of Government and Subsidiarity
6. Economic Justice
7. Stewardship of God's Creation
8. Promotion of Peace and Disarmament
9. Participation
10. Global Solidarity and Development
11. Forgiveness and Reconciliation
12. Sacredness of Human Life

John Paul College programs, processes and entire curriculum are compelled by Gospel Values and the spirit of Catholic Social Teaching.

*“It is charity, or love, that leads us to work with courage and generosity for justice, peace and development. We feel this impulse because it was placed in our hearts and minds by God”.*<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Thomas Groome, *Educating For Life, A Spiritual Vision for Every Teacher and Parent*. Thomas More Press: 1998. P. 368

<sup>2</sup> These are the key principles from Catholic Social Teaching documents of the last century.

<sup>3</sup> #1 *Caritas In Veritate*, Benedict XVI’s Encyclical: *Integral Human Development in Charity & Truth*, 2009. This is a key document given by Pope Benedict on 29th June 2009. *Caritas in Veritate* reflects on critical themes of all of the social documents of the last forty years of Catholic Social Teaching.

## Students

Whilst it is the responsibility of all areas of learning to promote Gospel Values, particularly, though not exclusively, students are led through religious education programs to understand the need to live as just and peace-loving people. Religious education class is often the forum where students can voice their concerns for the world in terms of what they see as pivotal justice issues. For example: environment, water, health, individual and community freedom, sustainability, beginning and end-of-life questions, greed, rich countries stock piling and causing hardship to others, supremacy of technology, marginalised people, and reconciliation are only some of the issues students want to be engaged in discussion and be directed and challenged to live in a way that is more faithful to the Gospel.

Students can also elect to commit themselves to participate in special justice initiatives including but not limited to:

- John Paul College Young St. Vincent De Paul Conference;
- the annual regional St. Vincent De Paul schools conference day;
- Youth ministry teams;
- College Soup Van – The Community Companion
- International Mission Immersions

Mission Action Day is a highlight each year with its focus on education on issues of poverty; service and sacrifice to raise funds for John Paul College founding orders (Faithful Companions of Jesus; Marianists) overseas missionary activities and programs. Further to this, students are engaged in winter and Christmas appeals to supply goods to local St. Vincent De Paul Conferences to assist those in need. Independent of other fundraising initiatives is the College engagement with the annual Caritas Project compassion which is well supported by both students and staff.

Students are also provided with opportunities to attend various social justice conferences and workshops throughout the year which enable them to interact on justice issues with other students from other schools.



## Parents and the wider community

Students particularly, encourage their parents to become involved in the John Paul College social justice initiatives. Parents are also informed of events through our community newsletter and through this and other means, staff inform and invite parents into matters of social justice. Parents can inform John Paul College about social justice needs within the local community.

## Staff

All staff at John Paul College have a responsibility to be attuned to local and global needs in terms of social justice. Knowing the needs of the poor and then needs of the world can be the first step of bringing students to the point of conscientization.<sup>4</sup> Teachers need to be informed and well prepared in order to confidently lead and explore with the students the ways of living justly according to the Gospels and Catholic Social Teaching.

Given the complexity of today's world a high priority needs to be given to the professional development of staff in the area. The Biennial Conference: Peninsula Catholic Education Cluster held at John Paul College frequently offers formation in justice education for teachers as well as our staff spirituality days.

While education of justice cannot be reduced to only fund-raising activities nevertheless increasing awareness through fund raising is an important aspect of justice education. A school discernment process is essential to ensure fundraising within the College supports Catholic Charities. All charities and activities require Principal Approval.

Fundraising for justice at John Paul College is planned through the four Houses: Chaminade, d'Houet, Olsen and Turner<sup>5</sup> and in keeping with the Archdiocesan Guidelines.<sup>6</sup>

## Conclusion

John Paul College social justice policy truthfully directs us in the way of the Gospel. We keep in mind the following from *Gaudium et Spes*, Vatican Council 11. <sup>7</sup>

### *Solidarity of the Church with the Whole Human Family*

*The joys and hopes, the grief and anguish of the people of our time, especially of those who are poor or afflicted, are the joys and hopes, the grief and anguish of the followers of Christ as well. Nothing that is genuinely human fails to find an echo in their hearts. #1*

*In every age, the church carries the responsibility of reading the signs of the times and of interpreting them in the light of the Gospel, if it is to carry out its task. In language intelligible to every generation, it should be able to answer the ever recurring questions which people ask about the meaning of this present life and of the life to come, and how one is related to the other. We must be aware of and understand the aspirations, the yearnings, and the often dramatic features of the world in which we live. #4*



John Paul College needs to be alerted, enabled and empowered to act with justice. This can only effectively happen by taking all of the John Paul College community to the heart of Christ: *With Him is the fullness of life.*<sup>8</sup>

**Policy review date:**

**Bibliography**

1. Buchanan, M & Rymarz, R., 2008. An Introduction to Catholic Education: Current Perspectives, (David Barlow Pub: Terrigal N.S.W.) pp.83-91.
2. Cully, I & Cully, K., (ed.) 1990 Encyclopaedia of Religious Education (Harper & Row Pub. San Francisco) p. 157.
3. Freire, P., 1968 Pedagogy of the Oppressed, (The Seabury Press: NY)
4. Groom, T., 1991 Sharing Faith: a Comprehensive Approach to Religious Education and Pastoral Ministry (Harper: San Francisco) pp. 380-406.
5. Hughes, P. (for the Christian Research Association), 2007 Putting Life Together: Findings from the Australian Youth Spirituality Research (Fairfield Press: Fairfield Victoria)
6. Nolan, A., 2007 Jesus Today: a Spirituality of Radical Freedom, (Orbis Books: Maryknoll. NY).

**Church Documents**

1. Caritas in Veritate, Benedict XVI's Encyclical: Integral Human Development in Charity & Truth, 2009
2. Gaudium et Spes, Vatican Council 11, 1965
3. Melbourne Archdiocese Guidelines for Action and Fundraising for Social Justice, 2007.

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<sup>4</sup> This process of conscientization is Paulo Freire's philosophy of education. Put simply this means educating for conscious-raising awareness towards action. A critical step of this process is reflection. See Pedagogy of the Oppressed by Paulo Freire (the Seabury Press: NY: translated 1968).

<sup>5</sup> Student Programs Coordinator prepares documentation and implementation of this each year.

<sup>6</sup> Melbourne Archdiocese Guidelines for Action and Fundraising for Social Justice. See attached document.

<sup>7</sup> Gaudium et Spes, Vatican Council 11, 1965

<sup>8</sup> From the John Paul College Vision Statement. See the inside back cover of the Student Planner. These same sentiments are beautifully expressed in the concluding paragraph #79 of Caritas in Veritate.

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