

# Integral Ecology Policy



INSTITUTE OF  
**SISTERS of MERCY**  
OF AUSTRALIA & PAPUA NEW GUINEA



# Introduction

Following the recommendations from the Institute's Ecological Reference Group, in September 2020, the ILT approved the Laudato Si' Action platform as the framework for Integral Ecology and as the contemporary expression of our Mercy and Faith Tradition. This was reinforced in the Institute Priorities 2020-2021 (25 September 2020) so that our Institute could contribute towards making communities around the world sustainable and regenerative in the spirit of the Integral Ecology of Laudato Si'.

This framework complements and strengthens the aims of the Institute's original policy "An Integrated Approach to Sustainable Living" (2016) and references the Seven Goals of Laudato Si' (LSGs) and the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).



## Laudato Si' Goals Aligned with Institute Priorities

The integrated action program of the Laudato Si' Action Platform has seven key goals (see Objectives) which the Ecological Reference Group summarised into the following actions and named in the Institute Priorities. The adoption of such a platform was endorsed in the Priorities: "A framework for 'ecological conversion' has been developed and offered to all in the Institute" (Institute Priorities p. 7).

### 1 Response to the Cry of Earth, and



### 2 Response to the cry of those rendered poor



"Opportunities are offered to Sisters and Colleagues for participation in reflective processes to interpret together the signs of the times in relation to a merciful response; and to hear the voices of First Nations People." (Institute Priorities p. 7).

### 3 Ecological Economics



"When all Institute business policies are reviewed in 2021, they have been reviewed in light of Integral Ecology principles and values" (Institute Priorities p. 9).

### 4 Adoption of Simple Lifestyles



"Sisters and Colleagues share their practices and learnings in living a simple lifestyle" (Institute Priorities p. 7).

### 5 Ecological Education



"Opportunities for education and spiritual development have been offered and are increasingly taken up," "Participation in various forms of ongoing formation has been increased" (Institute Priorities p. 7).

### 6 Ecological Spirituality



"Sisters and Colleagues have been invited to participate in opportunities to understand the theology of Integral Ecology. "We continue to strengthen collaboration with Mercy Global initiatives..." (Mercy Global Presence) (Institute Priorities p. 5).

### 7 Emphasis on Community Involvement and Participatory Action



"A framework and process for advocacy has been developed" (Institute Priorities p. 5) "The richness of the former congregations continues to be acknowledged..." (Institute Priorities p. 7) "More sisters and colleagues are engaging with Mercy Global Action initiatives and processes" (Institute Priorities p. 5).

The Institute is committed to promoting and adopting an integral ecology approach to sustainable living across the whole Institute to respect, reverence, conserve and renew our global environment. Our approach to this policy incorporates the following guiding principles: -

- Our motivation to implement this policy comes from our desire to understand our human place and responsibilities within the context of Earth's living systems. *We are part of nature, included in it and thus in constant interaction with it. (Laudato Si' 139).*
- We will work collaboratively with relevant internal teams and external partners to identify opportunities to implement change to more sustainable and regenerative practices at the local, national and global level.
- Any changes we implement will be appropriate and practical and informed by contemporary scientific knowledge and regenerative practices.
- We will regularly measure and monitor our impact.
- We will share our knowledge and experience across the Institute and with others.

## Scope

The policy statement, guiding principles and overarching objectives apply across the whole of the Institute and its ministries. It aims to guide all those involved to develop measurable targets (outputs and outcomes) supported by actions (policies, programs and procedures) which align with our commitment to an integrated approach to sustainable living and social responsibility. It is acknowledged that the Institute's ministries may develop their own Integral Ecology policy based on this framework.

## Rationale

We, as members of the Institute, are committed to respond to local and global issues of injustice. We bring to our response an understanding of the sacredness and interconnectedness of all creation. Our call is to contribute to a "flourishing humanity on a thriving planet rich in species in an evolving universe, all together filled with the glory of God" (Elizabeth Johnson, *Ask the Beasts*, 286). Currently our world is challenged by the devastating reality that two-thirds of the global human population lives in hunger, poverty and disadvantage and our planet is threatened as never before with mass destruction of its life-forms and life-support systems. We are also aware that those rendered poor in the world are disproportionately affected by this destruction.

In the spirit of our Constitutions, the Institute affirms Pope Francis' appeal to the peoples of the world to undergo "an 'ecological conversion', whereby the effects of [our] encounter with Jesus Christ become evident in [our] relationship with the world around [us]" (Laudato Si', 217). We recognise that the planet is faced with global deterioration and destruction

at an unprecedented rate but "[h]umanity still has the ability to work together in building our common home" (LS, 13). We also recognise that "[l]iving our vocation to be protectors of God's handiwork is essential to a life of virtue; it is not an optional extra or a secondary aspect of our Christian experience" (LS, 217). It arises out of our commitment to gospel justice and our contemplative stance towards the mystery of God as revealed in the ongoing story of the universe.

Our mercy values align with Integral Ecology, and the theology and spirituality which underpin it. Our Constitutions state: "We know that as members of the Earth community, we are integrally connected with each other and with the whole of creation" (Const 2. 02). This knowledge is vital if we are to care for our common home in ways which "break with the logic of violence, exploitation and selfishness" (LS, 230). This policy seeks to enable the whole Institute to respond to Pope Francis' call in *Laudato Si'* and to give witness through the values that are evident in the very fabric of the Institute and the lives of its members.

# 1. Objectives

Sisters, staff and volunteers and ministry partners across the Institute are responsible for developing measurable targets which align with some or all of the objectives, as appropriate for their operations. The goals below complement the environmental sustainability themes of the original Sustainable Living policy of energy, water, waste, transport, procurement, investment and infrastructure and integrate them under the wider scope of Integral Ecology.

This Integral Ecology policy impels us to respond to the seven goals of the Laudato Si' action platform in line with the recommendations of the Institute's Ecological Reference Group:

**Response to the Cry of the Earth** (greater use of clean renewable energy and reducing fossil fuels in order to achieve carbon neutrality, efforts to protect and promote biodiversity, guaranteeing access to clean water for all).

**Response to the Cry of the Poor** (defence of human life from conception to death and all forms of life on Earth, with special attention to vulnerable groups such as indigenous communities, migrants, children at risk through slavery).

**Ecological Economics** (sustainable production, Fair-trade, ethical consumption, ethical investments, divestment from fossil fuels and any economic activity harmful to the planet and the people, investment in renewable energy).

**Adoption of Sustainable Lifestyles** (sobriety in the use of resources and energy, avoid single-use plastic, adopt a more plant-based diet and reduce meat consumption, greater use of public transport and avoid polluting modes of transportation).

**Ecological Education** (re-think and re-design educational curricula and educational institution reform in the spirit of integral ecology to create ecological awareness and action, promoting the ecological vocation of young people, teachers and leaders of education).

**Ecological Spirituality** (recover a religious vision of God's creation, encourage greater contact with the natural world in a spirit of wonder, praise, joy and gratitude, promote creation-centred liturgical celebrations, develop ecological catechesis, prayer, retreats, formation).

**Emphasis on Community Involvement and Participatory Action** to care for creation at the local, regional, national and international levels (promote advocacy and people's campaigns, encourage rootedness in local territory and neighbourhood ecosystems).



## 2. Policies, Programs, Procedures

Our Integral Ecology policy provides a framework for the Institute and ministry partners to develop policies, programs and procedures which will contribute to achieving our overarching objectives. The policies, programs and procedures may relate to:

- **Activities and operations:** The activities and operations undertaken in association with the Institute and ministry partners.
- **Education and formation:** Education and formation programs led by the Institute.
- **Advocacy:** Advocating for the whole of the Earth community.

## 3. Policy Preparation, Review and Approval

This policy will be reviewed every two years through the Integral Ecology Advisory Group and approved by the ILT. This is reflected in the Terms of Reference for this meeting group and the risk management system has an alert for every 2 years linked to the content manager (*Integral Ecology Animator and the Mission and Ministry Resource Group Coordinator*).

## Definitions

**ISMAPNG** means Institute of Sisters of Mercy of Australia and Papua New Guinea (the Institute), a religious institute of pontifical right and a public juridic person within the Catholic Church.

“**Corporate Entities**” means Institute Property Association Limited, McAuley Property Limited, Mercy Sisters Ltd, The Sisters of Mercy of Papua New Guinea Inc., Mercy Support Ltd, McAuley Ministries Ltd and Catherine McAuley Services Ltd.

**Sisters** means all members of the Institute.

**Staff** means a person, whether remunerated or not, working on behalf of the Institute or the Corporate Entities listed including employees, contractors, sub-contractors, temporary staff and volunteers.

## Related Documents

- **An Integrated Approach to Sustainable Living**
- Integral Ecology Advisory Group terms of Reference
- Environmental Management Plan
- Integral Ecology Formation Plan 2020-2021
- Ecological Reference group report to the ILT 19 August 2020
- Institute Priorities 2020-2021 25 September 2020
- **Laudato Si' Action Platform**

## Contact

[institute@ismapng.org.au](mailto:institute@ismapng.org.au)