

**EDMUND RICE EDUCATION
AUSTRALIA**



THE CHARTER

**A PROCLAMATION OF AN AUTHENTIC
EXPRESSION OF
EDMUND RICE EDUCATION
AS APPLIED TO
CATHOLIC SCHOOLS IN THE EDMUND RICE TRADITION**

*One of a series of core documents prepared by
The National Planning Committee for Schools Governance
Christian Brothers Australia*

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PROCLAMATION

THE CALL TO RENEWAL

EDUCATING THE MINDS AND HEARTS OF THE YOUNG

The Christian Brothers’ international Congregation Chapter of 2002, held in Rome, recognised that a call to educate the minds and hearts of the young is at the “Heart of Being Brother”. In its deliberations the Chapter “acknowledged the immense contribution of the last 200 years that Brothers and their colleagues have made to the liberating education of the young”.

It is timely that this Chapter directs us to identify the distinctive cultural characteristics of Catholic schools that are in the Edmund Rice tradition and to develop a network of those involved in the transmission and development of the Edmund Rice charism through our schools. These distinctive cultural characteristics underpin the Charter, which aims to express the Edmund Rice tradition as an educational vision for Australian schools owned and operated by the Christian Brothers in the 21st century.

We, the Leaders of the four Australian Provinces, proclaim this Charter to enable schools to authenticate their endeavour in this tradition. The formulation of the Charter has been the result of consultation and collaboration by the Christian Brothers and their co-workers in the schools throughout Australia. Embraced by each school, the Charter aims to inspire school communities to foster energetically the vision of a charismatic leader, Blessed Edmund Rice, in the Spirit of Christ and the educational mission of the Catholic Church.

As a living document the Charter will continue to evolve through review and reflection as the demands of our changing times are read and interpreted in the light of the unchanging Gospel.

Given our imprimatur and proclaimed in Perth Western Australia this 12th day of March 2004.

Br Kevin Ryan cfc
Province Leader
Holy Spirit Province
WA & SA

Br Peter Dowling cfc
Province Leader
St Patrick’s Province
Vic & Tas

Br Laurie Needham cfc
Province Leader
St Mary’s Province
NSW & ACT

Br Luke Quinn cfc
Province Leader
St Francis Xavier Province
Qld & NT



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SECTION I

JESUS CHRIST

At the heart of the Christian Gospel is Jesus Christ, the Incarnate Word of God. Christ reveals the Spirit and face of the Father and the authentic form of our humanity. He is the touchstone against which we measure the quality of every aspect of our lives. He is the cornerstone who shapes and directs our Christian living.

Jesus is the embodiment of the love and forgiveness of God acting in the power of the Spirit in every age. In His words and deeds, in His life, death and resurrection, Jesus calls men and women to follow Him. He saw in each individual a human person made in the image and likeness of God. Jesus had a vision of what people could be and gave His very life as a gift that this might be achieved.

Great Christians, in living union with Christ, have shared His vision through the ages. Their intimacy with God gives them a new way of looking at the world. Their eyes have opened to the beauty, value and dignity of every human person. Such a person was Blessed Edmund Rice.

SECTION II

BLESSED EDMUND RICE

Life

Edmund was born in Callan, County Kilkenny, Ireland, in 1762. As a young man, he came to the bustling city port of Waterford and worked in his uncle's business. He was talented and energetic and became a very wealthy man. In 1785 he fell in love and married Mary Elliot. His happiness was shattered by the tragic death of his wife just four years later. Mary died in childbirth, and Edmund was left with a handicapped daughter, also named Mary. This shattering experience was the turning point in his life.

Edmund spent more and more time in prayer and in helping and empowering great numbers of people in Waterford who suffered poverty and injustice. In 1802 he set up a free school for poor young boys. Having provided for his daughter, Mary, he left his comfortable home and lived above the school he had recently founded.

Influenced by the work of Nano Nagle, the founder of the Presentation Sisters, he gathered around him a group of men. These he formed into a community of religious brothers dedicated to "raising up the poor".

Charism - The Gift of Edmund Rice to Church and Society

Throughout the ages, various ways of proclaiming the gospel and witnessing to the Kingdom have emerged within the Church.

Every era can boast followers of Jesus who, under the influence of the Holy Spirit, turn their individual gifts and personality to the service of God's Kingdom in their world, sometimes with remarkable ingenuity and in ways totally attuned to the historical situation.



Although their ministry has its beginnings in their own individual gifts and abilities that are given the name of charism, the ministry is always carried out on behalf of the Christian community in response to a call of God. The unique gifts of the founders of religious congregations bring about God's reign in a special manner.

Often charism becomes officially recognised and built into the structure of the Church's mission, regulated by Canon Law and with clear accountabilities. Such was the case with Blessed Edmund Rice and the Congregation of Christian Brothers that he founded. Through Edmund's meditation on the Gospel, he became more keenly aware of the oppressive social and political realities of his day. He recognised that the education system discriminated against the poor. In the unschooled and undisciplined boys of Waterford, he found images of God.

*Deeply aware of the Father's providential presence in his life,
Edmund was moved by the Holy Spirit to open his whole heart to
Christ present and appealing to him in the poor.*

With his sense of the God-given dignity of the poor, he saw education as a means by which to recognise and promote this dignity, through liberation for personal and communal empowerment.

Legacy

Edmund is honoured as the founder of both the Christian Brothers and the Presentation Brothers. For more than two centuries, many have been and continue to be attracted by his vision and generosity. The mission continues today on all five continents through the ministry of Christian Brothers and laity called to serve in this vocation of Catholic Education.

The Christian Brothers came to Australia – first of all, to Sydney – in 1843, at the invitation of Archbishop Polding, but left in 1848.

They arrived in Melbourne in 1868 at the invitation of Bishop James Goold. Within thirty-five years, the remarkable Brother Patrick Ambrose Treacy had responded to invitations from various Bishops to establish schools in the Dioceses of Brisbane, Sydney, Adelaide, Dunedin and Perth. The task of the Brothers in Australia, as mandated by the Bishops, was the evangelisation of the mainly poor, mainly Irish, Catholic families of the colonies.

The gift to Australian Catholic education since 1868 has been profound. The ministry of the Christian Brothers and their co-workers is active in all States and Territories of Australia and continues to be expressed in multiple forms.

At the beginning of the 21st century in Australia, there is a continuing need for Catholic schools in the Edmund Rice tradition to reflect on their purpose and role. This is borne out by the complexity of the modern world and the challenges confronting young people in their search for meaning. All members of these schools are called by way of their vocation to be committed to reflect deeply on engrained practices and issues relevant to spirituality. They are called to provide education that is transformational and liberating within the reign of God for the world.

These imperatives for Edmund Rice Education are consistent with and supportive of the educational philosophy articulated in the *2000 Adelaide Declaration – Goals for Schooling for a Future Australia*. Critical to the success of the school is its consciousness of and interaction with the contexts in which it operates. These include the cultural and social context within which the school exists, the Church whose mission it embraces, the philosophy it espouses, and the classrooms within which its core service is provided.



SECTION III

CATHOLIC EDUCATION

Education involves the collaborative facilitation of development within life.

The vision for Catholic Education is the facilitation of development based on the Christian life, expressed within the Catholic Tradition. Catholic Education is a ministry centred on Christ's vision for humanity, focused on authentic human growth and given expression through principles of faith tradition, quality service and developmental excellence. It embraces a great tradition, covers the whole of life, is evidenced primarily in schools and is administered authentically. The outcomes of Catholic Education are seen holistically in people, relationships, communities, processes and structures.

The identity of the Catholic school at its deepest philosophical level is the identity of the Catholic Church. Hence the distinctiveness of Catholic Education is linked to the distinctive characteristics of Catholicism.

It is these same characteristics that are reflected in the whole curriculum of the Catholic school, defined as the totality of the learning experiences embraced by the school. The distinctiveness of Catholic Education rests in its religious dimension, in which learners are supported as they grow within a faith tradition that offers a perspective of what it means to be authentically human.

SECTION IV

CATHOLIC EDUCATION IN THE EDMUND RICE TRADITION

Edmund Rice Education exists as part of the evangelising mission of the universal Catholic Church.

Each Catholic school in the Edmund Rice tradition shares in the mission and communion of its local Church.

These schools give emphasis to liberation through the empowering service of education, for the sake of the kingdom and the promise of abundant life for all. They are built on the cornerstone of Christ, the Tradition of the Church in Education, the charism of Blessed Edmund Rice and the continuing power of the Spirit.

These foundations find expression in learning communities with the following Cultural Characteristics.



SECTION V

CULTURAL CHARACTERISTICS AT THE HEART OF A CATHOLIC SCHOOL IN THE EDMUND RICE TRADITION

Schools conducted in the Edmund Rice tradition offer a distinctive Catholic educational philosophy. Vision and Mission Statements give expression to the distinctiveness of the educational ministry as it serves the mission of the Church in today's world. This Charter seeks to articulate the cultural characteristics of the Edmund Rice educational tradition for Australia in the 21st century.

There is no single component of the vision, mission and practice of a Catholic school in the Edmund Rice tradition that determines its distinctiveness. The vision and mission have their heart in the mission and ministry of Jesus, the Catholic Church and the charism of Edmund. In this context there is a need to look at the sum total of the Gospel message, the Tradition of the Church and the unique response made by Blessed Edmund to the movement of God's Spirit. The formulation of this Charter, describing the cultural characteristics of a Catholic school authentic to the Edmund Rice tradition, embraces this holistic approach.

The following cultural characteristics emerged from extensive consultation and research. They are proclaimed as an authentic expression of the charism of Blessed Edmund Rice, expressed in dynamic and adaptive learning communities. The integration of these cultural characteristics, and much more, reflects the mission of a Catholic school in the Edmund Rice tradition.



HOLISTIC EDUCATION

Integrated development occurs through quality teaching and learning.

1. A Catholic school in the Edmund Rice tradition provides a curriculum attentive to the needs of each person.
2. Each person's need is best served by teaching and learning experiences that are relevant, authentic, dynamic and creative.
3. Religious education, faith development experiences and service learning are fundamental components of a holistic curriculum.
4. Programs offered include a balance and integration of teaching and learning experiences that promote the development of the whole person.
5. All members of the school are encouraged to work to the best of their abilities, to realise their potential and to strive for individual excellence.
6. The school provides a sound learning culture that enables students to experience success within a safe and healthy environment.

SPIRITUALITY

Each person's story is unique and sacred.

1. A Catholic school in the Edmund Rice tradition nurtures and encourages the spirituality of each person.
2. Growth in spirituality and connection to Church are significant factors that shape religious education and faith development practices.
3. The life-journey of each person is enhanced by a personal understanding of and relationship with Jesus Christ.
4. Through reflection, prayer, the Eucharist and other Sacraments, liturgy, symbols, sacred stories and other rituals, the school celebrates the richness and diversity of its community, and develops the spiritual life of each person within it.
5. The school respects spirituality authentically lived by those who come from a range of other religious traditions.



FAITH IN ACTION

Each person is called to respond out of a personal relationship with God.

1. A Catholic school in the Edmund Rice tradition lives and grows as a faith-sharing community by fostering a personal relationship with God through Jesus Christ.
2. The school proclaims and lives the Gospel so as to enable the transformation of each person into the likeness of Jesus Christ.
3. The school is an integral part of the evangelising mission of the Catholic Church.
4. The school adopts a prophetic stance in the light of Gospel values.
5. In communion with other Church ministries and the community, the school continues the saving action of God in the world.

COMMUNITY

A school forms a distinctive community.

1. A Catholic school in the Edmund Rice tradition is characterised by the quality of its personal relationships.
2. The school celebrates as a eucharistic community, responsive to the gift and journey of each person.
3. The school develops a culture of good relationships, which evidence respect, community, hospitality, nurture, humour, care and justice.
4. The school fosters enduring, lifelong relationships with former students and their families.
5. The school acknowledges the primary role of parents or guardians in the growth and development of the child and provides opportunity for their participation in the life of the school.
6. The school recognises its many connections with families, other school communities and Church, civic and global communities.
7. Recognising traditional ownership and heritage, and with a commitment to reconciliation, the school welcomes indigenous persons into its community.



PASTORAL CARE

The dignity of each person as a child of God is at the heart of pastoral care.

1. A Catholic school in the Edmund Rice tradition acknowledges the dignity of all its members, each formed in the image of God.
2. The school conducts all aspects of school life in a manner that is sensitive to the needs of each student and to the common good.
3. In the allocation of resources, a priority is given to the provision of services for students with special needs.
4. The school's pastoral care program is designed to empower each student to embrace the fullness of life within a variety of pastoral care experiences.

SERVICE OF OTHERS

Service of others is integral to being a follower of Jesus.

1. A Catholic school in the Edmund Rice tradition promotes service of others, by way of significant learning experiences, as basic to fulfilling a Christian life.
2. The school expects each member to be active in the service of others and provides opportunities for this service in both local and global communities.
3. Students and staff are involved in programs in which they interact and work with the disadvantaged, understanding service as the movement from charity to justice.
4. Leadership in schools is based on a Gospel model of service centred in communion with others.
5. Staff recognise that their principal vocation is to serve students and families.



BEING JUST

Justice is integral to the vision of the Kingdom.

1. A Catholic school in the Edmund Rice tradition acts justly. This is reflected consistently in its structures and processes.
2. The curriculum and activities of the school enable students to experience and value a critical awareness of social justice issues.
3. The school provides opportunities for each member to be active in identifying and alleviating forms of injustice in and beyond the school community.
4. Networks of solidarity, within and beyond the school, are encouraged in the seeking of justice for all within the community.

AT THE MARGINS

Edmund Rice, following Jesus, sought out the marginalised.

1. A Catholic school in the Edmund Rice tradition stands in solidarity with those who are powerless and marginalised.
2. As a practical expression of this solidarity, the school strives to provide access to those who otherwise would not seek enrolment.
3. The school will not preclude the enrolment of a Catholic student on the basis of financial inability.
4. The school programs are designed to empower all members, especially the marginalised, to participate with dignity and confidence.

COMPASSION

Compassion is central to the life and teaching of Jesus and to the spirituality of Edmund.

1. A Catholic school in the Edmund Rice tradition fosters in its members the mind and heart of Edmund, who acted with compassion.
2. Students at risk are provided with special assistance.
3. The school models the Gospel's values of forgiveness and reconciliation by the manner in which conflict is resolved.



STEWARDSHIP

God's gifts are to be shared justly and used wisely, as exemplified by Edmund.

1. A Catholic school in the Edmund Rice tradition acknowledges the traditional relationship of indigenous peoples with the land.
2. The school demonstrates respect for the environment, through its practices and teachings.
3. The school manages and uses its resources equitably in the best interests of its current and future community, always conscious of the wider community in which it is situated.
4. The school is sensitive to the economic situation of each of its families.
5. The school looks beyond itself in contributing, according to its means, to the overall growth and development of Catholic schools in the Edmund Rice tradition.
6. The school acknowledges the service and contribution of the Christian Brothers to Edmund Rice Education in Australia.

REFLECTIVE PRACTICE

Reflective practice leads to personal and communal growth.

1. A Catholic school in the Edmund Rice tradition actively encourages all its members – teachers, staff and students – to reflect on the contemporary world in the light of the Gospel.
2. For its members, the school provides formation opportunities in the Spirit of Christ, the charism of Blessed Edmund Rice, their own sacred story and their call to mission.
3. Effective reflection within the school community promotes the transformation that enables individual and community growth.
4. Personal and communal discipline is achieved within an ordered and safe environment that enables each person and group to accept responsibility and be accountable for their actions.



SECTION SIX

APPLICATION OF THE CHARTER

The formulation of this Charter was the result of extensive consultation with communities of the Christian Brothers' schools in Australia and other people associated with their mission. The consultation revealed a unity of mission, significant cultural similarities and great diversity in the application of the mission in these schools. Each strives to authentically interpret the mission of Jesus and charism of Blessed Edmund in their educational community. Thus, the concrete expression of any single cultural characteristic may vary according to the context and tradition of each school.

Exemplars of the current practices that are considered congruent with the cultural characteristics of Catholic schools in the Edmund Rice tradition are continuing to be gathered for the renewal process that is integral to the implementation of the Charter in schools.

The renewal process will be used by schools to reflect regularly upon their current performance, celebrate achievements, recognise developmental needs and re-commit to the Spirit of a Catholic school in the Edmund Rice tradition. The Charter is the norm by which each school measures its mission, performance and priorities. With the Charter as a framework for renewal, the governing body of Edmund Rice Education will accredit each school's authenticity as a Catholic school in the Edmund Rice tradition.

AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY

St Edmund's College, Canberra

NEW SOUTH WALES

Christian Brothers' High School, Lewisham

Edmund Rice College, Wollongong

St Edward's College, Gosford

St Edmund's School, Wahroonga

St Dominic's College, Penrith

St Gabriel's School, Castle Hill

St Patrick's College, Strathfield

St Pius X College, Chatswood

Waverley College, Waverley

QUEENSLAND

Centre Education Programme, Kingston

Ignatius Park College, Townsville

St Brendan's College, Yeppoon

St Edmund's College, Ipswich

St Francis Xavier International High School, Nudgee

St James' College, Brisbane

St Joseph's College, Gregory Terrace

St Joseph's College, Nudgee

St Joseph's Nudgee Junior College, Indooroopilly

St Laurence's College, South Brisbane

St Patrick's College, Shorncliffe

SOUTH AUSTRALIA

Christian Brothers' College, Adelaide

Rostrevor College, Woodforde

St Paul's College, Gilles Plains

TASMANIA

St Virgil's College, Hobart

VICTORIA

Christian Brothers' College, St Kilda

Parade College, Bundoora

St Bernard's College, Essendon

St Joseph's College, Geelong

St Joseph's College, Melbourne

St Kevin's College, Toorak

St Patrick's College, Ballarat

WESTERN AUSTRALIA

Aquinas College, Manning

Catholic Agricultural College, Bindoon

Christian Brothers' Agricultural School, Tardun

Christian Brothers' College, Fremantle

Clontarf Aboriginal College

Trinity College, Perth