

SOCIAL JUSTICE – POLICY STATEMENT

St Mark's Lutheran School would like to acknowledge the Peramangk Aboriginal people who are the Traditional Custodians of this Land. We recognise the strength, resilience and capacity of all Aboriginal people - past and present.

1. MISSION STATEMENT

Led by God, St Mark's provides a quality education, developing individuals' potential and encouraging all to reflect Christ's love in service to others.

2. RATIONALE

At St Mark's Lutheran we believe that Social Justice is the foundation for a healthy community. It stems from an understanding that every human being is created in God's image and is of intrinsic value. Social Justice means moving towards a society where the hungry are fed, the sick are cared for, the marginalised included and the environment is treasured – where all people regardless of race, religious affiliation and socio-economic status are treated with love and compassion. Social Justice allows for a life of choices and opportunity, free from discrimination.

At St Mark's Lutheran we believe that it is not possible for justice to happen in the abstract – we believe that all students must have the opportunity to touch the lives of real people. Social Justice is integral to our Christian faith and a crucial issue in our local and global community.

3. AIMS

At St Mark's Lutheran we strive to create a school community in which its members:

- (a) empathise with those individuals who struggle against injustice;
- (b) live in accordance with the principles of social justice; and
- (c) learn and work towards becoming an advocate for change within ourselves, our local community and global world.

4. PRINCIPLES OF SOCIAL JUSTICE

The Principle of Equal Worth

All human beings irrespective of race, gender, age, religious affiliation, socio-economic status have equal worth and the right to be fairly treated

The Principle of Equal Voice

All human beings irrespective of race, gender, age, religious affiliation, socio-economic status have a right to have their voice heard and their grievances adequately addressed.

The Principle of Equal Opportunity

All human beings irrespective of potential and ability have the right to a quality education and resources which accommodate for differences between groups and individuals allowing for the greatest possible opportunity to contribute to, and participate in, all aspects of school and community life

5. THEOLOGY

Jesus was vitally concerned with what divided society and caused human impoverishment. He challenged many of the norms and social structures that oppressed, alienated or undermined the dignity of people.

As Christians we share in the ministry of Jesus because we too have been anointed with the power of the Holy Spirit and are called to be his witnesses. There is no end to our social responsibility. As Christians we must work for social conditions that allow for individuals and communities to meet their needs and realise their full potential.

Social Justice is grounded in the following mysteries of our faith:

5.1 All human beings are created in the image of God and brought to life by the same Spirit of God.

*...Then God said, Let us make man in our image, in our likeness...
Genesis 1:26*

*...the Lord God formed the man from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living being...
Genesis 2:7*

At St Mark's we will work towards developing a culture where...

- all people are treated with dignity and respect due to the image of God in which they are created.
- as beings in God's image we must build a just and compassionate community in obedience to His Word.

5.2 Integral to Christ's mission was the liberation of human beings from poverty, oppression and social injustice. This is a mission of God which we are called to action.

*...The Spirit of the Lord is on me,
because he has anointed me
to preach the good news to the poor.
He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners
and recovery of sight for the blind,
to release the oppressed,
to proclaim the year of the Lord's favour...
Luke 4:18-19*

At St Mark's we believe Christ died for all people and so irrespective of gender, age, religious affiliation, socio-economic status, ethnicity and geographical location, all people are worthy of God's saving love and compassion.

5.3 Our God, who in Christ experienced the injustice of suffering on the cross, continues to suffer with those who experience injustice. As Christians we are asked to bear the cross of Christ and together work towards creating a more just society.

*...Your attitude should be the same as that of Jesus Christ:
Who, being in very nature God,
did not consider equality with God
something to be grasped,
but made himself nothing,
taking the very nature of a servant,
being made in human likeness,
And being found in appearance as a man,
he humbled himself
and became obedient to death – even death on a cross!...
Philippians 2:23*

At St Mark's we believe that in response to God's endless love for us, we are called to actively extend love, compassion and hope to all people.

6. IMPLEMENTATION

To live and learn as a community in accordance with our social justice principles we will...

6.1 Community

- foster a sense of community among staff and their families through planned social gatherings
- continue to support and celebrate the work of our Classroom Carers
- maintain the position of Community Carer

6.2 Policy

- ensure that our staff and student behaviour policies are in keeping with the principles outlined for Social Justice
- ensure that students with special needs continue to be supported by relevant programs
- regularly review the enrolment policy to ensure that there is equitable access to children of all groups in society based on date of application

6.3 Learning

- encourage and support teaching staff to develop teaching techniques and methodology that is inclusive of all learning styles and abilities

- provide teachers with support for students who have a physical disability so that students are able to participate in all areas and at all levels of school life
- identify curriculum which allows for deliberate learning of social justice issues both locally and globally
- provide teacher resources that focus on the explicit teaching of the values which underpin social justice

6.4 Action

- participate in projects where the social justice agenda is explicit and becomes part of the learning experience of students so that they can identify themselves as change agents

Local Action

- *Sash Ferguson*
- *Christian Care & Share*

National Action

- *Foodbank Australia*
- *Cancer Council of Australia (National Bandanna Day, Daffodil Day, Australia's Biggest Morning Tea)*
- *Kiwanis (Heart Kids Australia)*
- *St Vincent de Paul (Blankets of Love)*

Global Action

- *ALWS Focus Countries*
- *Cambodia School & Community Projects*