



Students Celebrate Laudato si' Week through Learning about Advocacy

20 May 2020

Students from Catholic schools across Australia gathered today to celebrate Laudato si' week by launching the annual Edmund Rice Education Australia's ERA For Change student advocacy program.

This event has been held regionally each year to bring students together to explore advocacy, grounded in our Catholic faith, and the important voice that young people have in advocating for just causes that impact them and the world. This year it became national and went online.

Over 140 students and staff from 23 Catholic Schools in the Edmund Rice tradition considered our common home and our interconnectedness, a major theme of Pope Francis' Laudato si' encyclical. Corinne Fisher, from the Pacific Calling Partnership, guided students through an explanation of how Laudato si' is core to climate advocacy. Her core message was the world depends on all of us.

Students participated in one of six workshops, including themes of: action for climate justice, promoting reconciliation, preventing domestic violence, advocating for people with a disability and support of refugees and asylum seekers.

The event also took a global focus with Indian human rights advocate and Christian Brother, Steve Rocha, highlighting the situation of young people and how they have been impacted by COVID-19.

Students were able to identify that whilst having these conversations can be difficult, it is important to continue speaking up. "There can be a negative side to being an advocate as people can misjudge you as being a social justice warrior and not being open to others ideas and empathetic."

These collaborative sessions helped students to begin to think creatively about how they can implement advocacy within their schools. By acknowledging the current challenges presented by COVID-19, one group of students identified that, "artistic, creative and musical connection can help being an advocate during times of physical distancing. The change in language and cultural ways of perceiving the world is rewarding."

At the conclusion of the day participants reflected on their own interconnectedness and how that strengthens advocacy for our common home. The core message was that advocacy is not optional or secondary to our Catholic experience but is essential. As one student so aptly put it, "Advocacy is important because it is the beginning of progression. Without advocacy society will never prosper."