



CHOOSE LIFE!

MISSION COLLABORATION



Oceania Province
Christian Brothers



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INTRODUCTION

This document provides an overview of some resources that underpin the relationship between the Oceania Province (via the Mission Directorate) and the variety of Edmund Rice Ministries that operate throughout Papua New Guinea, Timor Leste, The Philippines, New Zealand and Australia. Province partnership with all ministries is central to an authentic expression of the charism within a contemporary local context. At the heart of this charism expression is the establishment, development and promotion of relationships that support mutual transformation. Hence ministry engagement with local communities and the Directorate's support of this engagement, is sensitive to the prevailing cultural, pastoral, spiritual context and attentive to industrial and legal parameters.

Many people contribute as sponsors, supporters, volunteers, Christian Brothers or employed personnel within each ministry, serving to inspire and act in ways that are authentic to this mission. Their legacy serves as a basis for continuity and a reminder of the spirit that motivates and accompanies continuous renewal of ministry life.

CONTEXT

The Oceania Province Leadership Team has canonical responsibility to ensure that entities for which it has direct governance authority demonstrate that their work is consistent with the Congregational Mission mandated by the Catholic Church. Similarly it expects that other civilly incorporated entities that operate in collaborative relationship with the Province would likewise strive to be authentic expressions of the Edmund Rice Vision. It is this entire suite of communities that this document refers to as Edmund Rice Ministries.

The partnership relationship that the Oceania Province holds with these Edmund Rice Ministries in multiple communities across the region varies in many aspects. However despite their diversity, each member of this ministry network shares the same desire for the charism to flourish via the relationships formed with local communities, groups and individuals. In emphasising subsidiarity as a fundamental relational principle, the Province seeks to enhance local ministry structures and operations to support their stance in solidarity with those made vulnerable. This support may be in the form of direct governance leadership, financial sponsorship, network collaboration or the provision of in-kind professional support services. Additionally the promotion and provision of charism inspired formation for mission is a primary function defining the relationship the Province has with all ministries.



MINISTRY VALUES AND CHARACTERISTICS

In establishing strategic priorities for the new Oceania Province, the inaugural Oceania Leadership Team (OLT) stated in 2008:

“Conscious of our own brokenness, we walk with people in need, especially those marginalised and made vulnerable by society. Our commitment to liberation and justice drives our decisions for ministry. We engage in partnerships with those similarly committed within and beyond Oceania.”

An emerging goal proclaimed that ministries are authentic and effective expressions of the Mission of the Oceania Province. In discerning a strategy in response to this goal, the OLT resolved to *“Identify, articulate and implement the characteristics of an Edmund Rice Ministry”*. Success would be evidenced by the development and publication of the characteristics of an authentic Edmund Rice Ministry.

In endorsing the *Edmund Rice Ministry Values and Characteristics Statement (The Statement)* successive Oceania Leadership Teams have articulated the core features of ministry life that invite each ministry to give contemporary witness to the Jesus inspired, Edmund Rice Vision. This vision calls for ministry life to demonstrate three touchstone values, namely:

- **Presence:** Alive to the wonder of all creation opening us to intimacy with the Mystery of God
- **Compassion:** Opening our hearts to and standing in solidarity with the suffering world
- **Liberation:** Freeing and enlivening a world groaning under the weight of injustice

While acknowledging that responsibility for bringing these values to life rests squarely with each individual ministry, the OLT have framed the specific features that define the nature of Edmund Rice Ministries. These are:

- **The Sacred** – Openness to a Spirit inspired presence.
- **Right Relationships** – Appreciation of Jesus’ model of compassionate presence.
- **Prophetic Leadership** – Alignment with Edmund’s Gospel inspired transformative presence.
- **Community** – Celebration of the Brother’s tradition of welcoming and inclusive presence.
- **Cross-cultural Awareness** – Embracing of a respectful and sensitive presence.

FORMATION

Formation for Mission is a canonical responsibility of the OLT and as such it is articulated and promoted as a priority of the Mission Directorate. Formation is designed to provide people with an understanding of our collective purpose as well as providing opportunities for personal growth, professional support and a sense of belonging. It is important that each individual has access to formation opportunities at a level appropriate to their role, their circumstance and their need. The collective need of the community to which the individual belongs is equally critical. Hence there may be expectations on an individual to engage in a particular program for the good of that community.

The opportunities made available within the Oceania Province recognise that, in many cases, the most valuable formation experiences are those that are directly responsive to the particular context and needs of an individual ministry.

Regional Mission Team services exist to collaborate with ministry leadership to develop and facilitate experiences that are sensitive to the diversity within each group and directed to meeting the particular goals of the group.

This 'tailor-made' support is critical in helping ministries to develop a 'culture of formation' that leads to community ownership of formation experiences. However it is also vital that ministry personnel have the opportunity to access programs that provide them with an understanding of the 'common ground' stories and spirituality upon which their ministry sits. Core formation programs shared with people beyond their own ministry 'backyard' offer this opportunity. Broader and more challenging opportunities also exist via immersions, volunteer placements and retreat experiences.

Formation experiences offered via the Mission Directorate are professionally planned, coordinated and delivered by well-trained and experienced formation facilitators/presenters. It is appropriate that ministries budget for these experiences in a manner that respects the quality of the professional service being provided. Pastoral and financial consideration is always given to ministries who have limited access to funding.



ACCREDITATION

The document *'Living the Vision'* offers an entry point into engaging with a Ministry Accreditation Process. The simple, uncompromising challenge to *live the vision* is the primary goal that connects and inspires us as an Edmund Rice Network of Ministry Communities.

True to the spirit of that call, participation within the Accreditation Process is an invitational one that promotes collaborative participation from both the ministry community and Province personnel. It is an opportunity to step back from the action that consumes ones daily work, and to critically reflect and discern how this work gives contemporary expression to the vision of Edmund. Our reference point remains the *Edmund Rice Ministry Values and Characteristics Statement (The Statement)*. It is not the definitive expression of all that encompasses the vision but it provides a solid foundation from which to ask the significant 'Why? 'How?' and 'For what outcome?' type questions.

The Accreditation Process does not seek to test, criticise or appraise. Instead it is designed to encourage each ministry to look within and to reclaim their heart, nurture new possibilities and welcome those alternate voices that undoubtedly arise whenever one dares to *"throw open your windows and let the fresh air in"*. Participation in the process is a further opportunity to help *"build healthy, compassionate communities, living a heart-centred spirituality and supporting one another in mission"*. (Munnar Chapter 2008)

PROCESS PURPOSE

The Accreditation Process is designed to provide scaffolding to support each ministry governed, sponsored or supported by Christian Brothers Oceania Province to participate in an analysis of its own lived expression of the core values and characteristics defining Edmund Rice Ministries. The Process serves to promote and affirm the importance of ongoing critical reflection and community dialogue in discerning the cultural and spiritual integrity of ministry activity.

PROCESS PRINCIPLES

The Accreditation Process is:

- Invitational in encouraging ministries to consider how they explicitly respond to the Statement;
- Formative in providing an experience of reflection, dialogue and visioning amongst as many of the ministry community as possible;
- Flexible in being sensitive to the unique nature and diversity of ministries across the Province;
- Affirming in ensuring ministry endeavour is recognised, proclaimed and celebrated;
- Future oriented in identifying specific areas for growth and development for the next period of ministry life;
- Community centred in promoting the sharing of best practice across all Edmund Rice Ministries.

Ministry Accreditation Process Stages

- 1: Implement Community Consultation
- 2: Engage with an appointed Accreditation Panel
- 3: Prepare and submit Reflection Response
- 4: Consider recommendations and celebrate accreditations.

A RIGHTS-BASED APPROACH TO MINISTRY

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

The features of community development that the Oceania Province promotes in its work in developing nations include: community participation, inclusion, community ownership, access and equity, empowerment, self-help, transparency and accountability, and planned exit strategies. These apply equally to other Oceania ministries. However, even these proclaimed development processes should not be assumed. Each ministry needs to be asking itself “What does development mean when there are limited resources?” There is often an assumption that the world can move towards an ever-increasing standard of living where every person’s needs are catered for. We know that this is not true, and that there needs to be a decrease in the expectations of those in developed nations around a standard of living, while at the same time working to raise the living standards of those made poor.

One positive aspect of this community development approach is the focus on community. This is a reminder that ministry with the marginalised is about the building of capacity and the empowerment of the local people to do for themselves what is required, to enable them to attain what is theirs by right. This is not just the respect for and attainment of human rights, but a respect for and a preservation of a healthy sustainable local ecosystem, in which all living beings can thrive.

A RIGHTS-BASED APPROACH

It seems that a Human and Earth Rights-based approach to mission can incorporate all of the best aspects of community development, address the challenges of a changing world scene, and find support in any sound theological model. In this approach, both service and justice come together. It begins with recognition that all human beings have rights and that the violation of one or more of these rights is what often leads to marginalisation, whether it is access to housing, food, water, employment, or participation. We also know that these Human Rights are unable to be realised while we fail to recognise that the wellbeing of all within the Earth community is dependent upon the well-being of the Earth itself, hence our need to work at the same time for the protection of Earth Rights.

In this rights-based model, both those involved in mission and the victim of rights violations work together in partnership to attempt to redress the violation by working locally, nationally, and internationally to have these rights recognised, to gain commitment from the nation state to enshrine them in its legislation, and finally to ensure that there are practical measures to implement the legislation which creates change ‘on the ground’. A rights-based approach therefore involves education about Earth and Human Rights, advocacy for Human and Earth Rights, and practical work to ensure improvements in the daily lives of those made poor.

ADVOCACY

One definition of advocacy stresses the strategic use of information to democratise unequal power relations and to improve the condition of those living in poverty or who are otherwise discriminated against. Associated key advocacy challenges urge us to hold institutions accountable for their actions and to ensure that they respond to social and environmental needs, and to ensure that international regimes and standards are implemented effectively and work to the benefit of poor people and poor countries.

Preparedness, both in terms of being well informed and well versed in the right form of response when challenged by criticism, will require strategic action and Prophetic Leadership. Our strategic position will be to make explicit that advocacy for Earth and Human Rights is core to the Province’s shared mission identity.

PROTECTIVE BEHAVIOURS

The 'Protocol Standards for Child Protection Reporting – Edmund Rice Ministries (Australia)' (the Standards) have been developed to respond to the particular service needs of the Oceania Province Mission Directorate in Australia. Since a considerable proportion of ministry engagement within the Directorate in Australia involves the provision of services to children, there is a need to be particularly vigilant and responsive to the care, safety and protection needs of these children. The OLT has recognised this in clear statements contained within various Child Protection policy related documents endorsed by its delegated Policy Committee. These include:

- Code of Conduct – Interacting with Children and Young People Guideline
- Child Protection Policy
- Mandatory Reporting and Investigation Policy

The Standards respond to the principles articulated within these policies, and apply these principles to operational practices primarily concerned with the provision of activities for children.

State and Commonwealth authorities throughout Australia require all service providers to be capable of demonstrating a professional, organisationally appropriate response when child protection concerns or allegations arise. Best practice would reinforce that an organisation, in responding to possible child protection concerns or allegations, should demonstrate the application of competent professional expertise within its response. It is crucial that our organisation has set in place clear systems and protocols to enable it to respond in the most professional manner prior to engagement with the relevant statutory child protection bodies.

The Standards provide ministry staff, volunteers, service users and other key stakeholders with clarity and direction in responding to issues around children's care, safety and protection. They exist to ensure that when a staff member or volunteer operating within an Edmund Rice Ministry in Australia becomes aware of a concern or allegation in relation to the well-being of a child in receipt of a ministry service, they will respond in a professional and timely manner according to the Standards requirements.

The Standards emphasise that each individual has a responsibility to report concerns relating to reasonable suspicion of possible maltreatment of a child, under relevant government legislation. The protocol seeks to capacity build and professionally support individuals to undertake mandatory reporting responsibilities.

All staff and volunteers need to pay immediate attention when risk factors surface in a child's or others' behaviours, conversations, emotions and perceptions. There are three key expectations upon all ministry staff and volunteers in responding to concerns/allegations relating to the well-being of children.

1. **Awareness** - To be aware when children's right to a harm-free care, safety and protection environment may be violated or is at-risk of violation.
2. **Responsive** - To undertake actions to report in a timely manner to designated persons or authorities as indicated in the Standards.
3. **Compliance** - To comply with reporting protocols and procedures requirements, both internal and legislated.

All staff and volunteers have child care, safety and protection responsibilities, namely:

1. **Individual responsibility** to discern, whenever there is 'reasonable suspicion' of harm to a child they need to undertake a mandatory report.
2. **Personal and professional responsibility** to complete training to capacity build one's child protection knowledge and skills competencies.
3. **Organisational responsibility** to report child care, safety and protection concerns and allegations to a designated on-site Reporting Officer.
4. **Organisational responsibility** to access professional competencies to support reporting processes.

CARE OF THE EARTH

The second element of the Edmund Rice Ministry Values and Characteristics Statement, **Right Relationships**, urges all Edmund Rice Ministries to be a compassionate presence that;

- Stands in solidarity with the poor and the earth;
- Challenges unjust structure and advocates for a just and sustainable world; and
- Critiques and responds to the impact of human activity upon the planet.

In responding to this call each ministry is encouraged to develop a relevant action plan that enables them to both highlight current initiatives and develop further their efforts to reduce the ministry's impact on our Earth community. Such a process invites Edmund Rice Ministry consideration of the following stages of development.

AWARENESS

Each ministry (or Province Centre) is encouraged to provide opportunities for both employees and volunteers to develop their understanding of the spirituality, values and stories that underpin our movement to sustainable ecological practices. Linking with local environmental groups and/or programs may provide valuable expertise and local knowledge on environmental issues. Regional Mission Teams can provide a range of facilitated programs and resources to support ministries in this awareness raising process.

Core elements of this awareness journey could include exploration of our place in the Universe story and our inter-connectedness with the whole Earth community. Ideally the spiritual foundations of this stance for our earth and an appreciation of the issues that are shaping and damaging our Earth community, will evoke some practical living ideas that can be applied to ministry life.

CRITICAL REFLECTION

Each community is encouraged to engage in a reflection process to name the current reality of their use of the resources of the Earth community. Areas for discernment could include: waste production, energy consumption, water / land usage, transport, or the nature and/or origins of purchased goods and services. There are a number of respected online audit tools that offer a very accurate measure of ones ecological footprint.

ACTION PLAN

As a final step a ministry could discern and implement those actions that reduce their impact on our Earth community. This Action Plan would seek to establish achievable and measurable targets associated with:

- Recycling of materials, including composting or organic waste;
- Reduction to water, electricity and energy consumption;
- Enhancement of the natural habitat; and
- Ethical communication strategies.

RISK MANAGEMENT

The OLT is continuously engaged in the exploration and development of processes in relation to meeting governance responsibilities. This includes Risk Management specifically in terms of the people, life and resources of the Province. Processes, emerging frameworks and, action plans for implementation must remain responsive to the ever changing landscape of compliance obligations and ministry life. Independent reports regularly identify a cross section of new risks not normally perceived.

In addressing this significant responsibility, a Risk Management Plan has been adopted which places emphasis on the need for collaborative communication with ministries in order to establish the unique context for their activity, identify associated risks and explore evaluation, intervention and monitoring requirements.

The goal is to empower ministries in their own risk management procedures by:

1. Promoting a shared understanding of the language of risk management;
2. Articulating the common domains that guide ministry analysis of risk;
3. Providing a single instrument for assessing, measuring, monitoring and reporting risk.

FINANCES

Edmund Rice Ministries and other Province projects are endorsed and provided with funding and other resources to support their conduct by the OLT on the recommendation of the Director of Mission. Edmund Rice Foundation Australia (ERFA) also responds to annual grant requests from ministries throughout Oceania and on the broader international stage. Ministries, irrespective of the nature of their governance relationship with the Province, work collaboratively with the services of the Mission and Resources Directorates to meet the appropriate accountability requirements for the use of these resources and the acquittal of money distributed.

In the interest of transparency, all Province activities make available to the OLT via their delegated finance officers, full details of their annual budget, income and expenditure, and balance sheet data. The Province Finance Office (Resources Directorate) provide accounting and reporting services to a vast majority of Edmund Rice Ministries. This has the obvious benefits of ensuring consistency of practice, transparency of operation, efficiencies of service and potential economies of scale savings.

The Province Finance Office (PFO) provides direct service provision in relation to payroll, employee entitlements, taxation, accounts payable and receivable, reporting, auditing and insurance. This centralised arrangement does not take away any decision-making or local control from the ministry site. It also frees ministries from the burden of preparing periodic financial reports to the Mission Directorate as the PFO services can supply the required level of accountability.

All of this provides considerable saving in time and resources to individual ministries, allowing them to concentrate more resources on their core business – advancing mission.

HUMAN RESOURCES

While leadership personnel within each ministry assume Human Resources (HR) associated responsibilities within their role specification, the Province Resources Directorate provides a centralised service that works in partnership with each ministry to provide advice and support on any HR related matters. This can include assistance with employment agreements, industrial advice, contract templates and/or simply Q & A responses. This service is also available to ministry personnel should they wish to obtain personal advice and/or support on any HR related matters.

This collaborative service has assisted in the development of consistencies within the nature and layout of employment agreements and positions description and also salary structures within the Province. This information sharing is further enhanced with the Greentree HR and Payroll modules that are maintained by Province Resources. Personnel are able to access their personal information online, make profile changes, see payslips and enter leave requests. The system provides the capacity for line managers to have access to employee's information, approve leave and see current employment agreements and other relevant documents.

The level of HR service provided by Province Resources, with some exception on payroll, is an interactive one and remains open and responsive to the variety of specific needs that each ministry and its managerial support personnel bring to its attention.



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