



EDMUND RICE EDUCATION  
AUSTRALIA

# With a Listening Heart

A Design for Formation within the  
Edmund Rice Tradition



*This Formation Design presents a strategic approach to supporting all members of our EREA communities to discern with a listening heart,<sup>iii</sup> the Gospel invitation to be agents of transformation in our world. It is published as a resource for leaders with responsibility for staff faith formation for the mission of Catholic Education in the Edmund Rice tradition.*

# Formation for a Listening Heart

Formation for mission in Catholic Education is “formation of the heart”.<sup>i</sup> Both scriptural tradition and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander spirituality remind us that a listening heart is key to opening ourselves to the presence of the Sacred in our lives. Miriam Rose Ungunmerr Baumann<sup>ix</sup> offers us an insight:

There are deep springs within each of us. Within this deep spring, which is the very Spirit of God, is a sound. The sound of Deep calling to Deep. The sound is the word of God – Jesus.<sup>iii</sup>

## Strategic Intent

This Formation Design presents a strategic approach to supporting all members of our EREA communities to discern with a listening heart,<sup>iii</sup> the Gospel invitation to be agents of transformation in our world through the provision of a liberating education.<sup>x</sup> It is published as a resource for leaders with responsibility for staff faith formation for the mission of Catholic Education in the Edmund Rice tradition.

# The MYSTERY of the Divine we name GOD

Formation helps us to understand, value and express our identity and activity as Catholic Schools in the Edmund Rice Tradition. At the heart of this tradition is the Mystery of the Divine we name God, revealed in Jesus and continuing to breathe life into all creation through the movement of the Holy Spirit. EREA Formation invites us to immerse ourselves in this unfolding self-communication of God’s loving vision of a better world for all, made visible through:

- the interconnectedness and dignity of all living beings;
- the witness of a Church striving to emulate Jesus’ example and continue his mission;
- experiences of love, wonder, awe, and diversity; and
- a spirit of openness to the insights of other spiritual and religious traditions.



The visualisation of the EREA Formation design has two components:

1. The **Spiral**, representing the Mystery of the Divine we name God.
2. The **Sails**, representing the Charism of Edmund Rice expressed in the Charter Touchstones.



In its entirety, the **Spiral** embodies the *Mystery of the Divine we name God*, eternally present in the unfolding of creation. The EREA story, which is part of this revelation, derives meaning from all life-giving stories, but most notably *First Nations Wisdoms*, the *Life of Jesus*, and *Edmund’s response to the Gospel*. Our *participation as EREA communities* invites us to bring contemporary form to this ever-expanding expression of God’s loving vision of a better world for all.

The rotation of the sails of a windmill creates energy. In a similar way, the *Touchstones* - the **Sails** in the visualisation - draw energy from our stories and transform this into living expressions of the *Charism of Edmund Rice*. The dynamic relationship between our *foundational stories* and the *Touchstones* is reflected in the way that each one energises the other. This energy liberates us to participate in the ongoing realisation of *God’s vision of a better world for all*.



# EREA’s Foundational Stories

EREA Formation opens us to God’s presence in First Nations Wisdoms, the life of Jesus, Edmund’s response to the Gospel; and Our participation as EREA communities.

**First Nations Wisdoms** reveal God’s presence through:

- spiritual connectedness to all living systems, made most explicit in Caring for Country;
- the stories, ways of Knowing and experiences of the world’s oldest continuous living cultures;
- deep respectful listening; and
- truth-telling, reconciliation and healing.

The **Life of Jesus** reveals God’s presence through his:

- unbounded love, compassionate presence and liberation for justice and peace;
- attention to, and radical challenge of, unjust structures diminishing people’s humanity;
- role as a liberating teacher (Rabbi); and
- healing that restores life giving relationships.

**Edmund’s response to the Gospel** reveals God’s presence through his:

- capacity to see God in all things;
- his willingness to challenge attitudes and structures not in alignment with Jesus’ teaching;
- pursuit of a mutually liberating education; and
- reflective action as part of a faith community.

**Our participation as EREA communities**

reveals God’s presence through our:

- education of the whole person, formed in the image of God;
- liberating practices that enable deep listening, confidence, agency and freedom;
- integration of the Gospel and Edmund’s charism with our lived realities; and
- communication of possibility and hope.

# The EREA Charter Touchstones

EREA Formation opens us to participation in the Reign of God<sup>y</sup> in building a better world for all, through a Liberating Education, based on a Gospel Spirituality, within an Inclusive Community committed to Justice and Solidarity.

**Liberating Education** invites our participation in building a better world for all through:

- co-design of learning and teaching experiences that open hearts and minds;
- mutually liberating, relational practices;
- informed, critical thinking and reflection; and
- a movement beyond self-interest that seeks the freedom of others.

**Gospel Spirituality** enables our participation in the building a better world for all through:

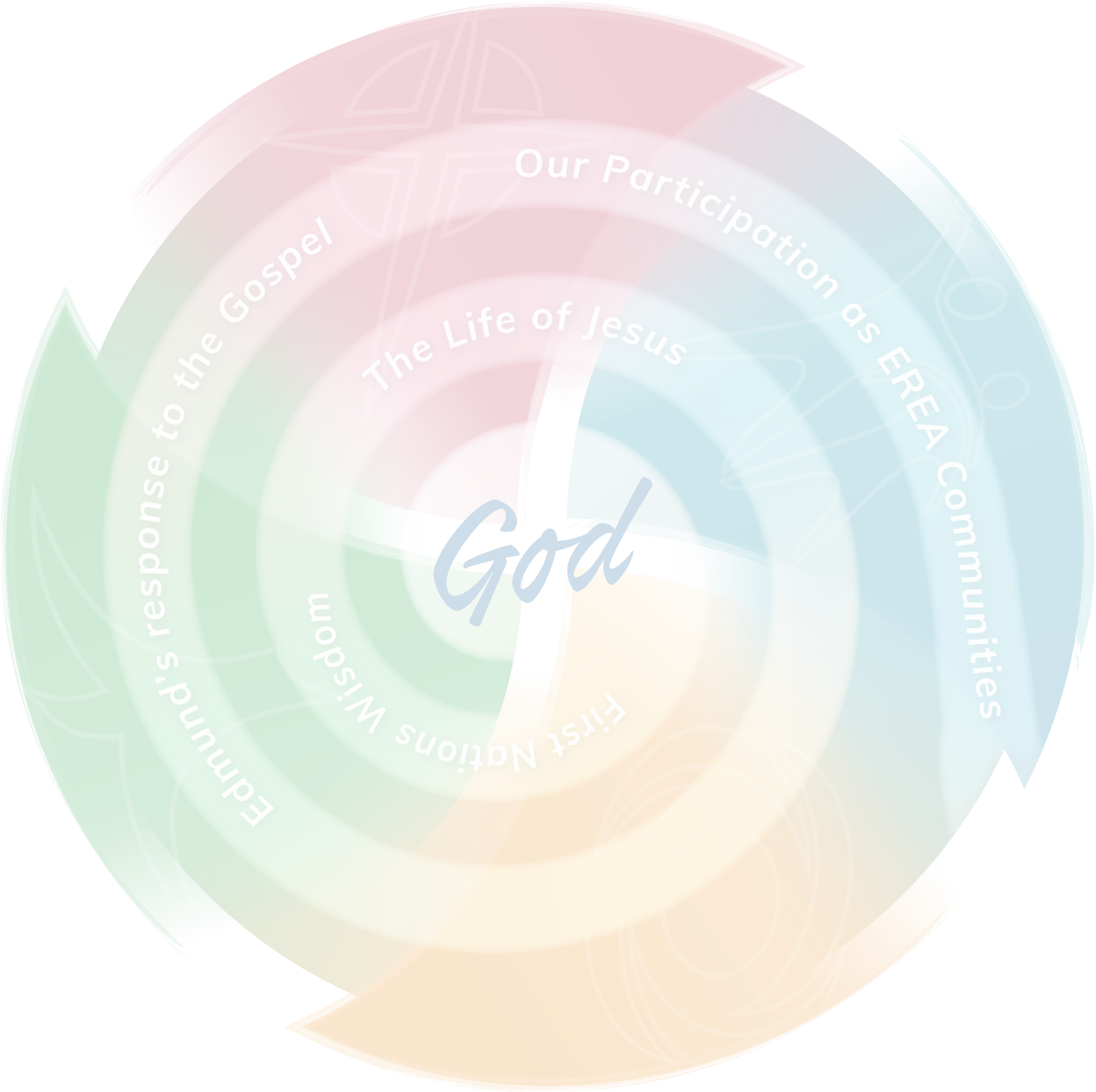
- life-giving relationships with God, self, others and the natural world;
- activity that places love, compassion, justice and peace at the centre of our communities;
- integration of silence, reflection, prayer and ritual with life experiences; and
- dialogue with our own and other faith traditions.

**Inclusive Community** invites our participation in the building a better world for all through:

- respect for each person’s story as unique and sacred;
- valuing diversity as enriching dialogue, engagement and an understanding of self.
- healing of wounds and failings that silence and exclude; and
- transformative relationships that invite, welcome, and engage.

**Justice and Solidarity** invites our participation in the building a better world for all through:

- Care for Our Common Home<sup>ix</sup>;
- critique of the structural causes of injustice using Catholic social teaching;
- deep listening to and preferential love for those most in need;
- collaboration with charism partners in being agents of change.





Informed by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Wisdoms, Spiritualities and Knowings, and shaped by the movement of the Holy Spirit and humanity’s evolving understanding of its place within the greater web of life on Earth, this Formation Design honours the unique stories and celebrates the diversity of all individuals, groups and beings within and beyond Edmund Rice Education Australia.

Formation, within our Christian tradition, invites us into a space where we can discern the presence of God’s Spirit in our midst, inspiring courage, creativity and hope in our response. (Acts 2:1-13).

*“Nothing else will change a person’s life except an experience of God ... it is a spirit that flows through our Universe that almost demands from us a response.”*  
- Br Philip Pinto (Christian Brothers Congregational Leader, 2002-14)

Formation is a canonical responsibility and mandated priority of EREA. Its accountability is identified in school and system strategic plans, budgets and EREA Renewal cycles.

*“EREA values Formation, Professional Learning and Leadership Development. All staff in schools and offices governed by EREA, along with members of its Council, Board and School Advisory Councils, are invited to actively pursue and engage with opportunities for personal and professional growth.”*  
- EREA Policy on Formation, Professional Learning and Leadership Development (pending finalisation)

The *Formation Design* draws significantly upon *“The Good Seed Will Grow” - A Formation Framework for Edmund Rice Communities in Oceania (2014)*, but is also informed by evolving EREA understandings and strategic priorities.

*“Have courage the good seed will grow up in the children’s hearts later on.”* - Edmund Rice

The *Formation Design* is informed by all principles underpinning the EREA Formation, Professional Learning and Leadership Development Framework (pending finalisation), promoting relationships based on respect, trust, inclusion, and integrity. It honours the diversity of the spiritual journey by providing multiple entry points that invite participants to discern the unique vocational contribution that they make to the life of their community.

*“Discernment is not a form of egotistical introspection, but an authentic process of leaving ourselves behind in order to approach the mystery of God, who helps us to carry out the mission to which we are called.”* - Pope Francis - The Call to Holiness in our World 5:175

Since there is a formative dimension to every aspect of Catholic schooling, intentional formation provides an orientation for the whole life of an educational community. This *Formation Design* exists to support those responsible for the creation, evaluation and review of formative experiences designed for individuals, groups or entire school or office-based communities within EREA.

*EREA Formation acts to explore, interpret and bring to life an Edmund Rice charism that “offers a contemporary compelling story, which has woven in its fabric a language with which to touch hearts, a passion to right wrongs, a mind to combat ignorance, ... a mission to embrace and most importantly a face in which Christ is recognised.”*  
- The Price of Freedom, Denis McLaughlin

Formation within the Catholic tradition recognises that the human person finds God in and through others and that co-creative partnership with God is realised through our work for justice for all in the human community and our “care for our common home”.

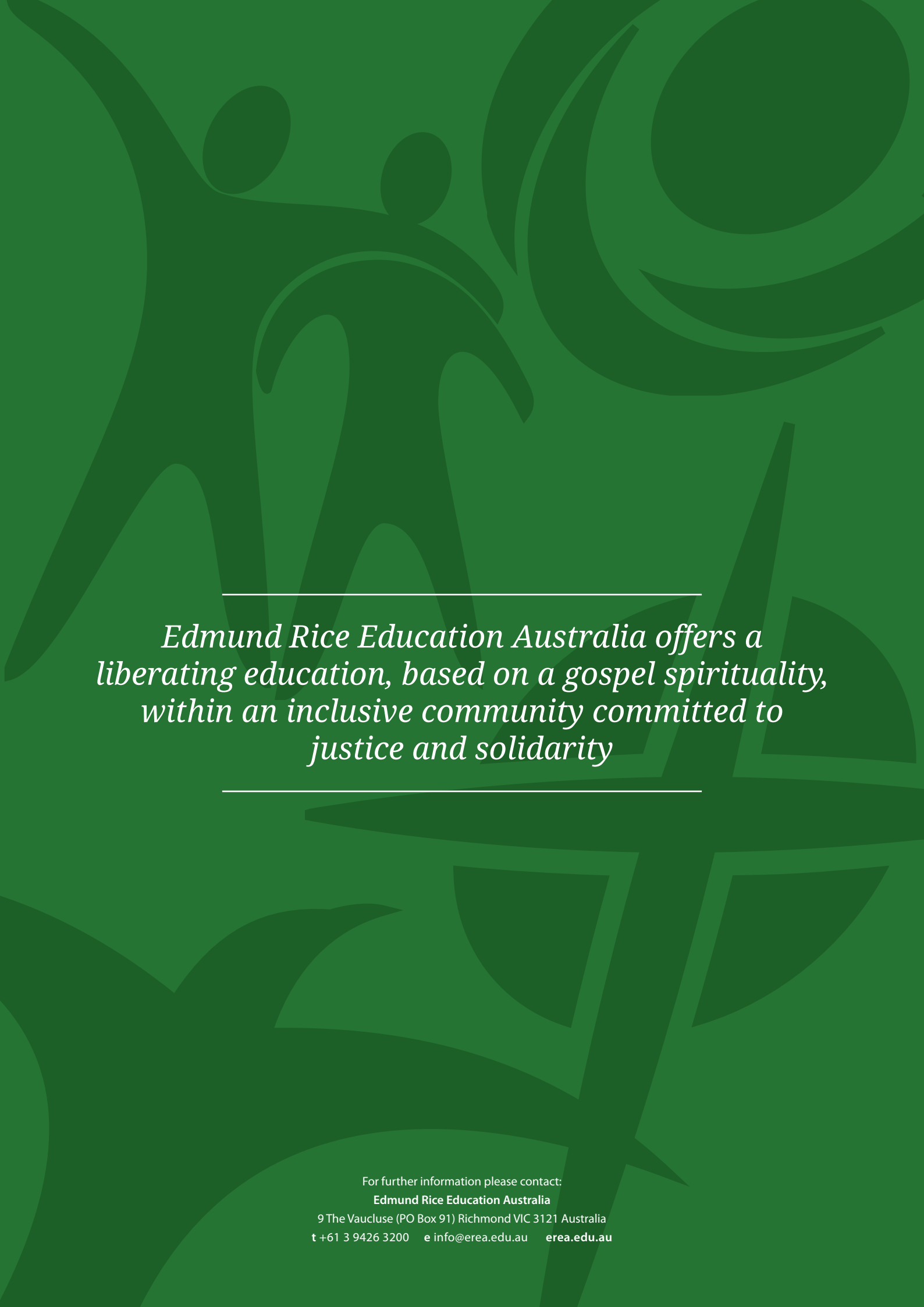
*“Today ...we continue to encourage and instil in our young people a love of God, a love of learning and a love for the “other”, particularly those who are on the margins of our world.”* - Dr Craig Wattam, EREA Executive Director EREA, 2021



**Endnotes**

<sup>i</sup> A Framework for Formation for Mission for Catholic Schools, National Catholic Education Commission (NCEC), p 14.  
<sup>ii</sup> 1 Kings 19:11-13 speaks of God’s presence in the silence of the gentle breeze requiring stillness and quiet to detect. <https://www.miriamrosefoundation.org.au/dadirri/> (accessed 5 Oct 2021).  
<sup>iii</sup> “Silence is not just an absence of noise. You begin to hear things that only silence can reveal to you. You begin to hear the movement of your own heart. You begin to hear your own motivations.” Hilda Scott OSB.  
<sup>iv</sup> This reference is inclusive of all Christian Churches, who are engaged in this ongoing work.  
<sup>v</sup> The “Reign of God” is at the heart of the Gospel and is characterised by a vision of God’s unbounded love characterised by compassion, inclusion, healing, justice and peace. Catechism of the Catholic Church, 2002, n. 543-544.  
<sup>vi</sup> EREA Strategic Directions refer <https://www.erea.edu.au/erea-strategic-directions/>.  
<sup>vii</sup> A Framework for Formation for Mission for Catholic Schools, NCEC, foreword Archbishop Timothy Costello.  
<sup>viii</sup> A Framework for Formation for Mission for Catholic Schools, NCEC, p 15.  
<sup>ix</sup> Miriam-Rose Ungunmerr Baumann is one of four liberating educators who has inspired the EREA Implementing Liberating Practise Learning Statement (2022).  
<sup>x</sup> EREA Implementing Liberating Practise Learning Statement (2022), refer to <https://www.erea.edu.au/learningstatement/>.  
<sup>xi</sup> Pope Francis, Laudato si’, 2015.





*Edmund Rice Education Australia offers a  
liberating education, based on a gospel spirituality,  
within an inclusive community committed to  
justice and solidarity*

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