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Kildare Ministries Newsletter

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Editorial

As we approach the sacred season of Christmas, our hearts turn toward the mystery of the Incarnation—God choosing to dwell among us, bringing light into the world. This profound act of love invites us to reflect on the theme of *Hope*, which has guided our journey throughout 2024, and to prepare our hearts for the theme of *Hospitality*, which will shape our mission in the year ahead.

In his recent Prayer Intention 'For Pilgrims of Hope', Pope Francis urged us to pray for the gift of hope, describing it as “the oxygen of the Christian life, which enables us to survive each day with its joys and challenges.” He reminds us that hope is not a fleeting emotion or mere optimism but a steadfast trust in the promise

of God's enduring presence and love.

Throughout the year, we have sought to embody this spirit of hope in our schools, community works and wider community, living out its transformative power in times of both joy and difficulty. In a world often marked by division and despair, our communities, families, and workplaces have been beacons of hope by living with compassion, choosing reconciliation, and responding to the needs around us. Hope has challenged us to believe in new possibilities, to trust in God's faithfulness, and to accompany others on their journeys with compassion and grace.

Christmas itself is a celebration of hope fulfilled: the hope of the prophets who awaited the

Messiah, the hope of Mary as she embraced God's call, and the hope of the shepherds who journeyed in faith to witness the newborn King. In each of these stories, we see that hope does not eliminate uncertainty or hardship. Rather, it illuminates the path forward, enabling us to trust that God is at work even in the messiness of our lives.

As we look to the year ahead, *Hospitality* invites us to expand upon the hope we have cultivated. Just as the Mary and Joseph found welcome in an unlikely place, we are called to create spaces of belonging for others. Hospitality challenges us to open our hearts and lives, offering not only physical welcome but also spiritual and emotional refuge to those we encounter.

This Christmas, as we gather with loved ones, may we find comfort in the message of Emmanuel—God with us. Christ comes to us not in grandeur but in humility, meeting us in the ordinary and transforming it with grace. His birth is a reminder that hope is never far, even in the darkest times.

As we celebrate the gift of hope and prepare to embrace the call to hospitality, let us

carry the joy of the Christmas season into our lives and communities. May the gift of hope, as Pope Francis describes, “ignite the light in darkness,” inspiring us to continue to be bearers of hope in our community and to all those we encounter.

I wish you, your loved ones and your communities a hope-filled Christmas and a blessed New Year.



Nicole Mange Isdorf
Acting

Executive Director
Kildare Ministries





Merry Christmas from all of us at Kildare Ministries!

As another year draws to a close, all of us at Kildare Ministries extend our heartfelt gratitude for your friendship, support and wonderful contributions throughout 2024. This year has been particularly significant as we celebrated the inspiring achievements of so many over the past decade since Kildare Ministries was founded and looked to our shared future with hope, courage and renewed commitment to being enablers of peace and justice in our world.

Our 2024 theme, Hope, has truly been a guiding light throughout the year. Each of you has carried this light into your communities, bringing hope to those around you and making a profound difference in their lives.

As we celebrate the Christmas season, may you be filled with the blessings of hope, peace, joy, and love. We look forward to continuing this shared journey with you in the year ahead.





Welcome and Farewells

Welcome to Kitty Guerin as a Trustee of Kildare Ministries

We welcomed Kitty Guerin as a Trustee of Kildare Ministries in November. Kitty comes to the Trustees with extensive knowledge and experience of Catholic Education in New South Wales. She is the former principal of two Catholic girls' schools: St Clare's College, Waverley and Our Lady of Mercy College, Parramatta and has worked closely with Mercy, Marist, and Dominican education communities.



Kitty is well known to Kildare Ministries having served as Director and Chair of the Board of Brigidine College, St Ives for

9 years, concluding her period of tenure in 2023. Kitty has current knowledge of governance for mission for Ministerial Public Juridic Persons (MPJPs). She is a past Chair of the former Federation of Religious Institute Schools NSW and is the foundation Chair of the newly formed Catholic Religious Institutes and Ministerial Public Juridic Persons NSW and ACT School Authorities (CRMNA).

We welcome and congratulate Kitty on her appointment as a Trustee and look forward to the wise, positive and mission focussed contribution that she will no doubt bring.

We Thank and Farewell

Carmel Barker

Principal – Marian College Ararat

In 2024, Kildare Ministries farewellled Carmel Barker, who has led the Marian College community as Principal since 2015, following three years as Assistant Principal. During her 13 years, Carmel's leadership consistently embodied the College and Brigidine motto of *Strength and Kindliness*, instilling these values throughout the school community and inspiring students, staff, and families alike. In the transition of moving from the charism of the Brigidine Sisters to the vision and mission of Kildare Ministries, she has led with generosity and openness to new possibilities.



In her welcome on the school website, Carmel outlined a vision of education “... *that empowers students to become life-long learners ...*”, and nurtures “... *growth towards confidence, wellbeing, social responsibility, justice and creativity.*” Daily, through her actions over the past 13 years, Carmel has strongly and consistently worked to make this vision a reality.

Under Carmel's dedicated and compassionate leadership, Marian College achieved the honour of being named The Age's 2024 Schools that Excel winner for independent schools in rural and regional Victoria—a reflection of her commitment to academic excellence and the holistic development of each student.

As Carmel concludes her role as Principal, we extend our deepest gratitude for her years of service and her enduring impact. Her commitment to the school's mission and her embodiment of strength and kindness will be fondly remembered and celebrated for years to come.

Laetitia Richmond

Principal – Brigidine College St Ives

After five years of dedicated service, Laetitia (Teash) Richmond concludes her tenure as Principal of Brigidine College, St Ives, at the end of 2024. Since stepping into the role in 2020, Teash has been a transformative leader, bringing both vision and compassion to her leadership. Her unwavering commitment to the College's mission, values, and the Brigidine tradition has been instrumental in shaping a vibrant and inclusive school community, with a strong emphasis on academic excellence, holistic student development, and social responsibility.



Over the past five years, Teash has led a team of committed and professional staff, creating a learning environment where students continue to achieve academically and spiritually as well as in a range of sporting and creative activities. Her dedication to fostering a nurturing and supportive environment for students and staff alike has helped the College to flourish. Her focus on student wellbeing and her compassionate approach have left an indelible mark on the College community, enriching the lives of countless young women and preparing them to make meaningful contributions to society.

As she concludes her role at Brigidine College, Teash leaves a legacy of inspiration, integrity, and service. Her influence will continue to be felt long after her departure, in the hearts of students, staff, and the broader College community. We extend our deep appreciation to Teash and wish her well as she takes up the role of Principal of St Scholastica's College, Glebe.

Phillip Steele

Co-Chair of the Board – Saltbush Balnarring Beach

Kildare Ministries farewellled Phillip Steele who resigned from the Board of Saltbush Balnarring Beach as of the AGM on 13 November. Phillip joined the Board as a Director in 2017 and held the role of Chair and Co-Chair in recent years. An Emeritus Professor of Monash University, Phillip came to the Board with significant academic and leadership experience.



During his time on the Board, Phillip observed Saltbush pivot its activities through the COVID crisis and participated in negotiations for a new trading name from The Presentation Family Centre to Saltbush Balnarring Beach. A Masterplan was established for the site and a Future Fund created to support long-term financial viability. Phillip played a key role in expanding the relationships of Saltbush with referrers, donors, and the broader community, including Kildare Ministries schools.

Phillip's deep commitment to continuing the vision and mission of the Presentation Sisters of Victoria who founded Saltbush to "provide a place of welcome, comfort and rest to all who call upon it and a retreat within which they might regenerate their spirits" has been clear throughout his time on the Board.

We thank Phillip for his valuable contribution and dedication to the ongoing development of Saltbush and wish him all the very best for the future.

Paul Desmond

Chair of the Board – Kildare Education Ministries



Kildare Ministries bids farewell to Paul Desmond, Board Chair of Kildare Education Ministries, who resigned as of the end of 2024. Paul joined the Board following his retirement in 2023 as Director of Catholic Education for the Diocese of Sandhurst, bringing over forty years of experience as a teacher, principal, and system leader.

Throughout his tenure, Paul has demonstrated exemplary leadership, a commitment to strong governance, and a deep respect for collaborative engagement. His faith-filled and dedicated guidance over the past year has been invaluable.

We extend our heartfelt gratitude to Paul for his service and wish him a fulfilling and restful retirement.

Melanie Sherrin

Kildare Ministries Risk and Assurance Manager

Although Mel has only been with Kildare Ministries for 15 months and in a part-time capacity, she has made significant impact through her work as our Risk and Assurance Manager.

Mel has been an invaluable member of the Mission and Ministry Team, bringing great insight, and

commitment to her role. She has worked closely with the Trustees through the Policy and Governance Committee and Risk Coordinators across our schools and community works.



Mel's expertise in risk management and assurance has strengthened our governance processes, with a significant piece of work being the development of a comprehensive enterprise risk framework for Kildare Ministries.

Her thoughtful approach, warm collegiality and generosity have been greatly appreciated by all who have worked with her, and we will miss her at Kildare Ministries.

While we are sad to see Mel leave, we are thrilled for her as she embarks on an exciting new chapter as Company Secretary with the Australian Physiotherapy Association and wish her every success in her new role.

Photos from the celebratory End of Year farewell lunch for our Leaders







With heartfelt gratitude to Renee Oberin



As our wonderful Mission Leader for the past four years, Renee Oberin concludes her time in this significant role, we take this opportunity to acknowledge and honour the incredible contribution she has made to Kildare Ministries.

Since assuming the role of Mission Leader, Renee has consistently demonstrated unwavering passion, insightful leadership, and a profound dedication to the mission and values of Kildare Ministries. Her tireless efforts and heartfelt commitment have left an indelible mark on our community.

Renee has worked closely with the Trustees, providing steadfast guidance and support. Her collaborative approach and thoughtful insights have been invaluable in shaping the direction and decisions of the Trustees, ensuring alignment with the mission of Kildare Ministries.

Over the years she has worked tirelessly with staff and students to bring the Vision, Mission, and Values of Kildare Ministries to life. Her ability to inspire and engage others has ensured that these guiding principles are not just words but are actively lived out in our community. She has transformed our Formation Program into an exemplar within ministerial PJPs, broadening its reach and impact across various networks. Through her vision and dedication, the program has become a cornerstone of our community's spiritual and professional growth.



Renee also played a pivotal role in the development of the *Living Justice, Living Peace* charter, a cornerstone of our mission. Her leadership and creativity were instrumental in articulating the values and aspirations that guide our collective efforts toward justice and peace.

Her extensive work in developing the program for this year's 10 Year Anniversary Conference exemplifies her dedication to enlivening our Vision, Mission and Values for all in the Kildare Ministries community. Renee's passion, creative and significant investment of time ensured that the conference was a meaningful and impactful experience for all participants.

While Renee steps back from her role as Mission Leader, we are thrilled that her journey with Kildare Ministries will continue in 2025 in a part-time capacity. We are delighted that she will remain part of our team and look forward to continuing to benefit from her expertise as she takes on key projects and supports our new Mission Leader in a smooth transition.







Formation Events

Staff Integral Ecology Retreat

From the 29-31 October, seven Kildare Ministries schools came together for our first Integral Ecology Retreat in Lancefield. Staff from Star of the Sea College, Marian College (Sunshine West), Clonard College, Kilbreda College, St Joseph's College, Killester College and Kildare College, all made the significant journey to be together to learn about integral ecology, be immersed in our magnificent natural world and contemplate the wonder of God's creation and our role within it.

The weather was perfect, and Lancefield was the perfect setting for our time together. We were joined by facilitators, Alice Carwardine and Jet Talarico who each brought their particular expertise to the group and warmly created a beautiful open and collaborative space for learning, prayer and conversation.

After settling in and getting to know a little about each other and why we were there, we began the retreat with contemplation of the 'Living Water' of Jesus' teaching and what this means to us within an ecological spirituality. We were then lead on a vivid and moving cosmic walk created by Alice – this was a lot to begin with and so spending time creating a living mandala gently guided by Jet provided much needed space and time to gather our thoughts and feelings and begin to form our personal responses.

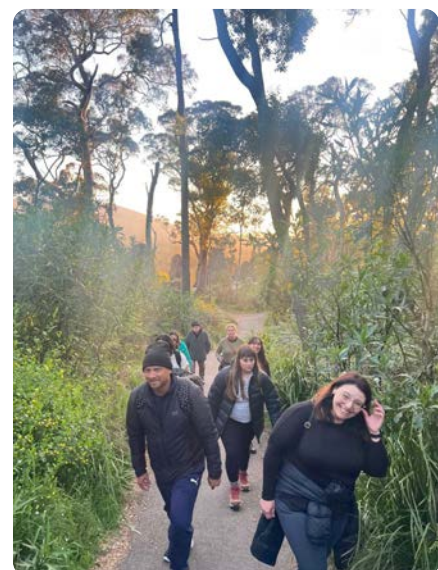
That night, we travelled to Hanging Rock to become immersed in the wonder of our creation and the visit this most ancient meeting place for three first nations peoples. The Woi Wurrung (Wurundjeri), Dja Dja Wurrung, and Taungurung all gathered at this place for various ceremonies, initiations and trade for at least 26, 000 years and it is a place of very deep spiritual and sacred significance. We began by climbing the rock guided by a ranger who

explained all the significant landmarks and natural features – it is an amazing natural wonder and the changing colours throughout the late evening were breathtaking, as were the views when we got to the top. At the top, surrounded by upright rock structures, we participated in body prayer together - so uplifting! We were then led in the darkness by spotlight, around the circumference of the rock itself and were amazed by the wildlife peeking out between the branches at us. Needless to say, we slept particularly well that evening.

The following morning, we contemplated Genesis and our call to care for the things of the earth as God does before leaving for Edgar's Mission, a refuge for injured or rejected farm animals. Edgar's Mission is a not-for-profit organisation which raises awareness and support for the humane treatment of animals. They proudly state that their mission is one of kindness, and the gentleness in the way the animals were treated sparked much thought amongst us all.

Following lunch, we participated in a session about how we can lighten our footsteps on the earth with by becoming more aware of the impact of our everyday actions. This was followed with practical advice and ideas for altering our routines for protecting our natural world. If this wasn't enough, Alice then led us in a practical workshop creating perfumes to demonstrate how habits can be changed with an opening of heart and imagination. The following day we spent most of the time in contemplative prayer interspersed with conversations about how we might interpret what we have heard and shared in our school lives, in our curriculum and in our personal lives.

This first Integral Ecology retreat proved to be an enjoyable and deep experience, and we look forward to the programs continued development into the future.





Student Leadership Retreat

Newly elected student leaders of Kildare Ministries arrived at Saltbush, Balnarring Beach on Wednesday the 20th of November for two nights. Breaking the ice between these students who had never met took no time at all, their engagement and excellent communication skills were evident right away. Participating in a number of collaborative activities was fun and set the scene perfectly for a great time spent together for the next two days.

On the first afternoon, student participated in a presentation and activities entitled 'Life to the Full' where we examined and discussed what this concept from Jesus' teaching could mean for leadership, and particularly for leadership which adopts our Kildare Ministries charter of Living Justice, Living Peace. These activities discussed the idea of 'seeing clearly' which Jesus often spoke about, and we learned about the skills of leadership that involve this very necessary mindfulness. To embed this learning, we created some roleplays which showcased these skills in scenarios likely to occur within our school leadership, and then we

critiqued and discussed which ones worked the best and why, and what other alternative skills could be employed. It was rich conversation.

Before dinner, Maree Feutrill, CEO of Saltbush, led us all on a walk through the new land and opportunities Saltbush is embracing. Maree spoke about the revegetation of the land at the back of Saltbush and how this could be utilised as teaching and learning opportunity for schools in the future answering the cry of the earth. Maree also talked about the importance of dreaming up new opportunities for Justice and Peace as well as the very necessary commitment to volunteering and what this means for Saltbush in real terms. Visiting Saltbush is such a rich experience for our students who see justice and peace in action, they find it so inspiring.

Following dinner, we examined values and how these interplay with ethical decision making, and this led on to the final session before bed. In the 'Losing your Life to Save it' presentation we looked at the motivations of St Brigid and Nano, and what 'losing oneself' in the fullness of life as Jesus promised, and 'losing oneself' in what we are called to be by God, might be like.

After a pre-breakfast walk on the beautiful Balnarring Beach, we settled in to hear from Alice Kett, alumna of Kilbreda College and our special guest. Students were captivated by Alice – her explanation and lived examples of vulnerable leadership were so accessible to everyone, including the teachers present. We are so grateful to her for sharing her time with us so generously. Students love to 'see their possible future selves' in our special alumni at this retreat.

After lunch we shared a brief journey up and down Maslow's hierarchy of needs, and then we then rolled up our sleeves and got into some real volunteer work for Saltbush, weeding, painting and tidying. We tried to get as much done as we could! We hoped to make a tiny difference.

Settling in after dinner, we attended to the 'hospitality moments' in our lives by examining the story of Martha and Mary and how important it is to understand the moment we are in so that we can offer the best response to the need that is there. We talked about 'listening to hear, not to respond', and about not being 'busy' for the sake of being busy. The activity that followed challenged students to 'really listen to hear', not just perceived to be listening. In the subsequent chat, they admitted how hard it is to really hear the other person deeply and in the moment.

The following day consisted of a liturgy on the beach, an activity for re-cap, and finally, students split up to design and lead the final liturgy of the camp. It was heartwarming and inspiring liturgy to be a part of. We all left on a high!

Special thanks go to the people behind the scenes at each of our schools who commit to getting our students there, it is yet another job in already busy schedules. Enormous thanks go to the wonderful teachers who escort our students there, who by giving up their time show our students just how important they are. And finally, all credit to the students who came. Their commitment, willingness, friendliness and openness to learn is ever amazing. We are lucky indeed in our Kildare Ministries community to be in their company and have the next generation of students (and beyond) led by them.





Renee Oberin

Mission Leader

Kildare Ministries



Board and Stewardship Council Formation

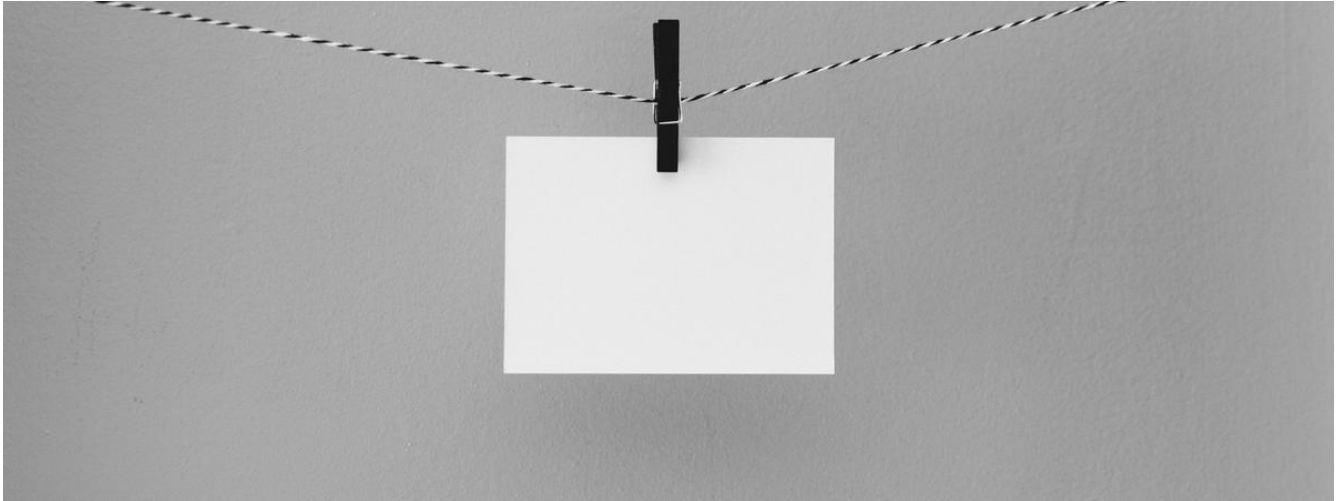
In October, the Trustees joined Directors and Councillors for the biennial 'Board Directors and Stewardship Councillors Formation Seminar' held at Marian College, Sunshine West. The theme for the Seminar was that of the Season of Creation 2024, "*To Hope and Act with Creation*".

Rev Dr Michael Trainor AM, senior lecturer in biblical studies with the Australian Catholic University and parish priest in the Archdiocese of Adelaide, South Australia explored the key insights of Papal encyclical *Laudato Si* and its implications for responsible leadership.

Trustee of Kildare Ministries, Dr Anne Astin AM PSM drew upon her wealth of knowledge and experience to deliver a powerful workshop which explored key insights and the call to action by corporates, communities and governments to address the need for changes of lifestyle, production and consumption '*to respond to the Cry of the Earth and the Cry of the Poor*'.

Participants described the day as 'most enlightening and enriching, leaving them with broader awareness and deeper insight'.





Principalship of Killester College from July 2025

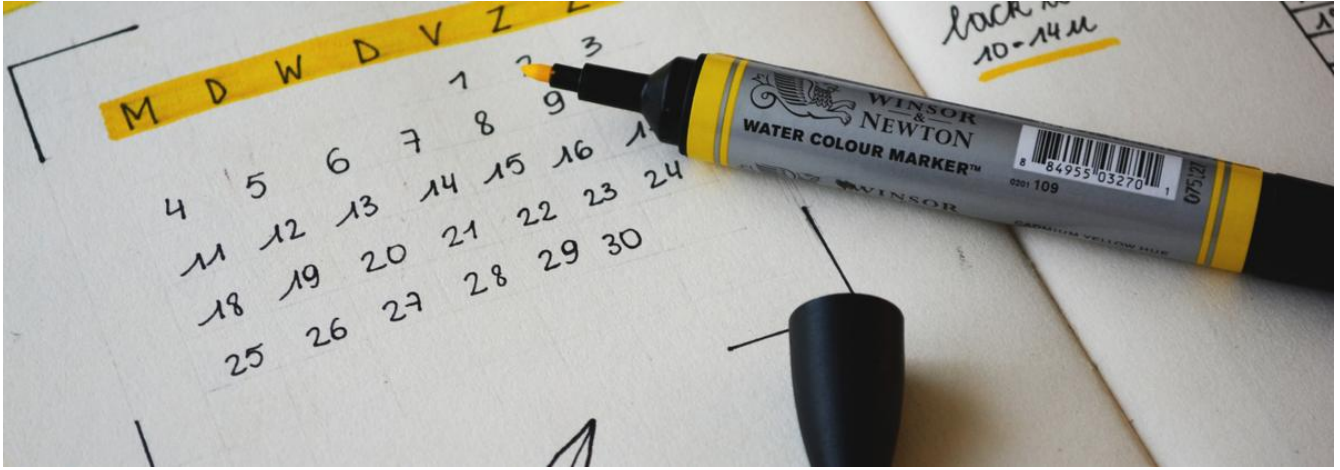
With sadness, we acknowledge that Sally Buick has tendered her resignation as Principal of Killester College, effective from July 4, 2025.



Sally is an outstanding Principal who has worked incredibly well to provide improved education and strong advocacy for the students of Killester College over the past five years. After enjoying her inspiring leadership in first semester next year, we will surely miss Sally's wisdom, passion for justice and supportive collegiality.

By January 22 next year, the position of Principal/Co-Principals of Killester College will be advertised on SEEK, Cath News and other platforms. It will also be advertised in The Age on Saturday 1 February. Applicants will be able to apply for sole Principalship, Co-Principalship or both.

You are invited to bring this forthcoming opportunity to the attention of passionate and capable educational leaders.



2025 Calendar Dates

Please note that the office of Kildare Ministries will close for the Christmas holidays on the 20th December and will reopen on the 28th January.

Network Meetings

KM Justice and Sustainability Leaders

4 February

KM Faith Leaders

13 February

27-28 May (with Learning Leaders)

1-2 September (with Learning Leaders)

28 November

KEM Risk Coordinators

27 February

21 August

KEM Principals

6 March

15 May

14 August

KM Leaders

7 March

15 August

21 November

KM Business Managers

31 March (Venue: Brigidine College Indooroopilly)

7 November

KM First Nations Network

29 April

22 July

KM Risk Coordinators

7 May

23 October

KM Board Chair Network

23 May

17 October

KEM Business Managers

29 August (Venue: Kildare College)

Inductions

KM New Leaders

18 February

27 August (online)

KM New Staff

5 March

3 September (online)

KM Board Directors and Stewardship Councillors Induction

24 May

Retreats and Immersions

Crossing New Seas Oration

18 March

TKM Leaders' and Faith Leaders' Retreat

11-13 June

Pilgrimage to Ireland

21 September - 3 October

Staff Integral Ecology Retreat

28 - 30 October

Student Programs

Social Justice Seminar - Amberley

17-18 March

First Nations Immersion - Brisbane

12-14 May

Network Zero - Amberley

29 - 30 July

Senior Leadership Retreat - Saltbush

2 - 4 December

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Click here to download the full 2025 Formation Calendar:





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