

# Policy Statement



ARCHDIOCESE OF BRISBANE  
Catholic Education Council

## ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER EDUCATION

Brisbane Catholic Education schools seek to ensure that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students and families, through active engagement and collaborative partnerships, have equitable access to quality education that is mutually enriching for all.

### INTRODUCTION

Brisbane Catholic Education respects, affirms and acknowledges the position of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as being the original inhabitants of this country, and recognises their ongoing spiritual connectedness to the land, seas, sky and waterways. In addressing the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples at Alice Springs in 1986, Pope John Paul II said:

*You are part of Australia and Australia is a part of you. And the Church herself in Australia will not be fully the Church that Jesus wants her to be until you [the Indigenous peoples of Australia] have made your contribution to her life and until that contribution has been joyfully received by others.*<sup>11</sup>

Brisbane Catholic Education has an enduring commitment to Reconciliation with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples through education, and values their involvement in the life of the Church through our school communities.

### RATIONALE

"Governments across Australia recognise Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people as the First Australians with one of the oldest continuing cultures in human history. They affirm the right of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to sustain their languages and cultures and acknowledge associations with the land and water"<sup>3</sup>

This policy statement reinforces Brisbane Catholic Education's strong commitment to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education and provides guidelines for its implementation. This policy encompasses education for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students and education about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures and perspectives.

It also affirms the strong commitment of many generations of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to living the Gospel message in the Catholic tradition and acknowledges Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people possess a 'deep rooted sacred spirituality ... that continues to encompass the richness and depth of the sacredness of spirituality of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and the traditions of the Catholic Church.' (Aunty Joan Hendriks)<sup>2</sup>.

Brisbane Catholic Education recognises and celebrates the unique giftedness, histories and cultures that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students and their families bring to the school communities.

In partnership with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families and their communities, Brisbane Catholic Education meets the diverse educational needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students and their families.

Foundational to the successful implementation practices and procedures are high expectations for all learners. These expectations are communicated by all those working to improve the educational outcomes of our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students and all other learners. The expectations teachers have for their students and the assumptions they make about students' potential have a tangible effect on student achievement.

"If educators truly have high expectations, then they find various ways to help individual students progress. This means providing appropriate supports such as differentiation and intentional small group instruction. If educators have high expectations, they take responsibility for the growth of all students... This focus on high expectations is believed to have a significant impact on improved classroom instruction and student engagement and learning. (Hattie, 2012)<sup>4</sup>

## CONSEQUENCIES

### Accountability

#### Catholic schools will:

- develop and implement procedures and protocols that support the implementation of reconciliation through education for all;
- monitor, review and report on the implementation of this policy in their school renewal and quality assurance processes;
- comply with the reporting and procedural requirements of government agencies.

#### Schools and Communities will:

- observe Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander protocols in relation to celebrations such as Journey of Healing (National Sorry Day), Reconciliation Week, NAIDOC Week and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children's Day and other significant events;
- affirm the knowledge and wisdom of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and encourage their contribution and participation in contemporary Catholic education and learning community activities;
- engage Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander parent bodies in policy and decision making at the local level;

### Learning and Teaching

**Catholic schools** acknowledge and embrace Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories, cultures, spiritual values and traditions through:

- engaging with the Cross Curriculum Priorities;
- integrating Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives across the curriculum.
- promote equitable access to quality education for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students through the provision of resources to enhance educational outcomes;
- implement pedagogies that align with current curriculum requirements to support the diverse range of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students;
- actively engage in curriculum content and practices which:
  - ~ reflect and respect Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives, histories, cultures and spirituality
  - ~ support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students in developing leadership skills; and
  - ~ assist Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students transition successfully into training, employment and further education.

**Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander learners** will experience:

- culturally inclusive education;
- teachers who hold high expectation for success;
- focused support in the areas of literacy and numeracy;
- focused support in the area of vocational education and training promoting further learning and employment pathways;
- affirmation and the valuing of their identity and their particular relationship with land, sea, sky and waterways.

**Staff** within Brisbane Catholic Education will:

- seek to develop authentic relationships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, staff, parents and communities;

- develop partnerships with local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander service providers;
- hold high expectations for improving achievement levels for all learners.

**Brisbane Catholic Education** will implement this policy through:

- design, development and implementation of an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Strategy;
- provision of professional learning to:
  - ~ strengthen pedagogical practices to support improved outcomes;
  - ~ raise cultural awareness for all staff;
  - ~ gain understanding of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander spirituality;
- developing and engaging with reconciliation strategies;
- building Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander workforce capacity through increased employment opportunities and professional development of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff;
- supporting the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Action Plan;
- provision of resources to support the diverse range of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander learners;
- monitoring student enrolment and attendance data;
- monitoring student achievement data.

## REFERENCES

1. Address of John Paul II to the Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders in Alice Springs, 29 November 1986 [online]. The Australasian Catholic Record, Vol. 83, No. 3, July 2006: 259-263.
2. Hendriks, Joan. Moving the Way Forward [online]. Australasian Catholic Record, The, Vol. 83, No. 3, July 2006: 298-308.
3. MCEECDYA (2010); "Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Action Plan 2010-2014" Ministerial Council for Education, Early Childhood Development and Youth Affairs
4. Hattie.J. (2012) "Challenging All Students". Leaders in Educational Thought Vol. 1 No. 2.

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