POLICY STATEMENT

Catholic schools in the Archdiocese of Brisbane seek to ensure that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, through active engagement and collaborative partnerships, have equitable access to a quality education that is mutually enriching for all.

INTRODUCTION

Catholic schools respect and affirm the position of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as being the original inhabitants of this country. In addressing the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples at Alice Springs in 1986, Pope John Paul II said:

“You are Australia and Australia is part of you. And the Church herself in Australia will not be fully the Church that Jesus wants her to be until you have made your contribution to her life and until that contribution has been joyfully received by others”.

In responding to this challenge, Catholic schools in the Archdiocese of Brisbane have an enduring commitment to reconciliation with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples through education, and through the encouragement of their valued involvement in the life of the Church through our school communities.

RATIONALE

This policy statement affirms and supports this ongoing commitment and seeks to provide guidelines for its implementation.

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.

“We challenge those we educate to live in communion with God, others and the whole of creation in prayerful, sacramental, just, peaceful, inclusive and reconciling communities”

(Vision Statement for Catholic Education in the Archdiocese of Brisbane, 2004)

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1 An Aborigine or Torres Strait Islander is a person who identifies as such and is accepted as such by the community in which she or he lives or has lived. National Report on Schooling in Australia (1994)
2 Pope John Paul II. (November 1986). Address to the Aboriginal People of Australia, Alice Springs.
3 A process which calls for Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians to work together with mutual respect to listen, to hear and to heal past wrongs. (National Catholic Education Commission)
CONSEQUENCES

Accountability

Parish and archdiocesan Catholic schools will:

- promote equitable access to quality education for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students through the provision of extra resources to achieve equal outcomes
- develop and implement procedures and protocols\(^4\) that support the implementation of reconciliation through education
- observe Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander protocols in relation to celebrations such as Journey of Healing (National Sorry Day),\(^5\) Reconciliation Week, NAIDOC Week and Aboriginal Children’s Day
- engage Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander parent bodies in policy and decision making at the local level
- monitor, review and report on the implementation of the policy in their school renewal and quality assurance processes
- comply with the reporting and procedural requirements of government agencies.

Curriculum

Catholic schools will engage with curriculum that promotes Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives through:

- acknowledging and embracing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories, cultures, spiritual values and traditions
- integrating Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives across the curriculum.

All Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students will experience:

- culturally inclusive education
- affirmation and valuing of their identity and their particular relationship with land, sea, sky and animals
- focused support in the areas of literacy and numeracy
- focused support in the area of vocational education and further learning.

Staff

All staff within the school will:

- seek to develop authentic relationships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, parents and community\(^6\)
- develop partnerships with local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander service providers.\(^7\)

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\(^4\) Protocols and Guidelines Document – for the development and implementation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies and Perspective in Brisbane Archdiocesan Schools and College.

\(^5\) Sorry does not have the same meaning to Indigenous people as non-Indigenous people. Its meaning is more literal – ‘it’s a time of sorrow’; ‘a time for reflection’; or ‘there is sorry time ahead’

\(^6\) Strategic Renewal Framework for Catholic Schooling in the Archdiocese of Brisbane 2002-2006

\(^7\) A process that encourages targeted networking with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander government/community agencies (i.e. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health, housing, resource centres, legal aid and child care) which will assist with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander learners to meet their maximum potential.
Professional Development
Each school community will implement this policy through:

- provision of appropriate professional development in cross cultural pedagogy for all staff
- provision of appropriate professional development in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander studies
- support for the implementation of reconciliation strategies.

REFERENCES


Pope John Paul II. (November 1986). Address to the Aboriginal People of Australia, Alice Springs.

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