

ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER EDUCATION

Scope: This policy applies to all in Catholic Education, Diocese of Rockhampton (referred to as CEDR in the document).

1. POLICY STATEMENT

Catholic Education - Diocese of Rockhampton (CEDR) acknowledges more than 60,000 years of continual connection to land, seas and waterways by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as a key part of the nation's history, present and future.

The responsibility for a strengths-based approach to excellence in First Nations Education is shared by all members of the CEDR community with an emphasis on partnership and co-design.

Each person is recognised as having inherent dignity, as created in God's image.

This policy affirms our education and care settings as places of learning, growth and belonging for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, families and communities, where all students have access to high quality and culturally appropriate education.

All those engaged in any capacity in CEDR can contribute to strengthening a culture of continuous improvement in First Nations Education, where all students and staff grow in their understanding and deep appreciation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, histories, cultures and spiritualities.

2. DEFINITIONS

Current policy and research support an interdisciplinary and multi-layered approach to First Nations Education, with key themes of:

- Interconnectedness of identity, culture and wellbeing for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples
- High expectations for all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students
- Authentic partnerships and relationships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander parents, families and communities
- Inclusion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, parents, families and communities in all aspects of educational decision-making
- Intentionally designed, whole school celebrations that honour and value Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, histories, cultures and spiritualities
- Respectful and accurate inclusion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories, cultures and spiritualities in the curriculum to promote a culture of truth-telling
- Cultural responsiveness and cultural capability of educators.



3. DESCRIPTION

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples are the first Australians with two of the oldest continuing cultures on earth, and so occupy a unique place in contemporary Australian society.

CEDR covers a landscape that is rich in ancient and contemporary stories and histories, where local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples are generously willing to share this culture and history and welcome the opportunity to be involved.

First Nations Education in CEDR has two distinct priorities:

1. Supporting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students (and families) academically, spiritually, pastorally and culturally, and providing learning environments where they see themselves, their identities and cultures reflected in all aspects of school life.
2. Educating all staff and students to strengthen a deeper understanding and appreciation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, their histories, cultures and spiritualities, and engage all in reconciliation through education in all aspects of school life.

Reconciliation is at the heart of all aspects of First Nations Education and begins with acknowledging that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples have a deep spiritual connection with the land, sea and waterways. Reconciliation in practice reflects Catholic Education's mission of honouring the past, enriching the present, shaping the future and finding meaning for life.

4. IMPLEMENTATION ISSUES

All in CEDR will:

- ensure culturally safe learning environments where Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students see themselves, their identities and cultures reflected in the curriculum and where all students engage in reconciliation, respect and recognition of the world's oldest continuous living cultures.
- provide opportunities and pathways for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students to achieve their full potential, shape their own futures, and embrace their cultures, languages and identities as Australia's First Nations peoples.
- develop and utilise opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students to encounter, learn, engage and grow in their understanding of the Catholic Christian tradition, along with their own spirituality and experiences as Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islander peoples.
- welcome, encourage and support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families to choose Catholic Education for their children.
- involve Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander parents, families and communities in all aspects of educational decision making.
- develop and implement Reconciliation Action Plans through the Narragunnawali platform.
- deliver a contemporary curriculum across all learning areas and year levels, enabling all students to grow in their knowledge and appreciation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories, cultures and spiritualities.
- build authentic partnerships to foster learning that honours the local, regional and national



cultural knowledge and experience of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

- ensure a holistic approach to the health and wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students by accessing the expertise, support and perspectives of families, communities and agencies.
- apply trauma informed principles to education and communication with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students and families.
- recognise Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff as key contributors to student engagement, achievement and wellbeing, and strong networkers between school, families and communities.
- provide career pathways and opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff in culturally safe environments.
- invest in, plan for and apply a strategic approach to ensure a culture of accountability and continuous improvement in all aspects of First Nations Education.
- design professional learning opportunities for all staff to increase their cultural competence and cultural capability to teach Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students.
- provide professional learning opportunities to build staff knowledge, understanding and confidence in teaching about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories, cultures and spiritualities.

5. REFLECTION MATERIAL

CATHOLIC EDUCATION POLICIES AND DOCUMENTS

- CEDR [*Defining Features of Catholic Schools in the 21st Century*](#) 2019
- CEDR [*Teaching and Learning Framework*](#) 2019
- CEDR [*Student Mental Health and Wellbeing Framework*](#) v2 2020
- CEDR *Reconciliation Action Plan* 2021-2023

WEBSITES

- [Online Platform: First Nations Education \(CEDR\)](#)

LEGISLATION

- [*Anti-Discrimination Act 1991 \(Queensland\)*](#)
- [*Commonwealth Racial Discrimination Act \(1975\)*](#)

RESOURCES

- Queensland Catholic Education Commission [*First Nations Education*](#) (Position Statement) 2024
- Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership (AITSL) [*Indigenous Cultural Competency in the Australian Teaching Workforce*](#) 2020
- Education Council [*Alice Springs \(Mparntwe\) Education Declaration*](#) 2019
- *First Nations National Constitutional Convention* [*Uluru Statement from the Heart*](#) 2017
- [Australian Curriculum Assessment and Reporting Authority \(ACARA\)](#)
- Commonwealth of Australia Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet [*Closing the Gap, Prime Minister's Report*](#)
- [*National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Strategy*](#) 2015



- AITSL [Australian Professional Standards for Teachers](#)
- Shay, M., Miller, J. Excellence in Indigenous Education; [Building Better Schools with Evidence-based Policy](#) 2021
- <https://www.australiancurriculum.edu.au/f-10-curriculum/cross-curriculum-priorities/aboriginal-and-torres-strait-islander-histories-and-cultures/>
- <https://www.qcaa.qld.edu.au/about/k-12-policies/aboriginal-torres-strait-islander-perspectives>