

# ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER EDUCATION

**Scope:** This policy applies to all staff employed in Catholic kindergartens, schools and colleges, and outside school hours care centres conducted by Catholic Education - Diocese of Rockhampton (referred to as Catholic Education in the document).

## 1. POLICY STATEMENT

All Catholic schools, colleges and services (hereafter referred to as Catholic schools) in the Diocese of Rockhampton will be culturally safe places of learning, growing and belonging for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, families and community members.

## 2. 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.

This Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Policy recognises the transformative power of education to change society and to form the basis for intergenerational change for Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples.

This policy also seeks to overcome the educational disadvantage of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students by providing the skills necessary to participate fully in society and to determine their own futures.

This policy is an affirmation that the Church, following the example of Jesus, seeks to achieve justice and harmony with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples through education processes.

## 3. IMPLEMENTATION ISSUES

Catholic schools will:

- Foster a spirit of openness for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students and their families to develop a sense of identity and belonging with the school community.
- Recognise and celebrate the unique giftedness that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students and their families bring to the school community.
- Involve Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in educational decision making.

- Promote an awareness of and respect for the cultural diversities, spiritualities, values, languages and traditions of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students.
- Include Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives across the curriculum.
- Ensure staff have regular access to professional learning opportunities to increase their level of cultural understandings and competencies.
- Seek assistance and expertise of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff employed in the Diocese and the local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities to best support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students and families.
- Encourage support of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander research, education and training and involvement with relevant projects and programs.
- Develop a Reconciliation Action Plan through Reconciliation Australia.
- Work in partnership with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families and communities to better support the education of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children.
- Identify barriers to education and ensure appropriate processes and procedures are in place to support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students and families.
- Actively reach out to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families to facilitate their access to and participation in Catholic Education.

#### 4. REFLECTION MATERIAL

##### CATHOLIC EDUCATION POLICIES AND DOCUMENTS

- Diocese of Rockhampton [\*'An Encounter with Christ': Defining Features of Catholic Schools in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century\*](#) 2004
- [\*Learning Framework\*](#) 2010

##### RESOURCES

- [\*National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Strategy\*](#) 2015
- *Australian Bishops Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Sunday Statements* 2011 and 2015
- Pope John Paul II [\*Message to Aboriginal people in Alice Springs\*](#) 1986
- Queensland Catholic Education Commission [\*Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Catholic Education Position Statement\*](#) 2017
- Australian Government [\*National Aboriginal Education Policy\*](#)
- [\*Reconciliation Australia\*](#)
- Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA) [\*National Curriculum\*](#)