



Victorian
Catholic
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Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Action Plan

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Schools featured:

Aquinas College, Ringwood
Immaculate Heart of Mary School, Newborough Sacred Heart College, Newtown
Parade College, Bundoora
Sacred Heart Primary School, Yarrowonga Salesian College, Sunbury
St Alipius' Parish School, Ballarat East St Aloysius' School, Redan
St Brendan's School, Lakes Entrance St Joseph's School, Beechworth
St Joseph's School, Benalla
St Monica's School, Wodonga West

Artwork featured:

In my DNA
Amali, Year 10

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Acknowledgement of Country



We acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of the many lands that encompass our respective dioceses – Ballarat, Sale, Sandhurst and the Archdiocese of Melbourne.

We pay our respects to Elders and ancestors both past and present, who built the bridges that we now walk on as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander* peoples towards self-determination.

We pay our respects to our first educators who have taught and continue to teach countless numbers of children their cultures, traditions and languages for thousands of years, generation to generation.

We extend that respect to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples who live, work, teach and learn within Catholic education in Victoria.

We commit to working together to create culturally safe schools for all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students to learn and thrive.

*The term Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander refers to two distinct major groups of people and is currently the most-used term by Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander peoples. Schools need to seek clarification as to appropriate terminology when engaging with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, families and communities.



Foreword



The Victorian Catholic Education Authority (VCEA) acknowledges Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as the longest living continuous culture. It recognises families and communities as the most significant educators of their children and respects their rich history and vibrant heritage.

In his message to Australia's Indigenous community on the 30th anniversary of St John Paul II's iconic words to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in Alice Springs in 1985, Pope Francis wrote, **"This anniversary affords me the happy opportunity to express my deep esteem for the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and for your ancient cultural heritage"**. Drawing upon St John Paul II's words, Pope Francis reminds us that the culture of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people is precious, with much to offer the Catholic Church around the world.

"Your culture, which shows the lasting genius and dignity of your race, must not be allowed to disappear... Your songs, your stories, your paintings, your dances, your languages, must never be lost. For when you share the noble traditions of your community, you also witness to the power of the Gospel to perfect and purify every society, and in this way God's holy will is accomplished." Pope Francis (2016)

The VCEA Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Action Plan calls upon Victorian Catholic schools to strengthen practices to improve the education and life outcomes of all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students.

It reflects the values of Catholic education and recognises an authentic commitment to the educational agency and voice for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students.

The VCEA Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Action Plan embeds a foundation stone statement as a commitment to strengthen each of the following priority areas:

- **Catholic identity**
- **leadership, quality teaching and workforce development**
- **culture and identity**
- **partnerships**
- **attendance**
- **transitions and pathways**
- **literacy and numeracy.**

I commend this resource to you and am confident it will strengthen your current practices.

Yours sincerely,

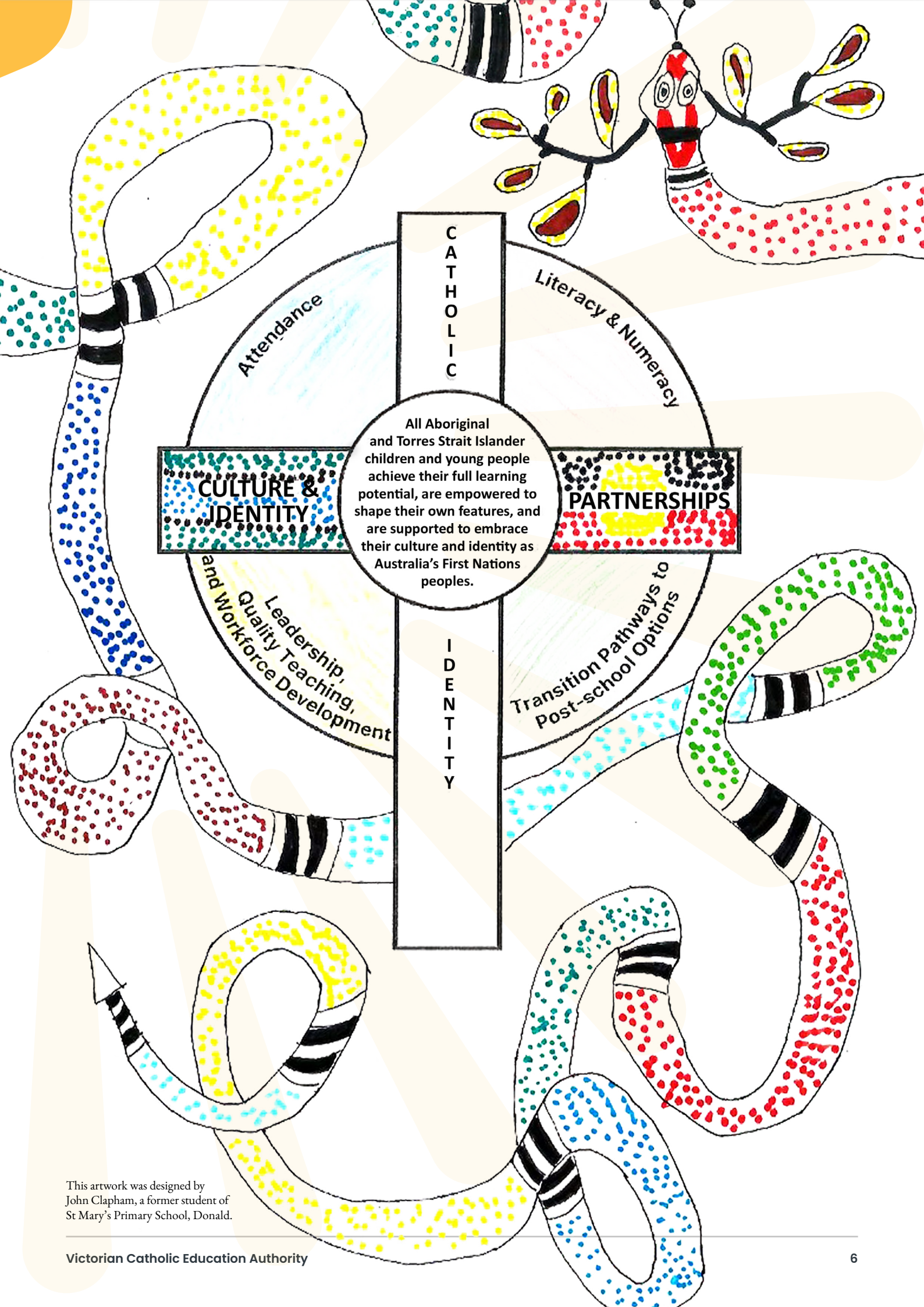
Professor Elizabeth Labone, CEO,
Victorian Catholic Education Authority

Vision

“All Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people achieve their full learning potential, are empowered to shape their own futures, and are supported to embrace their culture and identity as Australia’s First Nations peoples.”

(Education Council 2015)





This artwork was designed by John Clapham, a former student of St Mary's Primary School, Donald.

Purpose Statement

The key actions outlined in this Education Action Plan are designed to guide VCEA school communities to encourage and support every student to achieve their full learning potential.

The VCEA recognises and values the unique position of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in Australia's holistic and educational landscape. The National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Strategy (2015) (NATSIES 2015) has established a framework that outlines the 'principles and priority areas to inform the development and implementation of both local and systemic-level actions.' The VCEA Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Action Plan foundation stones underpin the priority areas of the NATSIES 2015. This document enables school leaders to facilitate change in the following domains:

- **Whole-school approach**
- **know the student**
- **professional development**
- **cultural competence**
- **high expectations**
- **supporting national priorities.**





Foundation Stone

This Education Action Plan is an affirmation that the Church, following the example of Jesus, seeks to achieve justice, harmony, respect and reconciliation with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples are the oldest living and continuous cultures on earth and, as the First Australians, occupy a unique place in contemporary Australian society.

This foundation stone refers to all people in the Church and of the Church. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples invite us to acknowledge, honour and celebrate a spirituality and way of being that embraces symbols, rituals, customs and their journeys.

The VCEA is committed to supporting dioceses to:

- ✓ provide relevant professional learning opportunities for leaders and teachers to increase their understanding and appreciation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, their culture and identity and how that informs their spiritual beliefs
 - ✓ support school proprietors to make relevant links with the local community to enhance their understanding of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander spirituality
 - ✓ provide a range of opportunities for leaders and teachers to develop their cultural competency when exploring faith, culture and identity.
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Key Actions

Whole-school approach

Building strong and culturally inclusive Catholic schools and communities

- ✓ Provide all members of the school community with an opportunity to engage with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander spirituality through recontextualization of Catholic traditions and teachings
- ✓ Incorporate Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander spirituality to inform and guide Religious Education and curriculum in Catholic schools
- ✓ Have a visual representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander symbols which are celebrated and included in Catholic rituals and ceremonies in Catholic schools
- ✓ Provide the necessary resources for teachers and Religious Education leaders to support the inclusion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander spirituality within Catholic identity
- ✓ Provide opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities to share and work with Catholic schools to foster and promote Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural recognition

Know the student

Knowing each student and celebrating their cultural identity

- ✓ Continue engagement with the Enhancing Catholic School Identity (ECSI) project
- ✓ Celebrate and commemorate significant Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander dates and incorporate them into the liturgical calendar
- ✓ Incorporate prayers and rituals that embrace Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures and spirituality
- ✓ Establish and maintain sacred spaces in every classroom that embrace Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander symbols, cultures and rituals
- ✓ Support student faith formation opportunities that are inclusive of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander spirituality

Professional development

Providing opportunities for ongoing professional development to strengthen teachers' understanding of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander spirituality

- ✓ Identify and promote opportunities to develop a process of inculturation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander spirituality and Catholic identity
- ✓ Develop an ongoing professional development plan for teachers around Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander spirituality, inclusive of incursion and immersion experiences
- ✓ Develop cultural competency opportunities for school communities regarding Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander spirituality and the Catholic story
- ✓ Develop ongoing professional relationships with relevant Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations, such as the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Catholic Ministry Victoria and the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Catholic Council

Cultural competence

Enhancing staff awareness of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander spirituality

- ✓ Promote and raise awareness of programs to enhance the cultural competency of schools, e.g. the Friends Igniting Reconciliation through Education program
- ✓ Ensure there are planned opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students to see their cultural and faith identities reflected in the curriculum, including in Religious Education
- ✓ Promote awareness of the cultural diversity of all Catholic schools and engage in dialogue with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities
- ✓ Promote prayer rituals with an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander focus on the day-to-day activities of the school

High expectations

Developing a culture of ongoing commitment in schools to build an understanding of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander spirituality

- ✓ Continue engagement with the Enhancing Catholic School Identity (ECSI) project
- ✓ Celebrate and commemorate significant Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander dates and incorporate them into the liturgical calendar
- ✓ Incorporate prayers and rituals that embrace Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures and spirituality
- ✓ Establish and maintain sacred spaces in every classroom that embrace Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander symbols, cultures and rituals
- ✓ Support student faith formation opportunities that are inclusive of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander spirituality

Supporting national priorities

Affirming Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students' spirituality within schools, creating greater connections for their educational journey

- ✓ Provide opportunities for dialogue that promotes Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander spirituality and student wellbeing through the school's community connections and the Catholic faith
- ✓ Acknowledge that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander spirituality is diverse and fundamental to many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' identity and their connection to their community



Leadership, Quality Teaching and Workforce Development



Foundation Stone

Catholic school communities, who are led by culturally responsive leaders, ensure opportunities are provided for the development of their staff in the knowledge of the local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community context. This knowledge informs the practice of the staff to incorporate the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspective into the curriculum that they deliver in their classrooms.

Leadership ensures that all teachers take responsibility for assessing, monitoring and establishing high expectations for their Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students' academic, cultural and wellbeing needs.

Action is planned for and undertaken to ensure children and young people are taught by staff who acknowledge, respect and celebrate Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories and cultures.

The school leadership team sets high expectations for learning that incorporates Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives across the enacted curriculum. There are numerous opportunities provided to celebrate significant dates that pay respect to the continued journey of reconciliation.

The VCEA is committed to supporting dioceses to:

- ✓ work closely with leadership teams to ensure there is a clearly articulated focus in the school's strategic planning to support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander education
- ✓ work closely with school leadership teams to support effective collaboration between the school and the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students and families
- ✓ support leaders to develop effective processes to monitor the spiritual, wellbeing and educational outcomes of their Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students
- ✓ work with leadership teams to map out appropriate learning opportunities to address whole-school or individual teacher needs.





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Key Actions

Whole-school approach

Ensuring that leaders plan, implement and evaluate outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students

- ✓ Include clearly articulated initiatives to enhance Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander educational outcomes in the school's strategic planning
- ✓ Create appropriate opportunities to include Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander personnel in decision-making processes and discussions concerning relevant issues
- ✓ Appoint a teacher responsible for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander education in each school
- ✓ Plan professional learning for leadership which adapts to the continuous needs of all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students
- ✓ Develop processes to ensure adherence with the Out-of-Home-Care Education Commitment: A Partnering Agreement 2018

Know the student

Developing a process to ensure that students' strengths and cultural backgrounds are understood and responded to appropriately

- ✓ Ensure that all relevant data and information are used fully so that learning opportunities can be matched to student strengths
- ✓ Ensure that all relevant personnel identify their Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population and that there are opportunities to share best practice
- ✓ Provide opportunities for teachers to meet with families to conduct a cultural interview. This will ensure that relevant staff have a sound understanding of the families' stories, including their heritage, language group, family connections and cultural ties
- ✓ Develop an understanding about how each Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander student would like their culture and identity celebrated in their classroom and at a whole-school level
- ✓ Academic growth of each Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander student is monitored by the teachers and the leadership team
- ✓ Ensure data is used by the school leadership team to track literacy and numeracy outcomes and assist teachers with relevant targeted interventions

Professional development

Ensuring a commitment to ongoing professional learning is upheld through a strategy that incorporates Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander knowledge for the development of all staff.

- ✓ Ensure there is time allocated each term to complete cross-curriculum perspectives training
- ✓ Prioritise ongoing professional learning to ensure an enhanced understanding of effective pedagogies to improve educational outcomes
- ✓ Complete an audit and ongoing review process of the delivered curriculum, inclusive of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives
- ✓ Provide adequate, contemporary and relevant resources for staff and students to support teaching and learning
- ✓ Plan for essential 'On Country' learning with the local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community and Elders, where available
- ✓ Ensure consultation with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Officer to seek guidance, information and attend professional development opportunities

Cultural competence

Building the capacity of staff to enhance their own cultural responsiveness and appreciation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures

- ✓ Provide staff with the opportunity for personal reflection as to their understanding of, and development towards, cultural competency
- ✓ Plan regular opportunities for staff to celebrate Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures
- ✓ Encourage staff to attend a range of cultural activities and learning inclusive of diocesan programs to continue to build their cultural competency
- ✓ Encourage staff to engage with their local community during significant community celebrations
- ✓ Implement programs in schools that involve the members of their local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community
- ✓ Create a culturally safe environment through the display of cultural symbols that are frequently acknowledged and celebrated by all members of the school community

High expectations

Ensuring there are high expectations for all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, school staff and curriculum design through quality teaching

- ✓ Provide staff with the opportunity for personal reflection as to their understanding of, and development towards, cultural competency
- ✓ Plan regular opportunities for staff to celebrate Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures
- ✓ Encourage staff to attend a range of cultural activities and learning inclusive of diocesan programs to continue to build their cultural competency
- ✓ Encourage staff to engage with their local community during significant community celebrations
- ✓ Implement programs in schools that involve the members of their local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community
- ✓ Create a culturally safe environment through the display of cultural symbols that are frequently acknowledged and celebrated by all members of the school community

Supporting national priorities

Ensuring leaders have a comprehensive understanding of the national targets and plan strategically in their school to address these targets

- ✓ Determine clear actions to address priorities, guided by the VCEA Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Action Plan
- ✓ Principal to ensure that targeted funding and general recurrent funding is used to support the successful learning outcomes of all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students
- ✓ Connect with, and seek advice from, the diocesan Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Officer



Culture and Identity




Foundation Stone

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students in Catholic schools across Victoria have a right to an education that values, respects and highlights the longest living culture on earth.

Schools that acknowledge and are responsive to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families' and students' lived experiences within the education setting will positively impact their engagement with schools. A child's identity is linked to their culture; it is who they are. A quality educational experience is one that

considers the culture and identity of the student and incorporates this knowledge into the opportunities for learning that are undertaken in that student's life.

The VCEA is committed to supporting dioceses to:

- ✓ provide guidance to leaders and teachers about the range of ways that their school can acknowledge and celebrate the cultural identity of their families and students
 - ✓ provide support to strategically plan for and provide a range of professional development opportunities for leaders and teachers to enhance their understanding of the uniqueness of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture and identity
 - ✓ support the development of programs and a curriculum design that focuses on an improved understanding and incorporation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures and histories across the curriculum.
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Key Actions

Whole-school approach

Celebrating a student's cultural identity at a whole- school level by creating an inclusive environment that embraces Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures

- ✓ Invite families and the community to share their cultural knowledge to support and grow the cultural identity of students
- ✓ Acknowledge, celebrate and champion the cultural identity of students through authentic engagement
- ✓ Ensure culturally appropriate resources are found in all classrooms that reflect the student and national identity of our country
- ✓ Collaborate with families as first educators
- ✓ Actively plan to ensure that all students can learn about the richness and unique cultural identity of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples
- ✓ Establish relationships with local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander representative organisations to seek advice to support cultural aspects of a student's educational experience
- ✓ Acknowledge the cultural identity of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community using cultural protocols and have culturally appropriate representation throughout the school
- ✓ Promote and participate in cultural programs to increase self-esteem and sense of cultural identity

Know the student

Greater understanding of a student's culture, enhancing their connection to their learning, and creating greater opportunities for success

- ✓ Engage with families for a greater understanding of a student's cultural identity
- ✓ Be responsive to the importance of each student's personal, physical and spiritual connection with their 'Country' and community
- ✓ Acknowledge, value and respect Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander knowledge, wisdom and expertise, which will be evident in classroom planning and content delivery
- ✓ Teachers develop a deeper understanding of each student's cultural knowledge so that learning outcomes are more relevant and effective
- ✓ Provide opportunities for families to share their stories to support the development of culturally appropriate plans
- ✓ Teachers actively and respectfully engage in conversations with students regarding their connection to their culture

Professional development

Building on the current cultural competency of staff by engaging in independent and group learning, that also provide opportunities for staff to reflect on their own personal biases

- ✓ Participate in 'On Country' cultural experiences with their local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community to hear and engage with the local knowledge of the Traditional Owners and Custodians
- ✓ Strategically plan the delivery of professional learning opportunities to equip teachers with knowledge and encourage culturally appropriate experiences
- ✓ Actively encourage teachers to develop a greater awareness and understanding of the diversity of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures
- ✓ Provide opportunities to build the capability of teachers to design and implement learning opportunities that are responsive to the cultural background and history of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and the local community
- ✓ Teachers to attend professional development that is provided within each diocese

Cultural competence

Ensuring opportunities for culturally competent teachers to learn about each student's cultural identity and apply this to their teaching practices to enhance their teaching practices

- ✓ Investigate and engage with their local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community to learn about the history and culture of the local area
- ✓ Extend this knowledge to incorporate other Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures
- ✓ Teachers to be reflective and aware of their own cultural competence in relation to biases and prejudices and how this influences their teaching instruction
- ✓ Teachers to make conscientious decisions to develop an understanding of a student's cultural identity, to ensure connection to the intended curriculum
- ✓ Teachers to ensure that content delivered will reflect the cultural backgrounds of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students

High expectations

Actively building and modelling high expectations, attitudes and behaviours for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students to strengthen their cultural identity

- ✓ Set high expectations to strengthen cultural identity through strategies that are planned for, monitored and reviewed
- ✓ Ensure teachers familiarise themselves with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories and cultures in the Victorian Curriculum
- ✓ Deliver curriculum that includes connections to the cultural identity of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students
- ✓ Provide educational experiences that will support the cultural identity of the student and empower them to achieve success in the school setting
- ✓ Schools to take an active role in community events and provide a platform to enable students to express, strengthen and/or celebrate their culture

Supporting national priorities

Strengthening the cultural identity of the students within their school, fostering a greater connection between their school and the community

- ✓ Develop teachers' capability to design and implement strategies that are responsive to the cultural background of all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students
- ✓ Deliver a strength-based curriculum that highlights the students' cultural identity by showcasing the history, language and cultural practices of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture
- ✓ Ensure that students who have a connection to land, family, culture and spirituality can promote a strong sense of cultural identity



Partnerships



Foundation Stone

School communities actively seek ways to develop authentic and sustainable partnerships with families, local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and organisations. Through these partnerships they provide opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students to achieve successful outcomes.

A strong emphasis is placed on family and community involvement in all appropriate levels of decision-making. It also considers mutually respectful partnerships, to ensure that there is an equal voice in the teaching of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students.

The VCEA is committed to supporting dioceses to:

- ✓ provide a localised list of relevant agencies and service providers that are available to support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families and students
 - ✓ support schools to establish partnerships with local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities
 - ✓ promote authentic partnerships to create opportunities for all key stakeholders to support successful outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students.
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Key Actions

Whole-school approach

Recognising the importance of developing equal partnerships within the school that enhance the learning of all students

- ✓ Develop and nurture partnerships with families and local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and organisations
- ✓ Identify all relevant agencies to establish partnerships, being mindful of each community's unique circumstances
- ✓ School leadership teams to be actively involved and have an ongoing commitment to building genuine partnerships
- ✓ Develop initiatives and programs that offer opportunities for connection and are embedded within relevant school documentation
- ✓ Develop opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families to participate in decision-making that affects their children's learning

Know the student

Ensuring school communities are aware of, and connected to, relevant partners to support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students in their learning and wellbeing

- ✓ Leaders to discuss with families any relevant partnerships that will enhance the knowledge of the teacher to support the student
- ✓ Engage with a wide range of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander key service providers to develop effective partnerships
- ✓ Provide opportunities for in-school partnerships to develop and strengthen student engagement and access
- ✓ Seek assistance from Koorie Education Workers who have extensive knowledge of the student and family and key partnerships in the local community
- ✓ Educators to be aware of the partnership opportunities that are available to support students through tailored learning opportunities to cater for individuals or small groups
- ✓ Staff access the relevant school personnel to engage with appropriate partnership opportunities

Professional development

Targeting knowledge that highlights and recognises the importance of partnerships and their impact on student outcomes

- ✓ School leadership teams work in partnership with relevant agencies to support staff to offer best practice in the learning, teaching and wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students
- ✓ School leadership teams support staff to offer quality learning and teaching in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander knowledge and perspectives, through organisations such as the Victorian Aboriginal Education Association Incorporated (VAEAI)
- ✓ Build relationships with local Traditional Owner groups and/or Elders
- ✓ Provide professional learning opportunities with local Elders to foster partnerships
- ✓ Use the expertise of diocesan Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Officers to create opportunities for partnerships with the local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community

Cultural Competence

Ensuring opportunities are available to all staff to create and develop partnerships that support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students

- ✓ Explore and build partnerships that increase the cultural competency of the whole school community
- ✓ Create culturally safe environments through partnerships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and key organisations
- ✓ Explore and develop intentional partnerships through collaboration with community members, organisations, Koorie Education Workers and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Officers to inform initiatives
- ✓ Schools to be responsive to community aspirations and set priorities through the development of quality partnerships
- ✓ Develop culturally appropriate partnerships with parents, caregivers and community stakeholders to ensure students thrive at school

High expectations

Engage with key stakeholders to build partnerships with their school, that create meaningful opportunities to improve student outcomes

- ✓ Create opportunities for authentic connections through partnerships with family and community, to ensure the voice of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community is heard
- ✓ Recognise the importance of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and families and the value they place on partnerships
- ✓ Focus on relevant partnerships that provide valuable support to the educational outcomes of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students
- ✓ Place emphasis on local partnerships where possible (e.g. Local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Consultative Group, Traditional Owner groups, Registered Aboriginal Parties and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander co-operatives).

Supporting national priorities

Prioritising equitable and strategic resourcing through general school funds as well as targeted funding

- ✓ Commit adequate resources to ensure the effectiveness and success of partnerships
- ✓ Schools and families implement timely reviews of partnerships to ascertain their value and significance
- ✓ Establish collaborative partnerships with families and appropriate community organisations that assist in achieving Closing the Gap targets



Attendance




Foundation Stone

Attending school is essential in succeeding in education and ensuring that all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students have a healthy and engaging learning experience. Improving the sustained attendance of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students increases their learning outcomes and creates the foundations for a fulfilling life after school.

Schools that are culturally safe create a climate that is proactive in developing strategies, including working closely with families and communities, a key factor which supports high attendance rates. A commitment to the educational experience of the student, which embeds a recognition of culture, encourages proud ownership of the school and successful school completion.

The VCEA is committed to supporting dioceses to:

- ✓ support schools to proactively monitor attendance so that immediate responses can be implemented to address the presenting issues/concerns
 - ✓ attend Program Support Group meetings to work with families and schools to understand the complexity of attendance concerns as soon as they are identified
 - ✓ provide recommendations and strategies that are culturally appropriate to ensure there are high levels of student engagement and attendance throughout their schooling.
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Key Actions

Whole-school approach

Engaging in respectful relationships with the community that support students to strengthen their school attendance

- ✓ Create an environment where Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures and peoples are respected and celebrated
- ✓ Ensure that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students have access to appropriate services that enhance engagement and attendance
- ✓ Provide appropriate support for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students to return to school by setting individual goals that engage in positive outcomes
- ✓ Teachers to develop strong relationships and engage with Koorie Education Workers, parents and community members to encourage full attendance
- ✓ Engage in respectful dialogue and provide support to families when attendance is an initial concern

Know the student

Developing a culturally safe environment that allows students to freely express their identity

- ✓ Embrace diversity and value Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages and cultures, enabling students to celebrate their own cultures
- ✓ Develop a better understanding of the complex factors influencing student attendance
- ✓ Have clearly outlined processes and practices that support a student's return- to-school plan and increased attendance
- ✓ Recognise families and communities as keepers of knowledge that will support the engagement and attendance of students

Professional development

Committing to learn and implement evidence-based strategies in schools that improve student attendance

- ✓ Support teachers to ensure they are culturally competent, and develop and deliver sound strategies that ensure parents, students and the community are respected and acknowledged leading to improved attendance and engagement
- ✓ Develop sound knowledge of the histories of both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, including the continuing impact they have on educational outcomes and communities
- ✓ Participate in cultural experiences that are deliberately planned with the school's local community, both inside and outside of the school environment
- ✓ Develop relationships with Koorie Education Workers, parents and community members through culturally appropriate programs

Cultural competence

Ensuring that staff are culturally competent and aware of their behaviours and attitude, and reflect on how these impact classroom attendance

- ✓ Acknowledge cultural sensitivities when developing school-based programs or strategies that strengthen a student's attendance
- ✓ When discussing a student's attendance with families, schools engage in a culturally appropriate and respectful manner
- ✓ Encourage teachers to consider their own biases and privilege, and how these can impact their teaching and engagement with students
- ✓ Understand that each student is an individual and will require tailored
- ✓ strength-based planning, learning and adjustments for continued engagement and attendance

Know the student

Knowing each student and celebrating their cultural identity

- ✓ Schools use the feedback from students to reflect on current practices and explore ways to support parents to engage with their children's education
- ✓ The leadership team monitors student attendance regularly and responses are designed to support increased attendance
- ✓ Encourage attendance through wellbeing practices instead of welfare practices
- ✓ Promote wellbeing practices, tailored to individual student need, to support engagement and attendance
- ✓ Set high expectations for all teachers to engage with students and their families to support increased attendance

Supporting national priorities

Ensuring schools are proactive in understanding cultural sensitivities that may affect student attendance

- ✓ Proactively plan and action identifying factors in the school that may affect attendance
- ✓ Respectfully work in partnership with families to address influencing factors
- ✓ Ensure students have a voice, and positive educational experiences are developed in response to their needs
- ✓ Provide effective teaching and learning environments which are respectful, supportive and reflective of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students' personal interests and aspirations, creating the foundations to achieve their life goals



Transitions and Pathways



Foundation Stone

Schools support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students to strive for excellence and to achieve successful transitions and pathways. This commences in the early years where appropriate supports are implemented at each key transition point. This will ensure that all students are supported in their chosen pathways.

Schools enact culturally responsive practices and processes that support students across the pre-foundation, year-to-year, primary-to-secondary and post-school pathways.

The VCEA is committed to supporting dioceses to:

- ✓ support schools to audit their transition practices and processes to ensure there are appropriate structures in place at all key transition points
- ✓ provide consultation support in relation to the development of transition or pathway plans
- ✓ work in partnership with schools to provide relevant information about all possible pathway options and programs targeted specifically at Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students.



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Key Actions

Whole-school approach

Developing effective transition processes that are implemented at all key transition points for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students

- ✓ Identify all key transition points and develop processes to support effective transitions
- ✓ Ensure school resources have a strong focus on developing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students' pathway options
- ✓ Ensure all key stakeholders are engaged in all transition meetings
- ✓ Gather all relevant information when developing a transition plan tailored to each Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander student
- ✓ Monitor and evaluate the transition plan and adjust to individual needs
- ✓ Ensure that a career counsellor familiarises themselves with all targeted support and advice specific to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, such as AFL SportsReady and the National Australia Bank Indigenous Pathways Program

Know the student

Establishing tailored transition points and pathways for each student through the development of strong links to family, community and relevant organisations

- ✓ Ensure there are opportunities for students to have a voice at all transition points to personalise the school's approach
- ✓ Link to relevant Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander agencies to support effective transition practices and processes that ensure successful pathways
- ✓ Provide Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students with information about the range of available traineeships and scholarships for their chosen pathway, e.g. Aurora Indigenous Pathways Portal for access to scholarships
- ✓ Use career tools and information about individual student strengths, interests and passions to provide explicit advice about pathways options

Professional development

Undertaking targeted professional learning that supports students at key transition points in their education journey

- ✓ Ensure relevant staff attend transition-related professional learning to enhance pathway planning for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students
- ✓ Attend sessions run by diocesan staff and/or government agencies to support students who are involved in the ABSTUDY program
- ✓ Keep informed about all relevant university pathways programs and ensure information is shared with relevant students, such as through VAEAI's Toorong Marnong

Cultural competence

Establishing partnerships with family, the community and relevant Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander agencies to ensure successful transition and pathway options

- ✓ Seek culturally safe work experience placements that are aligned to the student's career aspirations
- ✓ Complete an audit of transition programs and ensure they are culturally inclusive
- ✓ Seek support and advice from appropriate Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander agencies to strengthen school practices

High expectations

Setting aspirational and ambitious goals for all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students at key transition points

- ✓ Ensure appropriate supports are implemented to enable each student to achieve their desired transition and pathway
- ✓ Provide cultural mentoring and career planning opportunities for each student that allows them to explore the complete range of pathways
- ✓ Organise visits to universities and provide relevant information so that students can explore the range of options

Supporting national priorities

Implementing equitable and strategic resourcing to support transition and pathway planning

- ✓ Monitor and plan for successful transition at all key stages of transition and schooling from Foundation to post-school pathways
- ✓ Provide full access to, and participation in, all opportunities that will strengthen each student's pathway options
- ✓ Connect with the Local Learning and Employment Network systems to gather data which will support schools to evaluate the range of pathways and successful completion of post-school options
- ✓ Conduct student exit interviews to gather information and feedback to create and/or enhance successful programs and initiatives that celebrate students' cultural identity



Literacy and Numeracy




Foundation Stone

All Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students have the right to receive culturally inclusive, high-quality instruction to ensure optimal outcomes in literacy and numeracy. The way in which schools support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students and families are clearly articulated within school improvement initiatives and associated documentation.

Schools clearly articulate a plan for each student where teachers use evidence-based teaching practices to ensure goals for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students are met.

‘Through education, we are committed to ensuring that all students learn about the diversity of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures, and to seeing all young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples thrive in their education and all facets of life’ (Education Council Secretariat 2019).

The VCEA is committed to supporting dioceses to:

- ✓ support schools to analyse all the relevant student data to ensure that all teaching and learning adjustments are aspirational and informed by evidence-based practices
 - ✓ work with schools to set explicit goals and measure growth on a regular basis
 - ✓ work with leaders and teachers to ensure that all pedagogical approaches are culturally responsive and matched to the individual literacy and numeracy needs of each student
 - ✓ provide information in regard to culturally appropriate resources.
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Enabled by

Key Actions

Whole-school approach

Ensuring a shared responsibility by all educators to use data to set literacy and numeracy priorities for all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students

- ✓ Analyse data (both formal and informal) to inform and drive continued improvement of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students' educational outcomes
- ✓ Plan learning and teaching opportunities that are responsive to individual student data analysis
- ✓ Monitor and track the progress and growth of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students' performance data, guided by the school's assessment schedule
- ✓ School leadership team to schedule meetings each term with the relevant team members to discuss student progress
- ✓ School leaders to support teachers to use high-impact teaching strategies leading to strong student growth

Know the student

Ensuring teachers know the cultural background of their Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students and use effective pedagogical approaches to ensure ongoing progress in literacy and numeracy

- ✓ Conduct interviews with families and students to collect relevant cultural background information at the time of enrolment which clearly articulates the students' and families' aspirations
- ✓ Increase educators' awareness of students' cultural practices and linguistic backgrounds, and how these may impact their literacy and numeracy outcomes
- ✓ Schedule effective handover meetings to gather information regarding strengths and strategies that will assist the student in their literacy and numeracy progress
- ✓ Design and implement teaching strategies that are aligned with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander pedagogy and tailored to individual literacy and numeracy strengths and capabilities
- ✓ Explore opportunities to plan literacy and/or numeracy topics beginning with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives followed then by other perspectives

Professional development

Ensuring evidence - based and research - informed opportunities for professional development are available to teachers to support their Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students

- ✓ School leadership team assists in building the knowledge base of staff to include culturally appropriate resources when working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students
- ✓ Ensure that literacy and numeracy assessments are culturally valid and consider the cultural context for that student
- ✓ Plan professional learning opportunities for all staff that enhance literacy and numeracy outcomes
- ✓ Undertake professional learning to challenge the cultural bias that exists in classrooms and texts

Cultural competence

Using inclusive, culturally informed literacy and numeracy teaching practices for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, founded on research

- ✓ Ensure pedagogical approaches are respectful of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students and families
- ✓ Implement proven, culturally inclusive, responsive and personalised approaches to literacy and numeracy
- ✓ Create regular learning opportunities that make connections to a student's culture and interests through the delivery of literacy and numeracy activities
- ✓ Equip staff with the knowledge to select literacy and numeracy resources that do not include bias or stereotyping and that use language that is strength based
- ✓ Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander literacy and numeracy topics begin with local content and are prioritised in curriculum planning and delivery

High expectations

Setting aspirational and ambitious goals for all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students at key transition points

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Personalised Learning Plans



The Victorian Catholic Education Authority (VCEA) works in partnership with the four dioceses and school proprietors. The VCEA is deeply committed in ensuring Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students and their families have an active voice in enhancing education outcomes.

Catholic schools adopt a strengths-based approach to educational planning, reflecting the hopes and aspirations of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students.

The VCEA Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Action Plan (EAP) reflects aspirational goals for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students. These goals are articulated through the following:

- **touchstones and diocesan initiatives**
- **policies, and practices aimed at addressing historical injustices, and**
- **closing the gap in life outcomes, and**
- **ensuring the recognition and empowerment of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.**

Each Victorian Catholic school will provide avenues for student voice in the development of personalised learning plans. Plans will be personalised to the local context such as the examples found in appendices 1-4, but will include the following key elements:

- **Student voice supporting, where possible,:**
 - **links to their Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander community**
 - **understanding of their cultural heritage,**
 - **connection to land and Country**
 - **agency to strengthen and express their identity and culture in their educational setting, and**
 - **students to link to appropriate Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander education workers.**
- **Academic goals reflecting their hopes and aspirations for their learning.**
- **Strategic steps the school will take to meet the learning outcomes of the student.**
- **Wellbeing outcomes.**

Schools will use the advice provided in the Education Action Plan to refine and develop student personalised learning plans.

References



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<https://www.natsicc.org.au/pope-francis-message-to-indigenous-australians.html>.

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