



# St Paul's Primary School, Mt Lawley

## ABORIGINAL EDUCATION POLICY

### **RATIONALE:**

Aboriginal people are the original inhabitants of Australia. Their cultures are as diverse as the land to which they belong.

Pope John Paul II in his address to the Aboriginal people of Australia said:

*The Church of Australia will not be fully the Church that Jesus wants her to be until ... (the Aboriginal peoples of Australia) have made ... (their) contribution to her life and until that contribution has been joyfully received by others.*<sup>1</sup>

The National Catholic Education Commission (NCEC) supports this in its statement:

*We call upon the Church - her people, her leaders and her children to listen with new ears, to see with new eyes, what always was and what always will be - to be awakened to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander life, ways, cultures and spiritualities.*<sup>2</sup>

Whilst the Catholic Education Commission of Western Australia (CECWA) has a number of policies which apply to all groups in Catholic schools, CECWA, with advice from the Catholic Education Aboriginal Committee (CEAC), has developed this Policy Statement to provide guidance and vision on Aboriginal issues for all Catholic schools.

The CECWA supports the call for Aboriginal people to continue the process of change, in partnership with Catholic schools, enabling Aboriginal students to develop their full potential academically, physically, emotionally, socially and spiritually.

Catholic schools shall provide all students with learning experiences and an environment that promotes an understanding of Aboriginality and the shared history of Australia to empower them to be full participants in the reconciliation process.

Aboriginal parents, as primary educators of their children, are concerned with issues of education.

Reconciliation is a very important process that recognises cultural traditions and values. It promotes the principles of inclusion, equity and justice. Therefore, as with all members of the community:

*The Aboriginal people have the right to expect all followers of Jesus Christ as witnesses to the truth of the Gospel, to support them in their legitimate efforts towards development as a people seeking equality of dignity and opportunity in Australia.*<sup>3</sup>

This policy will be implemented taking into account the nature of individual schools and their communities.

<sup>1</sup> Pope John Paul II: Address to the Aboriginal People of Australia, Alice Springs, 1986.

<sup>2</sup> NCEC Conference ACT 1996.

<sup>3</sup> Pastoral Letter to the People of the Archdioceses of Perth, 1993.

## **DEFINITION:**

The term 'Aboriginal' refers to Aboriginal people and embraces Torres Strait Islander people.

## **PRINCIPLES:**

1. Aboriginal people seeking a Catholic education at St Paul's Primary School have the right to access a Catholic education in so far as resources permit.
2. Aboriginal students will be provided where possible with appropriate educational experiences to enable them to achieve educational outcomes equitable to all Australians whilst maintaining their cultural identity.
3. Aboriginal people have the right to determine the educational needs of their children and the obligation to support them in that endeavour.
4. Aboriginal people have a rich culture and history from which all Australians can learn.
5. All members of Catholic school communities shall be provided with opportunities to expand their knowledge leading them to an appreciation of the identity (including the history, culture and spirituality) and the contexts in which Aboriginal people now live.
6. The employment and ongoing training of Aboriginal staff in Catholic schools, especially in leadership positions, is essential if Aboriginal people are to participate fully in the Catholic schooling process. St Paul's is committed to assisting with Student Teacher and Student Assistant Teacher Practicum Placements.
7. St Paul's School has a commitment to the reconciliation process and to the promotion of Catholic education in the Aboriginal community.

## **PROCEDURES:**

1. St Paul's School, in consultation with the school community, continues to raise awareness of the need for and development of reconciliation strategies, so as to ensure that the vision of reconciliation is realised.
2. The Curriculum Framework is used by St Paul's to develop and implement teaching and learning programs according to the needs and characteristics of our students.
3. At St Paul's, a fully integrated Aboriginal Studies curriculum with appropriate resources shall be developed and it will be aligned with the Curriculum Framework.
4. St Paul's is aware of the cross-curricular priorities in the Australian Curriculum and uses the conceptual framework of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories and cultures to enhance learning programs.
5. St Paul's encourages a two-way approach to education between Catholic schools and Aboriginal people where Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people learn from each other. A two-way approach to education is experienced when the Aboriginal perspectives in the teaching and learning process are given equal importance to that of the non-Aboriginal culture.

6. Ongoing professional development in Aboriginal cultural awareness shall be provided to all staff working at St Paul's School. Wherever possible, the local Aboriginal community will be involved in the delivery of this training to ensure that local perspectives are provided.
7. St Paul's School supports the initiative of the Catholic education system to actively encourage and support Aboriginal people who undertake training and higher education to further the goals of the Catholic education system.
8. St Paul's will participate in celebrations for NAIDOC, Sorry Day, National Reconciliation Week and Harmony Day to increase our awareness and appreciation of the Aboriginal people and their culture.