

Catholic Education Ballarat

Reflect Reconciliation Action Plan May 2024 – May, 2025

Our business

Catholic Education Ballarat (CEB) provides educational, business and governance leadership and support for schools who belong to Diocese of Ballarat Catholic Education Ltd (DOBCEL). DOBCEL schools are operated under the auspices of the Bishop of the Ballarat Diocese. CEB's main office is situated in Ballarat with educational centres located in Warrnambool, Horsham, Swan Hill and Mildura. CEB serves the schools of the Ballarat Diocese which spans the western side of Victoria.

Across the five office locations there are 131 staff, including 2 who identify as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander. While CEB's geographic reach is confined to part of Victoria, we collaborate and work with other Victorian diocesan education systems as part of the Victorian Catholic Education Authority (VCEA).

Our RAP

Catholic Education Ballarat (CEB) is deeply connected to the Catholic tradition, strongly influencing a perspective on Reconciliation, which is seen as a sacred element in relationship with other people, the environment and God. The Catholic tradition holds *Justice* and the *Dignity of the Human Person* as central to the Church's mission. CEB's Reconciliation Action Plan is an opportunity for these values to be lived authentically. CEB desires to be in a deeper dialogue with the First Nations within the Ballarat Diocese, with an emphasis on listening and understanding. This will require the organisation to reach out to other bodies and individuals in the diocese, demonstrating a real and authentic intent to be enriched by relationship with them.

As agents of *Catholic Education*, CEB's work is focussed on pursuing fullness of life for all connected to Catholic education in the Ballarat Diocese. CEB staff work with schools to enhance educational outcomes, but also offer comprehensive support in the management of schools, with advice and resourcing for finance, human resources, marketing, property management, information technology and digital resource creation.

The Diocese of Ballarat stretches across land on which children have been educated for tens of thousands of years. The Catholic school communities which CEB serves were initially founded by Anglo-Irish immigrants and their descendants. Ongoing European migration across the twentieth century increased cultural diversity, which has continued in the opening decades of the twenty first century. Today, CEB is somewhat of a microcosm of this wider picture. CEB's workforce reflects the migration flow over recent centuries and the current cultural and religious diversity of modern Australia.

First Nations students have long been part of the story of education in the Ballarat Diocese, and while the numbers of students acknowledging this heritage have been proportionally low, CEB also recognises other students and their families may not have felt safe enough or ready to identify.

The Diocese of Ballarat covers parts of Victoria that have a complex and traumatic history between First Nations and other Australians. CEB sees the implementation of a Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP) as an opportunity to be part of a unified future and to welcome the wisdom, beauty and genius of First Nations' cultures into the heart of our organisation. CEB wishes to recognise and learn from strengths, talents and resilience that have been and continue to be shown by the First Nations members in diocesan communities.

Over many years CEB has employed Education Officers whose primary function has been to liaise with schools and First Nations families and students in order to bring about improved educational outcomes. Over time this role has broadened to advising schools on cultural relationships with local First Nations bodies and the promotion of First Nations culture for the benefit of all students in schools. CEB is proud that this role has been filled by First Nations people, and would like to expand the possibilities for First Nations people to seek employment in CEB offices at all levels and divisions. However, CEB recognises a risk that the work of Reconciliation is relegated to those members of staff who identify as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander. Reconciliation with our First Nations is a shared opportunity for all of the staff employed with the CEB.

At all formative stages of the RAP, we have sought to engage the entirety of our workplace either by direct involvement or by communicating the latest actions and inviting feedback and interaction. Just as CEB acknowledges that there will be First Nations people on staff who do not yet feel the time is right to begin or continue their cultural journey, there is also a recognition that a number of CEB staff from non-First Nations backgrounds can be uncertain about what Reconciliation means for them. It is intended that all staff feel safe and included in these processes and dialogue.

Our partnerships/current activities (if applicable)

CEB has established relationships with national, state, regional and local organisations and communities. These include the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Catholic Council (NATSICC), Aboriginal Catholic Ministry Victoria (ACMV), Victorian Aboriginal Education Association Incorporated (VAEAI), pertinent Local Aboriginal Education Consultative Groups (LAECGs), Aboriginal Co-operatives/Services and Traditional Owner Groups. We also have links with local councils, Victorian Department of Education Koorie Education Units, and relevant government departments. Both Education Officers: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education regularly attend Reconciliation Victoria's Sharing Truth and Reconciliation in Victorian Education (STRIVE) Committee meetings.

Over the past two decades, CEB has facilitated activities designed to provide learning opportunities for staff. Some of these include local Elders, community members and the CEB Education Officer: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education co-presenting on topics such as Welcome to/Acknowledgement of Country, Stolen Generations, local and national historical events, the history and importance of celebrations (e.g. National Reconciliation Week, NAIDOC Week, National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children's Day) as well as cultures and contemporary societies. At whole staff Formation Days, staff were invited to experience on-country learning at Gariwerd, Tower Hill, Ballarat and working with Wayapa Wuurrk staff at Mt. Macedon. CEB has also participated in ACMV's Proud Race initiative that was sponsored by Reconciliation Victoria and Reconciliation Australia. This initiative enabled schools to "record and celebrate the stories of Indigenous Australians on life-size bollards which (were) exhibited in venues throughout Australia." Staff have also also participated in formation at Lake Mungo.

As well as these structured activities, CEB holds intermittent group/individual discussions. Examples of these include leading discussions on topical matters (e.g. 2023 Referendum, racism in sport, debunking myths and disinformation) and education on the background or significance of specific Acknowledgements of Country, prayers and historical events. Staff are regularly invited to, and do attend, online sessions such as Reconciliation Victoria's Reconciliation in Education Seminars. In 2017, CEB collaborated with Ballarat Aboriginal community members to develop cultural protocols (to be reviewed as part of RAP).

As with previous years, CEB plans to host internal and promote external celebrations of significant days/weeks. Invitations are extended to staff during Cultural Diversity Week, National Reconciliation Week, NAIDOC Week and National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children's Day, as well as other dates of significance.

Relationships			
Action	Deliverable	Timeline	Responsibility
1. Establish and strengthen mutually beneficial relationships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stakeholders and organisations.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stakeholders and organisations within our local area or sphere of influence. 	May 31st 2024	Education Officers
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Research best practice and principles that support partnerships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stakeholders and organisations. 	August 2 2024	RAP Champion RAP WG
2. Build relationships through celebrating National Reconciliation Week (NRW).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Circulate Reconciliation Australia's NRW resources and reconciliation materials to our staff. 	May 2024	Marketing & Communication
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> RAP Working Group members to participate in an external NRW event. 	27 May-3 June, 2024	RAP WG
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Encourage and support staff and senior leaders to participate in at least one external event to recognise and celebrate NRW. 	27 May-3 June, 2024	Directorate & RAP WG
3. Promote reconciliation through our sphere of influence.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Communicate our commitment to reconciliation to all staff. 	October 2024	RAP WG Education Officers Directorate
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify external stakeholders that our organisation can engage with on our reconciliation journey. 	May 31st 2024	Education Officers
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify RAP and other like-minded organisations that we could approach to collaborate with on our reconciliation journey. 	May 31st 2024	Education Officers
4. Promote positive race relations through anti-discrimination strategies.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Research best practice and policies in areas of race relations and anti-discrimination. 	March 2025	RAP WG
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Conduct a review of HR policies and procedures to identify existing anti-discrimination provisions, and future needs. 	March 2025	RAP WG People & Development

Respect			
Action	Deliverable	Timeline	Responsibility
5. Increase understanding, value and recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures, histories, knowledge and rights through cultural learning.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop a business case for increasing understanding, value and recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures, histories, knowledge and rights within our organisation. 	September 6 2024	RAP Champion RAP WG
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Conduct a review of cultural learning needs within our organisation. 	September 6 2024	RAP WG
6. Demonstrate respect to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples by observing cultural protocols.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop an understanding of the local Traditional Owners or Custodians of the lands and waters within our organisation's operational area. 	May 31st 2024	RAP WG
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increase staff's understanding of the purpose and significance behind cultural protocols, including Acknowledgement of Country and Welcome to Country protocols. 	October 2024	Education Officers
7. Build respect for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures and histories by celebrating NAIDOC Week.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Raise awareness and share information amongst our staff about the meaning of NAIDOC Week. 	June 2024	Education Officers
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Introduce our staff to NAIDOC Week by promoting external events in our local area. 	June 2024	Marketing & Communication
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> RAP Working Group to participate in an external NAIDOC Week event. 	First week in July, 2024	RAP WG

Opportunities			
Action	Deliverable	Timeline	Responsibility
8. Improve employment outcomes by increasing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander recruitment, retention and professional development.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop a business case for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employment within our organisation. 	March 2025	RAP Champion RAP WG
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Build understanding of current Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staffing to inform future employment and professional development opportunities. 	March 2025	RAP WG People & Development
9. Increase Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander supplier diversity to support improved economic and social outcomes.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop a business case for procurement from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander owned businesses. 	August 2 2024	RAP WG
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Investigate Supply Nation membership. 	August 2024	RAP WG Office Finance

Governance			
Action	Deliverable	Timeline	Responsibility
10. Establish and maintain an effective RAP Working Group (RWG) to drive governance of the RAP.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Form a RWG to govern RAP implementation. 	March 2024	RAP Champion
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Draft a Terms of Reference for the RWG. 	May 1st 2024	RAP Champion RAP WG
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establish Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander representation on the RWG. 	<i>March 2024</i>	RAP Champion
11. Provide appropriate support for effective implementation of RAP commitments.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Define resource needs for RAP implementation. 	September 6 2024	RAP WG
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Engage senior leaders in the delivery of RAP commitments. 	Each RAP WG meeting.	RAP Champion
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Appoint a senior leader to champion our RAP internally. 	November 2023	RAP Champion
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Define appropriate systems and capability to track, measure and report on RAP commitments. 	At each RAP WG meeting	RAP Champion RAP WG
12. Build accountability and transparency through reporting RAP achievements, challenges and learnings both internally and externally.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Contact Reconciliation Australia to verify that our primary and secondary contact details are up to date, to ensure we do not miss out on important RAP correspondence. 	June annually	RAP Champion
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Contact Reconciliation Australia to request our unique link, to access the online RAP Impact Measurement Questionnaire. 	1 August annually	RAP Champion
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Complete and submit the annual RAP Impact Measurement Questionnaire to Reconciliation Australia. 	30 September, <i>annually</i>	RAP WG CEB Staff
13. Continue our reconciliation journey by developing our next RAP.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Register via Reconciliation Australia's website to begin developing our next RAP. 	<i>October 2024</i>	RAP WG

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