



**CATHOLIC EDUCATION**  
COMMISSION OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA

Topic: **Aboriginal Education**  
Policy No: **2-B3**  
Policy Area: **Education**  
Sub-Committee: **Aboriginal Community Sub-Committee**  
Originally Released: **1994**  
Date for Review: **2021**

## 1. Rationale

Catholic school communities have a responsibility to create an understanding and appreciation of Aboriginal people, their histories, cultures and spirituality. Catholic schools, in conjunction with parents, families and communities, shall play an important role in the Christian formation of their students to develop as active and contributing members of Australian society. *‘Catholic schools can serve as models for all within Western Australia who seek to create genuine communities. Such communities are always founded upon shared commitment to the common good’* (Bishops’ Mandate, p. 7).

Catholic Education Western Australia (CEWA) recognises Aboriginal people as the original inhabitants of Australia, and embraces the richness and diversity that exists both within and across Australia’s many Aboriginal Nations. As such, Catholic education is committed to maximising the learning opportunities for all Aboriginal peoples.

Western Australian Catholic school communities have a responsibility to improve the educational outcomes of Aboriginal students, while acknowledging, respecting and reflecting Aboriginal peoples’ histories and cultures, including their unique values, languages, and spirituality, for the betterment of all students.

This policy should be utilised in conjunction with the Catholic Education Commission of Western Australia (CECWA) policy statements of Justice Education, Student Enrolment and Curriculum.

## 2. Definitions

- 2.1 The term *Aboriginal* refers to the original inhabitants of Australia and respectfully includes Torres Strait Islander people.
- 2.2 The term *parents* is not limited to the Western nuclear family definition, but rather reflects complex and dynamic Aboriginal kinship systems regulated by social bonds, physical and emotional relationship to country, and connections to ancestral spirits.
- 2.3 The term *histories and cultures* is inclusive of the unique values, languages and spirituality of Aboriginal peoples.
- 2.4 The term *Aboriginal Education* refers to the deep knowledge that can be learned from Aboriginal histories and cultures. Aboriginal Education applies to all areas within the school including: teaching and learning, employment, career pathways and community partnerships.
- 2.5 The term *Aboriginal Education Plan* refers to a formalised, whole-school plan to address all facets of Aboriginal Education.

- 2.6 The term *Aboriginal Nation* refers to Aboriginal society as one that is diverse, complex and sophisticated. Australia is made up of many Aboriginal Nations.

### **3. Scope**

This policy applies to all Catholic schools in Western Australia.

### **4. Principles**

- 4.1 Aboriginal people have rich histories and cultures that may be shared with all Australians.
- 4.2 Catholic education is committed to increasing knowledge and understanding of the histories, cultures, and experiences of Aboriginal peoples.
- 4.3 Catholic education recognises that parents are the first educators of their children.
- 4.4 Catholic education is committed to collaborative decision making and capacity building with Aboriginal people.
- 4.5 Aboriginal students have the right to an equitable education that both enables the achievement of educational outcomes and maintains their cultural identity.
- 4.6 Catholic education is committed to reconciliation which promotes the principles of truth, justice, equity and inclusivity.
- 4.7 Catholic education is committed to increasing employment and promotional opportunities for Aboriginal people.

### **5. Procedures**

- 5.1 All Catholic schools in consultation with parents, families and school communities shall develop an Aboriginal Education Plan which is consistent with guidelines provided by national and state agreements.
- 5.2 Catholic schools shall integrate Aboriginal Education across all areas of curriculum through the cross curriculum priority of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories and cultures, as mandated by the Western Australian Curriculum. This cross curriculum priority provides the opportunity for all Catholic schools to act as exemplars and work in collaboration with Aboriginal people to develop all students as active and contributing members of Australian society.
- 5.3 Catholic Education staff shall attend ongoing professional learning in Aboriginal Education. Members of the local Aboriginal community shall be invited to be involved in the delivery of this professional learning where possible, in consultation with the Aboriginal Education Team.
- 5.4 School cultural education and Aboriginal language programs shall be developed in collaboration with the Aboriginal community and in consultation with the Aboriginal Education Team.
- 5.5 Catholic schools shall actively encourage and support Aboriginal people to be represented appropriately on school decision making committees.
- 5.6 Catholic schools shall actively encourage and support Aboriginal people to undertake training and further education.

- 5.7 Catholic schools shall encourage the employment and promotion of eligible, qualified Aboriginal people to leadership roles.
- 5.8 All Catholic schools shall be fully involved in a process of reconciliation through the recognition, acceptance and celebration of Aboriginal cultural traditions and values.

## 6. References

Bishops Mandate for the Catholic Education Commission of Western Australia 2009 – 2015

National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Strategy, 2015

University of New South Wales, Indigenous Terminology 2016

<https://teaching.unsw.edu.au/indigenous-terminology>

The State of Reconciliation in Australia, 2016

Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership (AITSL)

School Curriculum and Standards Authority, Government of Western Australia, 2014

## 7. Related Documents

CECWA policy statement 2-D5 *Student Enrolment*

CECWA policy statement 2-B7 *Justice Education*

CECWA policy statement 2-B2 *Curriculum*

## 8. Review History

Year of Review:	Reviewed by:	Amendments/Review
1994	CEAC	Originally Released
2000	CEAC	Reviewed
2005	CEAC	Reviewed
2010	CEAC	Reviewed
2010	CEOWA	Reformatted
2016	CEAC	Reviewed

## 9. Next Review

Year:	CECWA Sub-Committee Responsible
2021	Aboriginal Community Sub-Committee