



St. Bernard's Primary School Wangaratta Covenant 2023



Covenant

We recognise the special place and culture of Aboriginal peoples within Australia. We acknowledge that Aboriginal peoples have been the custodians of this land for more than 60,000 years. We respect their spiritual connection to Mother Earth through the Dreaming.

We will be proactive and employ practical measures to address the disadvantage experienced by Aboriginal people in education, health, employment, and general opportunity.

“Reconciliation is an active pursuit – it’s about getting on with what’s needed and what we know to get the results we all want, and that’s a mixture of measures that target the body, the mind and the spirit.” Mick Dodson 2009

True Reconciliation requires national and local solutions achieved through positive and purposeful partnerships not just for today but also for tomorrow. We work for Reconciliation, in partnership with those who believe that there can be an alternative to the present order.

This Covenant will be maintained and updated by St. Bernard's FIRE carrier leader and members of the school leadership. This Covenant explains the imperative for all St. Bernard's Primary school staff and students to work towards Reconciliation and the agreed steps we desire to take.

Our School: St. Bernard's Primary School Wangaratta

St. Bernard's is located on the traditional lands of the Bangerang and Pangerang people of the Yorta Yorta nation (Wangaratta).

Our vision for reconciliation is to be a place of learning and teaching that respects Aboriginal protocols, history and culture. We will have strong and mutually beneficial relationships with Aboriginal communities. These relationships will provide for the sharing of knowledge and ideas, and the opportunity to listen and learn from Aboriginal Australians about the past, their current circumstances, and their vision for the future. We will be a place where Aboriginal culture is respected and celebrated.

Through education we aim to empower our school community to recognise the importance and the significance of Reconciliation. Our goal is that all students and staff are informed and formed to have a deeper understanding and appreciation of Aboriginal Australia so that Indigenous students have access to high quality and culturally appropriate schooling and Aboriginal Australian history and culture is taught, celebrated and valued.

Our Vision at St. Bernard's is "To provide the best quality Catholic education for the children in our care"

To Provide: St. Bernard's provides educational resources, buildings, quality teaching staff and opportunities for children to learn and develop.

The best quality: Qualified and dedicated teachers who keep abreast of contemporary pedagogy, Child Safe Standards and Government legislation.

Catholic Education: A Christian education in the Catholic tradition that permeates all aspects of school life.

For the children: St. Bernard's is a special place for children with adults who value childhood, understand children and are dedicated to their education and safety.

In our care: Our parents entrust their children to St. Bernard's School where understanding, care, respect and safety of children as individuals is paramount.

History

St. Bernard's Primary School was opened in 1963 under the guidance of the Sisters of St. Brigid, and is a part of the Wangaratta parishes of St. Patrick's and Our Lady's in the diocese of Sandhurst.

We look forward to the future with confidence grounded in the teachings of Jesus Christ who is our 'Source of Life' as we endeavour to grow in our understanding, commitment and living of the Gospel as members of the Sandhurst Diocesan Catholic community. Our call is to en flesh the promise of Jesus in the lives of our students and families - "I have come that they may have life and have it abundantly" (Jn 10:10).

ST. Bernard's is committed to embedding the learning and traditions of the local Aboriginal people. Each year a dedicated group of grade 5 and 6 students are committed as F.I.R.E Carrier leaders of the school and student body. Their role is to share Aboriginal cultural knowledge and continue their traditions within the school. These students are led by F.I.R.E Carrier staff member Stacey Lamb and Principal Patricia Boak.

What do we mean by Reconciliation?

Reconciliation is working in respectful relationship with Aboriginal people in order to raise awareness and knowledge of Aboriginal history and culture to bring about societal and attitudinal change that is often based on myths and misunderstandings, and to encourage action where everyone plays their part in building better relationships between all Australians.

Professor Michael McDaniel challenges us to participate actively in the Reconciliation process. "If every non-Indigenous person just simply within the everyday power that you have in your workplace with the regular authority you have, with the everyday resources you have, just simply turn your mind occasionally to what you could do with that for the benefit of Indigenous Australians and did that once a year, that would be a movement of twenty odd million people which I'm sure over a decade would result in a situation or circumstance that I can't possibly imagine for that small five hundred thousand fellow Australians."

Reconciliation, central to the mission of Jesus and a meaningful model for evangelisation, is the transformation of the heart that leads to the unity of all humankind with God through restoring right relationships. Focus on the spirituality of reconciliation: how reconciliation is experienced, how that experience can become a key to a new way of living, and how that way of living might be shared with and transmitted to others is fundamental to the total experience of God transforming the lives of teachers, parents and students (Schreiter, 1998, p. 5).

The Bishops Commission 2010 states " For Christian people, a true and sincere apology can never be taken lightly. It indicates a change of heart, a recognition that something needs to be different. We are saying that we want to turn around. We want to make a commitment to a new future. Apologies are always more than words. They involve the heart, courage and being prepared to take a

risk. The fruit of an apology is seen in a new attitude, in new behaviour and the desire to walk on a new path. It is about wanting to live in a new relationship with God and one another. “

As Christians we belong to a religious tradition that allows us to listen, to share in an apology and allow its healing and grace to make us better people and a better nation. This challenge is up to us as individuals, but also up to us as families, communities, at home, school and in our work. As Pope John Paul II invited us in 2006 “Let us become the Church Jesus calls us to be.”

What responsibility do we have as individuals and as a group?

Reconciliation is the business of every person who works at St. Bernard’s Primary School!

Prime Minister Kevin Rudd in his apology to Aboriginal people on behalf of the nation made it plain that it was every Australian’s responsibility:-

“We today take this first step by acknowledging the past and laying claim to a future that embraces all Australians.

A future where this Parliament resolves that the injustices of the past must never, never happen again.

A future where we harness the determination of all Australians, Indigenous and non-Indigenous, to close the gap that lies between us in life expectancy, educational achievement and economic opportunity.

A future where we embrace the possibility of new solutions to enduring problems where old approaches have failed.

A future based on mutual respect, mutual resolve and mutual responsibility.

A future where all Australians, whatever their origins, are truly equal partners, with equal opportunities and with an equal stake in shaping the next chapter in the history of this great country, Australia.”

Extract from K Rudd PM Apology to the Stolen Generations

Pope John Paul II when he spoke to Australian teachers in 1986 reminded us of our responsibility as teachers:-

“The life of a teacher, as I know from personal experience, is very challenging and demanding, but it is also profoundly satisfying.

It is more than a job, for it is rooted in our deepest convictions and values.

To be intimately concerned in the development of a young person, of hundreds of

young people, is a highly responsible task.
 As teachers, you kindle in your students
 a thirst for truth and wisdom.
 You spark off for them a desire for beauty.
 You introduce them to their cultural heritage.
 You help them to discover the treasures of other
 cultures and peoples.
 What an awesome responsibility and privilege is yours
 in the teaching profession.'

Reconciliation is not a charity movement; the benefits for both Aboriginal and non Aboriginal people are mutual.

Why is Reconciliation important at St. Bernard’s Primary School?

Reconciliation is central to the mission of the Catholic Church and our school. We attempt to live Jesus message “I have come that you may have life and have it abundantly”. John 10:10 When Aboriginal people are living with societal, health and educational outcomes that are the worst for any race of people in our country, our mission as Catholics, committed to social justice, is to bring about change in these areas so that all will experience the life giving opportunities Jesus expressed.

Australian society is the poorer for not knowing the true history and culture of Australia. Our mission as educators is to teach truth.

Spirituality Focus Area: Learn , Teach, Share, Grow towards understanding Aboriginal Spirituality (holistic)			
Actions	Responsibility	Timeline	Suggested Activities/Resources
Engage, collaborate and consult with Aboriginal people to enrich and enhance,	All staff	Ongoing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work as colleagues with the Aboriginal Network and CES staff • Stay connected with Nikki James and Aunty Des from

<p>spiritual experiences for staff, student and community.</p> <p>Honour the Aboriginal significant days through prayer</p> <p>Perform the Aboriginal rituals in Mass and prayer e.g. Acknowledgment of country and Message Stick</p> <p>Work with Aboriginal elders to develop and embedded a connection with the school</p>		<p>Embedded</p> <p>Embedded</p> <p>Embedded</p> <p>Embedded</p> <p>Embedded</p> <p>New</p>	<p>Winton Wetlands</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Work with Elders and Aboriginal people locally to ensure protocols and knowledge are accurate ● Use the message stick during reading of the Word at assemblies, liturgies and Masses ● Participate in retreats and immersion opportunities to significant Aboriginal Sites i.e. Lake Mungo. ● Use the prayer and liturgy materials provided by CEO Staff for Staff Meetings and PDs prepared during Aboriginal significant days ● Assist and take part in the preparation and attend the Deanery National Reconciliation Week Masses each May ● Liaise with and invite Aboriginal elder Nikki James and Aunty Des to school gatherings and excursions.
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Cultural Recognition & Awareness

Focus Area: Recognise Cultural Perspectives, Demonstrate Awareness

Actions	Responsibility	Timeline	Suggested Activities/Resources
Embrace Aboriginal stories	All staff	Embedded	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Acknowledge Country at staff meetings and all public

<p>and culture within Office ceremonies</p> <p>Publicly display our schools respect for Aboriginal people.</p> <p>Engage in professional development and cross cultural opportunities to better cater for the needs of Aboriginal students in our schools</p>		<p>Embedded</p> <p>Embedded</p> <p>Ongoing</p> <p>Embedded</p> <p>Ongoing</p> <p>Embedded</p> <p>Embedded</p> <p>Embedded</p> <p>Embedded</p> <p>Embedded</p>	<p>events</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Invite Elders to Welcome visitors to Country at significant events where appropriate. ● Localise Acknowledgment of Country as much as possible using local photos / images ● Work with staff to assist them to Incorporate Aboriginal perspectives in curriculum ● Acknowledge Country on schools website, email messages and printed material ● Annually ensure a senior staff member is a FIRE Carrier and perform ceremony early in the year with the FIRE Carriers and Lou Levy from CES ● Exhibit Fire Carrier and cultural artefacts in prominent position ● Educate the school community of the Aboriginal story of the land and people on which St. Bernard's is situated ● Display Aboriginal paintings and other symbols around the school ● Use Aboriginal artefacts during assemblies, Masses and liturgies.. ● Celebrate the Aboriginal calendar.
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Practical Reconciliation & Justice
Focus Area: Walk the Journey together, Learnings into Practice

Actions	Responsibility	Timeline	Suggested Activities/Resources
<p>Take Practical Measures toward Reconciliation and Justice</p> <p>Acknowledge and teach the 'true' history of Australia</p> <p>Empower the FIRE Carrier leaders to share the learning and message within the school</p>	All staff	<p>Ongoing</p> <p>Embedded</p> <p>Ongoing</p> <p>Ongoing</p> <p>Ongoing</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Display the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander flags ● Display and maintain Aboriginal artefacts in front office ● Attend significant diversion gatherings such as Reconciliation Masses ● Make links to Victorian curriculum ● Provide learning opportunity for our FIRE Carrier students to grow their knowledge and understanding ● Provide opportunities for FIRE Carrier leaders to pass on their knowledge and learning
<p>Staff to know and celebrate the students that identify as Aboriginal in our school community</p>	All staff	Ongoing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● This information to be noted on the student profiles. Staff to connect and celebrate the identity of the child and family. ● Students and family are to be supported and invited to work with FIRE Carriers and staff in Indigenous learning experiences.
<p>Connect with and know who</p>	All Staff	Ongoing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Foster and build connections.

our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families are	Leadership		<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Information noted on Google files● Invitation sent out to welcome any sharing of knowledge and learning of culture.
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St. Bernard's Primary School Wangaratta commits annual actions to educate and work toward true Reconciliation.