

Educating for Justice, Truth and Reconciliation



**A New Partnership with
Indigenous Peoples of Australia**

National Catholic Education Commission

*V*ision

The National Catholic Education Commission's vision for Reconciliation with the Indigenous Peoples of Australia is:

That all involved in Catholic education will act upon the words of The Australian Bishops, Pope John Paul II and The Vision of the Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation.

Firmly opt for solidarity between all of Australia's inhabitants by individually and communally responding to a call to conversion based on hope, promise and love, and to reconciliation with people of every race living in our country. 1

The Church of Australia will not be fully the Church that Jesus wants her to be until you [the Indigenous peoples of Australia] have made your contribution to her life and until that contribution has been joyfully received by others. 2

*A united Australia which respects this land of ours;
Values the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander heritage;
And provides justice and equity for all. 3*

*M*ission

This expression of the mission of Jesus provides a key source of inspiration for all of us.

*The Spirit of the Lord is upon me,
because he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor.
He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind,
to let the oppressed go free,
to proclaim the year of the Lord's favour. 4*

The N.C.E.C. intends the statement "Educating for Justice, Truth and Reconciliation" to be a positive response to Indigenous people who have said:

*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
lifeways, cultures and spiritualities. 5*

Commitment

For some people, this awakening has already dawned. This experience can and should be shared.

With this in mind the N.C.E.C. declares its commitment to:

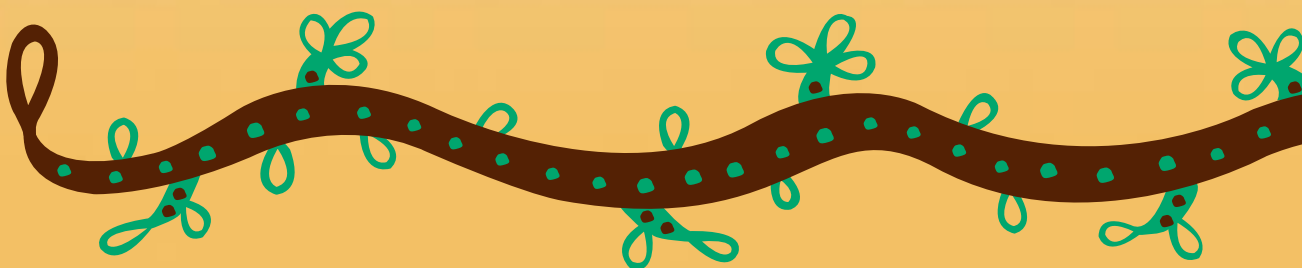
- engage in the process of awakening which will bring about a new heart in the people of this land;
- acknowledge that Justice and Truth are at the heart of Reconciliation;
- support and encourage educators in the Catholic community to journey with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and work towards Reconciliation through education;
- reflect upon and evaluate progress of Catholic education in Australia towards Reconciliation.

Values & Principles

All involved in Catholic Education are called to move beyond words and to express in action the Gospel values and principles they profess by:

- affirming that education has continued in this land in unique ways for thousands of years;
- recognising, appreciating and celebrating cultural diversity;
- acknowledging the dignity, self-worth and human rights of all Australians;
- sharing spiritualities and connectedness to the land and sea;
- seeking Reconciliation by...
 - acknowledging wrongdoing,
 - expressing sorrow in truthful ways,
 - forgiving and being forgiven,
 - undertaking, as far as possible, to restore the damage caused by wrongdoing,
 - celebrating Reconciliation with appropriate liturgy that includes Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives.

N.C.E.C. will promote such action in full collaboration with the State and Territory Catholic Education Commissions in a spirit of Justice and Equity.



Challenges in Education for furthering Reconciliation

All involved in Catholic education are urged to engage with present and future challenges. These will include the search for common ground and mutual understanding, learning to “walk in the other’s shoes” and maintaining a particular focus on:

Communication

- ▶ The Reconciliation process will be furthered by the development of communication strategies based on understanding, mutual respect and negotiation.

Improving Relationships

- ▶ Fractured relationships need to be restored through:
 - individual, personal, internal reconciliation;
 - reconciliation within and between cultural groups; and
 - development of mutual trust.

Countering Racism

- ▶ It is essential to nurture educational principles and approaches which involve:
 - the pursuit of truth;
 - liberation from ignorance and prejudice; and
 - promoting relationships in harmony with gospel values.

Addressing Disadvantage

- ▶ Progress towards Reconciliation calls for a recognition “..... that past injustice continues to give rise to present injustices for Indigenous Australians”.⁶

Our Shared History

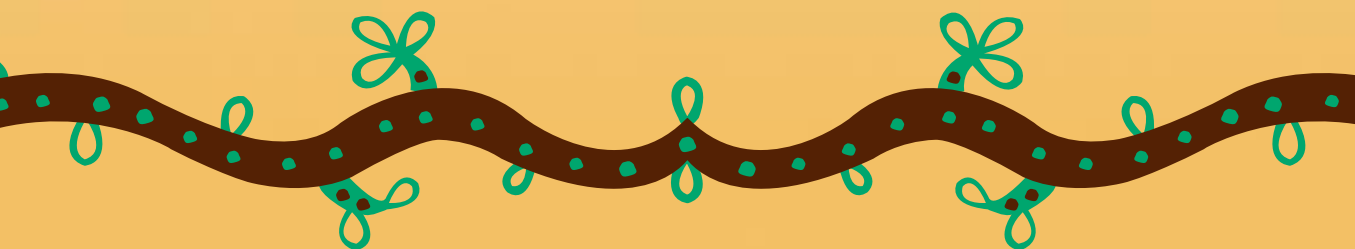
- ▶ A positive and productive approach to Reconciliation relies upon a deeper appreciation of the thousands of years of Indigenous Australian history with a deliberate focus on the implications and consequences of our shared history of the last 200 years.

Reading the Signs of the Times

- ▶ Renewal of Australia as a nation is the ultimate goal of National Reconciliation. It is crucial that education communities discern the signs of the times so that Catholic educators can contribute to Reconciliation.


Reconciliation and Renewal

- ▶ Restoration and renewal of right relationships among peoples is a necessary consequence of expressing sorrow and seeking forgiveness for the disadvantage experienced by Indigenous Australians. The process of National Reconciliation challenges Australians to work in partnership to create a better future.



Focus for action

A
Statement
by the
National
Catholic
Education
Commission



N.C.E.C. will collaborate with State and Territory Catholic Education Commissions to support and actively encourage participation with Indigenous peoples.

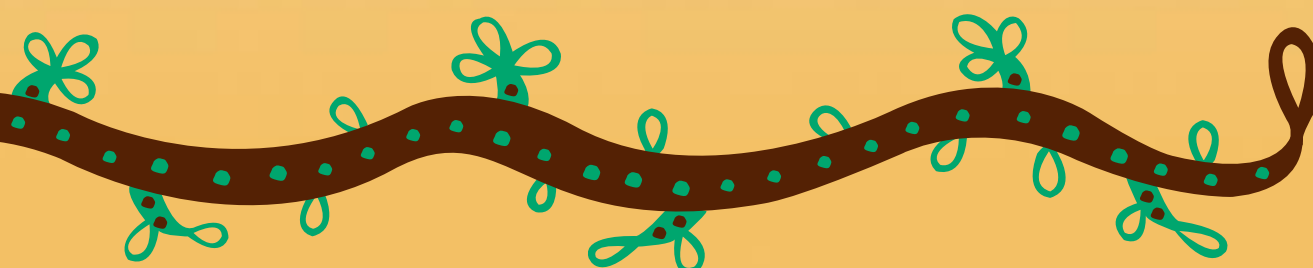
Respecting the previously stated values and principles, and in particular, the principle of allowing decisions to be taken as close as possible to the point at which they can be effectively implemented, an appropriate response would include:

- Critically reflecting on roles and responsibilities so that policy and practice will achieve genuine educational outcomes;
- Continually challenging Catholic educators to:
 - be open to* the movement of the Holy Spirit;
 - affirm and value* all people;
 - discern new ways* to assist all Australians to understand their country's histories and cultural identities;
 - exercise leadership* in educating people to understand the process of Reconciliation.

Reconciliation is about building a new relationship between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians and the wider community, one that heals the pain of the past and ensures we all share fairly and equally in our national citizenship. 7

November

1998



COVER DESIGN: *Blue* is for the people of the sea. It also represents the Heavens and the calming effect it has when you've discovered your inner self. *Green* is for the people of the land. It also represents growth, abundance and knowledge. *Brown* is for the people of the desert. It also represents depth – your discovery of one's own spirituality by digging down into your soul. *Book* – this was placed centrally as the Bible and Education are the tools to learning and self discovery. *Cross* – this has everything revolving around it as this is the source to one's spirituality, education and life. *People* – the eight people represent the eight states and territories of Australia. It also represents the joining of hands in prayer and touching others through the Lord's words. It also symbolises reconciliation celebrating all peoples diverse cultures, beliefs, spirituality and life. *Circles* represent the Journey and people finding the path of enlightenment – the circle of life. *Vine* is spreading the word of the Lord through education and culture sharing. The vine connecting the three inner pages symbolises the spreading of the word of the Lord through education and cultural sharing.



ARTWORK THIS PAGE – Entitled Woppa-Yunga (One Big Mob). The large circles represent the eight state and territory Catholic Education Commissions. At the centre is Christ on the cross – a spirituality to which each person is called. The small dots indicate the journey and the sharing; with all things interacting on a continuous exchange around the Catholic ethos and Indigenous cultural learning cycle.

ARTIST: Michelle Na-Kui (Pink Water Lily) Ballesteros is a descendant of the Darrumbal Clan from Central Rockhampton. Her peoples' Dreaming is the Water Lily – each leaf of the Water Lily flower represents a sister clan. Michelle's mob is the Woppa-burra people. She has worked in the Brisbane Indigenous Community as an artist for 16 years.

REFERENCES:

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|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------|
| 1. No. 8 Pastoral Letter of Australian Bishops - Racism and the Conversion of the Human Heart | 11 December 1988 |
| 2. Pope John Paul II - Address to the Aboriginal People of Australia, Alice Springs | 29 November 1986 |
| 3. Vision Statement of the Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation | February 1992 |
| 4. Luke 4:18-19 The Holy Bible: New Revised Standard Version - Nelson | 1989 |
| 5. N.C.E.C. Conference ACT | 3 May 1996 |
| 6. The Path to Reconciliation: Renewal of the Nation, Australian Reconciliation Convention | 28 May 1997 |
| 7. Ibid | |

This statement is issued by the National Catholic Education Commission (NCEC).

For further particulars contact:

**NCEC
GPO Box 3046
CANBERRA CITY ACT 2601**

**Telephone (02) 6201 9830
Fax (02) 6257 7395
Email: ncec@ncec.catholic.edu.au
Website: <http://www.ncec.catholic.edu.au>**