



Catholic  
Education  
Tasmania

# **Catholic Education Tasmania**

**Independent Education Review  
Submission**

## Contents

|   |    |
|---|----|
| Overview of Catholic Education in Tasmania  | 3  |
| Theme One: Defining education success   | 4  |
| Catholic Education Tasmania Perspectives  | 4  |
| CET Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Perspectives  | 6  |
| Theme Two: Strengthening supports and engagement for all learners at all stages of their education. | 9  |
| Catholic Education Tasmania Perspectives  | 9  |
| Catholic Community  | 9  |
| CET Science of Reading  | 9  |
| CET <i>Insight</i>  | 10 |
| CET Early Years' Perspectives   | 12 |
| CET Speech and Language Perspectives  | 13 |
| CET Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Perspectives  | 16 |
| Theme Three: Outcomes at the conclusion of the formal years of schooling.                           | 20 |
| Catholic Education Tasmania Perspectives  | 20 |
| CET Pastoral Care Considerations  | 22 |
| CET Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Perspectives  | 23 |
| Theme Four: Support for our teaching workforce.   | 26 |
| Catholic Education Tasmania Perspectives  | 26 |
| CET Literate Learners for Life  | 27 |
| CET <i>Insight</i>  | 28 |
| CET Canvas Learning Management System and Science of Learning Curriculum Resources                  | 29 |
| CET ICT Perspectives  | 31 |
| Early Career Teacher Support Initiatives  | 32 |
| CET Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Perspectives  | 32 |
| CET Catholic Mission Perspectives   | 35 |
| CET Teaching Schools  | 36 |
| CET Workforce Strategies  | 37 |
| Theme Five: Accountability for improved outcomes.   | 39 |
| Catholic Education Tasmania Perspectives  | 39 |
| CET Policy Initiatives  | 39 |
| CET Strategic Improvement Planning  | 39 |
| CET <i>Insight</i>  | 40 |
| CET Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Perspectives  | 40 |
| Key Features of AKSEP   | 41 |
| Impact of AKSEP   | 42 |
| Acknowledgements  | 44 |
| References  | 45 |

Catholic Education Tasmania welcomes the opportunity to make a submission as part of the Independent Education Review, October 2024.

## **Overview of Catholic Education in Tasmania**

Catholic schools were originally established to support and nurture the faith development of Catholic children, whilst providing everyone with the highest standard of learning and care.

Today, there are 38 Archdiocesan schools in Tasmania. Our schools are places where spiritual, educational, physical, moral and social formation is provided for every child or young person who walks through our doors.

As an education provider, Catholic Education Tasmania is responsible for the education, safety and well-being of 17,000 students across Tasmania. We employ over 4,000 staff.

Catholic Education Tasmania responds to the needs of all members of our school communities in a sensitive and just manner, which respects the innate dignity of every human person.

## Theme 1 - Defining educational success

We need to ensure that our education system has clearly agreed objectives that are transparently reported. What does success look like after the formal years of schooling in the Tasmanian context and how do we better encourage our young people to aspire to achieve?

### Catholic Education Tasmania System Perspectives

The Archbishop's *Charter for Catholic Schools in the Archdiocese of Hobart* states that "our goal as educators is the integral formation of the human person, which includes preparation for professional life, formation of ethical and social awareness, developing awareness of the transcendental, and religious education." Consequently, our curriculum and instruction should foster the desire in our students to seek wisdom and truth; the preference for social justice; the discipline to become self-learners; the capacity to recognise right moral action and the desire to transform and enrich the world with the love of Christ.

Completing Year 12 is crucial as preparation for further study and work. Continuing in school education until age 18 means that students reach pivotal decision points in life with greater maturity, self-awareness, capability and knowledge. Students who complete Year 12 also have access to considerable support and advice from trained professionals through their respective educational institutions. Finishing Year 12 also provides greater opportunities for further study and work through attainment of entry qualifications. Finally, finishing Year 12 means that the protective social-emotional factor of school connectedness and peer friendship networks extends through these vital growth years.

Success during and after formal years of schooling would be evident with students achieving competent, age-appropriate literacy (especially reading) and numeracy skills. Success is also defined by attainment - whether that be TCE, TCEA, VET or TASC qualifications. Success is apparent when students apply the skills and knowledge attained at school to the next phase of life - whether that be further study or employment. It can also be seen where students can fully participate fully in social, economic and political life beyond school without disadvantage. Success can also be defined by students being involved, connected and thriving through extra-curricular activities and groups (sporting, cultural, academic and service) both at school and beyond.

We can better encourage our young people to aspire to achieve their ambition by equipping them with the necessary skills and knowledge to fully participate in life beyond school. This requires high-quality and consistent career and further study advice. Students considering

pathways at Year 10 and 11 and exiting Year 12, face a bewildering and complex landscape. Whilst that may be difficult to fix, professional and skilled guidance and advice must be available to every student over their final three years of school (and beyond). Students should be provided with multiple opportunities throughout their education to explore a range of career paths and work inspirations. It is vital students have access to speakers from a variety of backgrounds who are willing to share their professional journeys.

It is important also that VET and University pathways be equally valued and accessible. If we have prepared students well, ideally, they will have acquired a range of key academic, social, emotional and interpersonal skills that support their full participation in life.

Intergenerational change should also be considered as we understand the nuance of the new generation and future generations. We know that newer generations such as Generation Z are driven by individuality, diversity and social justice, in a world of smartphones and social media. Conversely, Generation Alpha is technologically immersed, digitally sophisticated and adept at navigating the pace of change in technology.

What success looks like for future generations will evolve as new generations in the workforce have a stronger alignment to work life balance and part time work portfolios. This means a student's view may be vastly different from their educators' views depending on their generational bias.

To support student aspiration and resilience, schools need to prioritise and implement wellbeing and mental health checks to enable educators and allied health professionals to respond to student need. This will support the development of an environment that is safe and engaging for students, encouraging them to remain at school and finish year 12.

The enactment of the Education Act in 2016 which requires all students to finish Year 12 or its equivalent, has been a major reform. It directs effort by the government, schools and other institutions towards a clear goal. VET in schools has made great progress in recent years, providing excellent pathways for students who may or may not pursue University qualifications in the future. Pathways counselling has improved and is now much more widely accessible and capable. The extension of Year 11 and 12 to high schools, provides additional opportunities for students (particularly in regional areas) to complete Year 12. The Schools Recommendation pathway (supplementing the ATAR) instituted by UTAS, provides an additional recognition for students seeking a university pathway. A greater focus by schools on wellbeing as an outcome, and recognition of its importance to success in post-school life, has also been a significant improvement.

## CET Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Perspectives

Finishing Year 12 is essential for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students as it provides a pathway to broader opportunities, both in further education and employment. For many Aboriginal students, successfully completing Year 12 or its equivalent is not just about academic achievement but also about the holistic development of their cultural identity, well-being, and readiness for life after school.

- **Access to Multiple Pathways:** Completing Year 12 opens doors to various post-school pathways, including university, vocational training, or direct entry into the workforce. These options empower students to make informed choices about their futures. CET ensures that Aboriginal students have access to tailored post-school pathways, supported by Aboriginal Transition Officers and Key Teachers, who help students explore their options and navigate the transition to further education or employment.
- **Cultural and Personal Development:** For Aboriginal students, completing Year 12 also signifies the culmination of a journey that strengthens their cultural identity and well-being. Through their participation in a comprehensive cultural education program with Catholic Education Tasmania, students are provided with a supportive environment that recognises their cultural heritage and helps them develop the resilience and confidence needed to succeed in the broader world.
- **Contributing to Community and Society:** Completing Year 12 equips Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students with the skills, knowledge, and confidence to contribute to Tasmanian society and their own communities. Through CET's focus on learning, well-being, and cultural outcomes, students are prepared to participate in the economy, engage in meaningful work, and serve as role models within their communities, and perhaps be cultural knowledge sharers and leaders for future generations.

For Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, success during and after school is not solely defined by academic achievement but by a balance of learning, well-being, and cultural outcomes. Catholic Education Tasmania recognises that each of these areas is equally important and that success in all three is more likely to lead to ongoing success and smooth transition into further education or employment.

- **Academic Success:** Success in the classroom is important for Aboriginal students as it gives them the foundation to pursue their goals, whether in further education or the workforce. CET supports academic success through a number of targeted measures that ensure academic support and that students stay on track with their studies.
- **Cultural Success:** CET defines cultural success as students having a strong sense of their Aboriginal identity and heritage. Through a comprehensive cultural education

program that integrates cultural knowledge sharers, family involvement, and access to cultural resources, Aboriginal students develop a deep understanding of their culture, which helps build confidence and resilience. This cultural strength is a critical component of long-term success.

- **Well-Being and Social Success:** Success also involves students feeling supported emotionally and socially. CET fosters a culturally safe environment where Aboriginal students feel respected and valued. The Aboriginal Community Liaison and Transition Officer plays a key role in ensuring that students' well-being is prioritised, both during their schooling and as they transition into further education or employment.

Encouraging Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students to aspire to achieve their ambitions requires fostering a sense of purpose, connection to culture, and clear pathways that lead to further education or employment. Catholic Education Tasmania uses several strategies to support this:

- **Cultural Connection as a Motivator:** Aboriginal students are more likely to aspire to achieve when they see their cultural identity reflected in their education. CET's comprehensive cultural education program ensures that students remain connected to their culture throughout their schooling, which motivates them to pursue their goals with confidence.
- **Clear Pathways to Success:** CET supports students by offering clear, tailored pathways into further education and employment. The Aboriginal Transition Officer provides individualised guidance, helping students see the relevance of completing Year 12 and the opportunities that follow. Partnerships with UTAS, TasTAFE, and local employers also help students envision themselves in successful post-school roles.
- **Mentorship and Role Models:** CET encourages aspirations by connecting students with Aboriginal role models through school programs and community events. These role models provide inspiration and practical advice, showing students what is possible and helping them set meaningful goals.

Catholic Education Tasmania's focus on learning, well-being, and cultural outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students is working well because it provides a holistic approach to education that meets the diverse needs of First Nations students.

- **Comprehensive Cultural Education Program:** CET offers what may be one of the largest cultural education programs of any education system across Australia. Through this comprehensive program, Aboriginal students and their families participate in a wide array of cultural activities, such as working with cultural knowledge sharers, attending cultural camps, and accessing resources from the Cultural Object Library. This program ensures that cultural identity is deeply

embedded into the educational experience, which is a key factor in student engagement and success.

- **Cultural Integration:** The integration of Aboriginal culture into the curriculum and school life through cultural knowledge sharers, the Cultural Object Library, and family events, has been highly effective in keeping Aboriginal students engaged in their education. When students see their identity reflected and valued, they are more motivated to succeed.
- **Tailored Support Systems:** CET's use of Aboriginal Student Success Teachers (ASSTs), Key Teachers, and the Aboriginal Community Liaison and Transition Officer ensures that students receive the academic, emotional, and cultural support they need. These tailored support systems help students stay on track, even if they face challenges during their schooling.
- **Family and Community Engagement:** By actively involving Aboriginal families and communities in the educational process through events like cultural camps, parent excursions, and family history research initiatives, CET has strengthened the connection between home and school. This engagement creates a supportive network around students that contributes to their success.

By emphasising learning, well-being, and cultural outcomes, Catholic Education Tasmania ensures that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students are not only prepared academically but are also equipped to transition successfully into further education or employment. This holistic approach to success helps students achieve their ambitions while staying connected to their culture and Community.

In conclusion, year 12 completion supports a lifelong learning process and disposition toward a habit of completion and personal empowerment. As a system, CET is committed to ensuring that young people are on track to complete year 12 with confidence, creativity, knowledge and skills to achieve and contribute to Tasmanian society and economy. A year 12 qualification challenges the barriers to generational poverty, low literacy rates and under-employment. A young person's full achievement at this level provides a significant head start to a successful transition into tertiary education, a career in trade, full time employment or further study.



## Theme 2 - Strengthening supports and engagement for all learners at all stages of their education

How can we collectively support Tasmanian learners to get the most out of their entire education experience and ensure all students reach their potential?

### Catholic Education Tasmania System Perspectives

#### Catholic Community

Many Tasmanian families continue to entrust their children's education to Catholic schools with the expectation that the Catholic school community will work with them in fostering their children's spiritual, religious and moral development, integrated within their overall development as human persons. The Catholic school recognises parents/carers as the primary educators of their children, and it aims to work in partnership with families and the parish community for the Christian faith formation of young people.

Essentially, parents/carers are aware that the growing spiritual and religious self-understanding of their children will be given priority in the Catholic school. This occurs through their children's immersion in the religious life of the school, its formal classroom Religious Education curriculum and its wider curriculum imbued with a Catholic worldview. In addition, parents/carers are aware that their children are invited to participate in the Christian faith formation opportunities of the local Catholic parish community that are provided through its sacramental and liturgical life and Christian service activities. It is through these activities and the witness of the living faith of its members that the Catholic school participates with families and the parish community in the Catholic Church's evangelising mission that continues to proclaim the Good News of Jesus Christ now and forever.

#### CET Science of Reading

Catholic Education Tasmania (CET) supports teachers to develop professional knowledge and capacity in reading instruction. To enhance and strengthen teacher competency, CET has ensured School Leaders, Teachers and Literacy Leaders are confident in knowing how the human brain learns to read and acquires knowledge and skills. This has been achieved by facilitating, funding and supporting professional learning, such as:

- explicit and direct reading programs and interventions
- All System Day professional learning by experts and coaches

- observation and coaching in schools
- targeted professional support
- Literacy Leader meetings – professional reading, expert support, collaborative discussion and planning

CET understands that teachers with strong professional knowledge, who feel equipped and supported to teach reading effectively:

1. **Understand developmental stages:** To help tailor instruction to meet the diverse needs of their students, ensuring that each child progresses at their learning pace.
2. **Use effective and evidence-based instructional strategies:** To choose appropriate methods for teaching phonological awareness, oral language, phonics, vocabulary, comprehension, and fluency, making learning more effective and engaging.
3. **Identify reading difficulties in a timely manner:** To implement interventions promptly, providing support that helps students fill gaps and overcome challenges.
4. **Integrate literacy across the curriculum:** Reading is not confined to English; it intersects with all subjects. Teachers with expertise in literacy can integrate reading and writing skills into other areas, enhancing overall learning and critical thinking.
5. **Stay informed on the continually evolving research:** Teachers who are committed to professional development stay updated on the latest research and best practices, ensuring that their teaching methods reflect current knowledge.
6. **Build a love for reading:** Knowledgeable teachers can inspire a passion for reading. They understand how to create a positive reading environment, recommend appropriate texts, and foster discussions that make reading instruction and reading enjoyment combine.

### **CET Insight**

*Insight*, based on the science of learning and reading, encompasses the way we teach in every classroom. This teaching approach empowers all educators to help their students grow in knowledge, wisdom and service.

Our *Insight* Project has one single objective: to improve the learning achievement of every student in our schools. Decades of research now tells us that we improve student learning by helping teachers become even more effective in their daily teaching practice.

The *Insight* project focuses on improving three key foundations of teaching and learning:

1. A comprehensive, knowledge rich Curriculum: that supports student's growth in learning, knowing and remembering - every day
2. Cognitive Science (the Science of Learning): Developing our understanding about how people learn; to overcome the limits of working memory in order to maximise student learning and to build long-term memory in all key subjects.

3. High impact Pedagogy: Regular and intensive coaching to assist our educators in actively applying the science of learning as we design highly efficient and effective teaching and learning methods in the classroom

CET is committed to supporting every student to grow in understanding and knowledge. We firmly believe the *Insight* project will serve the growth of our students as they understand the communal knowledge needed to function and flourish in society and in turn, build on their prior knowledge to respond in critical and creative ways to real world problems and daily life challenges.

From the beginning of 2023, Catholic educators across Tasmania have had opportunities to study the science of learning and commit themselves to learning specific high impact teaching practices that will improve learning in every subject at every level, in every CET school.

*Insight* will also provide educators with high-quality professional development opportunities through:

1. Instructional Leadership: Coaching and mentoring for Principals and Leaders to support planning and implementation.
2. High Impact Teaching Practice: Theory, coaching and resources to embed Science of Learning based teaching practice in all classrooms.
3. Literate Learners for Life: Theory, coaching and resources to embed Science of Reading based teaching practice in all classrooms.



## CET Early Years' Perspectives

Families are their children's first and most important educators, playing a fundamental role in shaping their values, knowledge and lifelong learning habits from the very beginning. Hattie (2023) identified that family environment and frequency of positive engagement with their child's education is an important predictor of a child's future academic and social success. In the early years, a strong partnership between the families and their child's educator has been demonstrated in supporting the learning outcomes of young children when parties have open communication identification of any interventions and how best to support the students are more successful.

At Catholic Education Tasmania our support for families begins with our Set Up for Success Programs. All Catholic primary schools run a Set up for Success program catering to families with children from birth to four years of age. These programs welcome all members of a community with children in this age bracket. The programs are play-based and use data from the Australian Early Development Census (AEDC) to inform planning. The sessions are either facilitated or overseen by an early year's educator or teacher. Each session provides a range of diverse play provocations alongside information for the families about the provocation and how the experiences support child development. These sessions can include information and visits from allied health professionals to help and support families with children with additional needs to facilitate early intervention. Evidence suggests early intervention for children with additional needs has been demonstrated to provide positive outcomes for children both socially, emotionally and in their learning.

Catholic Education Tasmania recognises the important role of providing quality education and care for three and four-year-olds. CET in collaboration with Catholic Care, provides six Ludo Early learning centres for three and four-year-olds to cater for families with children in disadvantaged areas. This aligns with the evidence that providing young children with two years of quality preschool leads to positive learning outcomes for young children. The Ludo services along with our kindergartens are all situated on school sites. This supports the families to integrate into the school community, building relationships and accessing school specialists and resources. In kindergarten, all families with the support of the Kindergarten teacher complete the Parents' Evaluation of Developmental Status (PEDS) which measures young children on their global cognitive skills, expressive language and articulation, receptive language, fine motor, gross motor, behaviour, social-emotional and self-help skills.

Families need to know how their choices are impacting their children. The World Health Organisation recommends no more than 1 hour of sedentary screen time per day for children 3-4 years of age. In Australia, children at 3 years are being exposed to nearly 3

hours of screen time a day. This interference by technology means they hear 1139 fewer adult words per day, speak 843 fewer words per day and engage in 194 fewer conversational turns every day (Brushe et. al., 2024). When not distracted by devices and directed activities, children have great capacity to entertain themselves when given the opportunity; exposed to conversation, shared experiences and books, children have a far greater capacity to develop their vocabulary.

Families need tools to help guide them and help them take control of the influence of media in their lives. The Family Media Plan is a tool that is free, easy to access and allows families to tailor a plan to their family and change it as they achieve their goals and their needs change.

### CET Speech and Language Perspectives

Families need help to navigate access to allied health and the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS). Families are challenged by financial pressures and their need to work which makes accessing therapies outside of school difficult. Some NDIS therapists assist families by seeing clients in the school setting, but there is no strategic approach to ensure that this is done in collaboration with teachers and families so valuable therapeutic time is maximised in its effectiveness. NDIS practitioners are often young and inexperienced and may not be experienced with working in education. Speech Pathology Australia outline that Speech Pathologists approach work in education settings with two aims in mind: to work with education teams to uphold the rights of children to participate in all aspects of education and remove barriers; to provide interventions within a multi-tiered framework (Speech Pathology in Education Practice Guideline, 2022).

Catholic Education Tasmania recognises that up to 23% of children enter school with oral language levels that are lower than expected (AEDC). When a child is in kindergarten, we may not know whether they will end up with a diagnosis of Developmental Language Disorder or Language Disorder Associated with another disorder such as Autism Spectrum Disorder. Early intervention is key to supporting students who are struggling or at risk of falling behind. As mentioned above, one of the key supports Catholic Education Tasmania offers is opportunities to access programs like Set Up For Success, Ludo and Kindergarten. CET has responded to the evidence identifying the need to support young children's oral language and literacy. CET is committed to following the Science of Early Learning to help all students achieve their full potential. CET recognised the need for providing quality explicit instruction beginning in kindergarten using the PreLit program, to develop our students' phonological awareness and vocabulary. The developmental progress of kindergarten students in CET is also measured against the Kindergarten Developmental Check (KDC) with intervention and support provided for students not achieving the markers after the initial check.

The KDC focusses on early childhood development including thinking, communication, physical, social and behavioural skills. It is a screening tool that assists teachers to identify students at risk of not achieving expected development outcomes. The KDC provides information to support teachers educational planning and referral to allied health professionals when required.

Kindergarten students will be screened for oral language at the end of kindergarten and as of 2025, Language Lift will be used as an intervention for Prep students to get them back on track. The Language Lift program will also be trialled within a few Kindergartens as part of the daily programming. The Language Lift program aligns with some of the markers on the Kindergarten Developmental Check, the trial may provide some evidence that utilisation of the program in kindergarten may alleviate the need for intervention with some students as they progress into full-time schooling and give the foundation to better access the curriculum from the start. The aim is to lift the language of students who start school with oral language below their peers so they are ready for formal literacy learning in Prep. This is in recognition of the pivotal role oral language plays in the development of literacy.

Catholic Education Tasmania has initiated research with Distinguished Professor Sharynne McLeod from Charles Sturt University to look at the prevalence of speech sound disorders in Tasmania.

In 2006 the National Institute on Deafness and Other Communication Disorders [NIDCH] was reporting that at least 6% of children have difficulty acquiring intelligible speech. Two years later a study of 308 5-year-old students in 30 public schools in northern Tasmania investigated the prevalence of speech and/or language impairment. They identified a staggering figure of 23% of their cohort with speech impairment with 41.2% having either speech and/or language impairment.

*“Compared to prior Australian and international research, the present data reflect one of the highest prevalence estimates for speech and/or language impairment reported to date. Given the relative paucity of Australian prevalence data, further epidemiological research specifically of Australian children is needed to validate the current findings.”*

In 2021, Holm *et al* reported another elevated figure for speech sound disorder, reporting a prevalence of SSD of 18% from their 2015 data of 3-year-old Australian children. The authors raised the question, ‘Is children’s speech development changing?’

We know that assessment of children’s speech is important in the development of literacy. Children with speech sound disorder have increased risk for literacy development difficulties. This risk is increased if they also have atypical speech errors, persistent speech errors and language impairment. So, is the Tasmanian data collected on the prevalence of

speech and language disorder unreliable or is it in fact real and representative of an underlying issue in keeping with continued trends on struggling literacy rates in Tasmania?

The Grattan Institute report, *Improving Literacy for Tasmanian Students (2022)* highlights that:

*“Australia has an unacceptably high number of adolescents who fail to reach minimum proficiency standards in reading. The OECD’s 2018 Program for International Student Assessment (PISA) test showed that two in five Australian 15-year-olds fall short of Australia’s proficient reading standard.*”

This problem is exacerbated in Tasmania as,

*“...performance on PISA lags Australia’s national average and is well behind that of the top PISA performers internationally. Tasmanian students PISA performance has also declined significantly over time. In fact, in 2018 Tasmanian students were, on average, about a year behind where they were on the first PISA reading assessment in 2000 ... Tasmania faces a range of challenges regarding the development of strong literacy skills across its population, particularly in terms of reaching its aspirational goal of 100 per cent functional literacy, along with a broader goal of significantly reducing the almost 50 per cent of Tasmanian students who fall short of Australia’s benchmark proficiency level in PISA.”*

It is important to know if the rates of speech sound disorder in Tasmania are similar to those on mainland Australia and internationally. We continue to hear anecdotal evidence from school Principals and student support leaders that speech and language difficulties are rising in Tasmania. This represents an increasing load on our system. With the percentage of children who have difficulty acquiring speech, it is important that speech screening is reliable and time efficient and takes into consideration skills, capacity, and time of CET students, teachers, speech pathologists, and other CET personnel.

10% of children have Speech, Language and Communication Needs (SLCN), which increases to 50% in areas of social disadvantage. Eighty one percent of children with Social Emotional Mental Health/SEMH have SLCN. Students often have difficulties with understanding language, emotional literacy skills, inferencing and verbal reasoning, narrative skills and social problem solving. This means they struggle to access the curriculum, display active or passive behaviours, struggle to participate in disciplinary conversations or talking therapies and struggle to advocate for themselves. 66% of males excluded from school have SLCN. 60% of children in the justice system have SLCN.

Dr Archie Thomas suggests that Evidence is emerging from the United States, the United Kingdom and elsewhere that there is a ‘school-to-prison’ pipeline, where repeated school exclusions gradually shepherd students away from positive school connections towards

criminalisation. There is a lack of publicly available data on school exclusion in Australia, but the over-representation of marginalised groups in prison suggests the same may be happening in Australia.

At CET we are opening conversations and investing in speech pathology involvement in high schools to help identify students with speech, language and communication needs that have been “missed” and require support.

The evidence shows that for a sustainable future that adheres to the UN Goals for Sustainable Development encompassing social, economic and environmental sustainability we must provide inclusive opportunities for diverse students to access the curriculum and achieve their full potential. In the early years in Catholic Education Tasmania, this is achieved through a balanced approach of intentional explicit instruction of foundational skills including oral language, phonological and phonemic awareness and from foundation upwards also in mathematics. Explicit instruction is balanced with play-based learning which incorporates guided inquiry, opportunities to explore, discover and engage with concepts in different contexts and the use of socio-dramatic play through pedagogies like Conceptual Play Worlds. The Science of Early Learning recognises that a balanced approach that incorporates explicit instruction within a play-based context supports students with diverse needs to build their knowledge and understanding of new concepts.

Challenges children arrive at school with must be known and understood to ensure programs are delivered that support children to reach their full potential. This can be done with universal screening and by having teachers alert to the difficulties students present with.

Comprehensive multi-tiered system of supports (MTSS) should be in place to assist in delivering programs in a dynamic manner and provide support when and where needed. MTSS must be flexible in their approach to meet the changing educational demands of a child’s learning journey.

## **CET Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Perspectives**

Aboriginal families play a critical role in nurturing a strong sense of cultural identity, which is foundational for their children’s engagement and success in education. Aboriginal families and communities bring valuable cultural knowledge, experiences, and support to the educational environment. They do this by:

- **Maintaining Strong Cultural Connections:** Aboriginal families actively engage their children with their cultural heritage through stories, language, and traditions,



ensuring that young people develop a strong sense of identity. This cultural grounding plays a significant role in building self-confidence and resilience, which translates into better engagement in their schooling. Through CET's Aboriginal family and community events, such as family camps, families can share these cultural practices and experiences with schools, helping bridge the gap between home and the school environment.

- **Active Participation in School Communities:** Many Aboriginal families contribute to their children's learning by becoming involved in school events and activities. For example, families often engage as cultural knowledge sharers in schools, participating in classroom activities, excursions, or cultural celebrations. This involvement helps create a more inclusive school environment that recognises and respects Aboriginal students' cultural identity.
- **Supporting Cultural Identity Through Community Engagement:** Aboriginal families often connect with local Aboriginal communities and organisations to help maintain cultural practices and identity. These connections ensure that students remain grounded in their heritage, which strengthens their engagement in learning. CET facilitates these connections by delivering a comprehensive program of cultural education in schools and providing families with opportunities to engage with local Elders and knowledge sharers.

Catholic Education Tasmania actively supports Aboriginal families in their efforts to engage with their children's education through a variety of targeted strategies and resources:

- **Cultural Events and Family Engagement Programs:** CET hosts Aboriginal family and community events, such as cultural camps, parent excursions, and incursions, which provide opportunities for families to connect with schools and share cultural knowledge. These events create a welcoming space for Aboriginal families to engage with educators and the school community, fostering a deeper connection to their children's education.
- **CET Cultural Object Library and Father John Wall Library:** Through access to the Cultural Object Library and Father John Wall Library, Aboriginal families and communities can access culturally significant resources. These resources, including cultural objects, books, and educational materials, are used to enrich classroom experiences and help families share their cultural heritage with students. This strengthens the connection between home, culture, and school, providing families with the tools they need to actively participate in their children's learning.
- **Support for Cultural Knowledge Sharers in Schools:** CET encourages Aboriginal families to work alongside cultural knowledge sharers in schools, facilitating direct involvement in their children's education. By participating in the classroom or during cultural excursions, families can contribute to the curriculum, enhancing the cultural relevance of the education provided.

- **Dedicated Aboriginal Community Liaison and Transition Officer:** CET has a dedicated Aboriginal Community Liaison and Transition Officer who works directly with Aboriginal families and communities. This role is critical in supporting families by facilitating connections between the school system and Aboriginal communities, ensuring that families are engaged in their children's learning and transition processes. The liaison officer also helps coordinate cultural events, camps, and family excursions, fostering stronger relationships between the community and schools.
- **Supporting Families with Cultural Identity and Family History Research:** CET supports Aboriginal families by helping them connect with local Aboriginal organisations and communities that can assist with family history research. These services enable families to explore their cultural roots and pass on this knowledge to their children, reinforcing a sense of belonging and identity. CET's Aboriginal Community Liaison and Transition Officer plays a vital role in facilitating these connections and ensuring families have access to resources that support their cultural journey.

To better support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students who are at risk of disengagement or falling behind, CET implements several strategies that focus on both academic support and cultural inclusion:

- **Culturally Responsive Mentoring and Tutoring:** Aboriginal Student Success Teachers (ASSTs) and Key Teachers play a critical role in monitoring students' academic progress and well-being. They provide personalised academic support and mentoring to Aboriginal students, helping them to stay on track with their learning while also maintaining a strong connection to their cultural identity.
- **Community and Family Engagement to Re-engage Learners:** Engaging families in the educational process is key to helping students get back on track. Parent excursions and incursions, along with community events, encourage families to take an active role in supporting their children's education. The Aboriginal Community Liaison and Transition Officer is essential in facilitating these family connections, ensuring that students have the necessary cultural and academic support to succeed.
- **Access to Cultural Resources:** Students who are struggling academically may also feel disconnected from their cultural heritage, contributing to disengagement. CET provides access to the Cultural Object Library and the Father John Wall Library, enabling students and families to access culturally relevant resources that can be incorporated into their learning. This approach helps students re-engage by making the curriculum more relatable and meaningful.

Ensuring that all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students reach their full potential requires a holistic approach that integrates academic support, cultural inclusion, and family engagement. Catholic Education Tasmania employs several strategies to achieve this:

- **Building Strong Cultural Foundations for Success:** Embedding Aboriginal culture into the curriculum through cultural knowledge sharers and resources from the Cultural Object Library ensures that Aboriginal students see their identities reflected in their learning. This approach helps students feel valued and supported, which is key to maintaining high levels of engagement throughout their educational journey.
- **Active Community and Family Involvement:** Engaging families through Aboriginal family and community events, such as cultural camps and parent incursions, ensures that families are an integral part of the educational process. This sustained involvement encourages a positive learning environment that supports students both at home and in school. The Aboriginal Community Liaison and Transition Officer plays a key role in ensuring that families and communities are engaged, helping students stay connected to both their education and their culture.
- **Tailored Academic Support and Mentorship:** Providing personalised academic support through Aboriginal Student Success Teachers (ASSTs) and Key Teachers helps students overcome academic challenges and stay on track. These educators work closely with students to ensure they have the resources and mentorship needed to reach their full potential.
- **Connecting Families to Aboriginal Organisations for Cultural and Family History Support:** CET ensures that Aboriginal families have access to local Aboriginal organisations and community groups that can assist with family history research and cultural identity support. These connections help students and their families strengthen their cultural understanding, which in turn supports students' engagement and success in their education.

## Theme 3 - Outcomes at the conclusion of the formal years of schooling

Noting the specific challenges that emerge as young people progress through schooling; how can we improve attendance, retention, attainment and student outcomes to better support choice of learning and career pathways?

### Catholic Education Tasmania System Perspectives

Lifting student attainment levels by the end of Year 10, including literacy and numeracy would support more students to complete Year 11 and 12 qualifications. For some students, their academic level at the end of Year 10 does not set them up for success in either TASC or VET courses. This misalignment of student capacity with course requirements causes significant numbers of students to change courses in the early stages of Year 11 or to fail in courses in which they enrol. The gap between Year 10 attainment and what Year 11 and 12 teachers expect of students can be confronting. This issue is magnified because many of our year 7 to 10 teachers do not have a sound understanding of the academic level required to access TASC and VET courses. The variability between Year 10 students' academic attainment from school to school when students enter senior secondary college further adds to student anxiety and difficulties transitioning to post year 10 education. This variability in access points, also creates difficulties for senior secondary teachers. These challenges could be addressed by:

- Improved academic standards at 7 to 10 level, including literacy and numeracy proficiencies.
- Over time, all secondary schools and colleges extend to year 12.
- Improved moderation, common standards in secondary education and sharing of learning and teaching practices between years 7 to 10 in all schools and colleges.

The difference between course delivery, assessment and at times teaching style in years 7 to 10 learning and Year 11 and 12 TASC and VET can be difficult to navigate for students. For example, students spend a decade of their school life being assessed throughout the year against a descriptive Australian Curriculum standard. Students then transition to Year 11 courses that are assessed against criteria (TASC) or competencies (VET). TASC Level 3 and 4 courses also have high stakes exams which are not required in years 7 to 10 education. The 9 to 12 Learning Project had started a discussion around increasing opportunities for Year 9 and 10 students to access appropriate TASC and VET courses, however, this seems to have petered out. Greater engagement at Year 9 and 10 in appropriate Year 11/12 courses may

provide a softer landing for high school students transitioning to senior secondary education.

Many CET colleges are delivering Packages of Learning to students in years 9 and 10. Packages of Learning were developed as part of the DECYP 9 to 12 Learning Project and are integrated studies that teach core Australian Curriculum subjects with some VET modules in areas such as construction, agriculture or hospitality. Due to their focus on real world learning experiences, Packages of Learning have been very successful in engaging students seeking a practical trade and industry pathway and creating a pathway for students to full VET certificates and TAFE courses.

Increasing student engagement in learning during Years 9 and 10 would support students completing Year 12. Many Years 9 and 10 students have decided on their post Year 12 future. This may be work, vocational trade training and TAFE or higher education. Schools and colleges are increasing the diversity of learning opportunities such as school-based apprenticeships and a range of VET courses. However, despite high schools' best attempts to increase the range of options in Year 9 and 10, many students are still restricted by a traditional range of subject offerings that may not be relevant to their post year 10 pathway. The 2016 ACER review found that students still see secondary and senior secondary education as primarily catering for university and ATAR pathways and other vocational pathways are not as valued. Further measures that could support Year 12 completion include:

- More genuine pathway options that engage students in learning starting from Year 9. This would include engagement with local business, industry and workplace learning.
- More resources allocated to career and pathway planning.
- Raising the profile and importance of vocational training and alternative pathways in schools and the community.
- Greater alignment of secondary and senior secondary teaching and learning. The transition from year 10 learning to TASC and VET in year 11 is challenging for many students.
- Improve post Year 10 options for regional students. The location, size of the school or college, staff FTE and skill sets, budgets and basic school logistics such as the length of the school day and bus routes often determine what schools can provide. Creative responses such as greater cooperation between DECYP, TAFE and the Catholic/Independent sector, expansion of flexible learning options such hybrid online/face to face learning or learning hubs supported by colleges in regional areas are some examples of how all Tasmanian students could be supported through to the end of Year 12.

The other key for completing Year 12 is promoting a mindset that encourages students and their families to perceive secondary education as inclusive of years 11 and 12, as opposed to ceasing at Year 10, with Senior Secondary then recommencing for Years 11 and 12.

Catholic Education Tasmania, in recent years, has embraced two key initiatives to embed long term success for all students as they engage in their formative educational journey.

1. The Science of Reading and the Science of Learning: These umbrella terms encompass evidence-informed pedagogies designed to improve the learning achievement of every student in CET. The *Insight* project focuses on empowering the three key foundations of teaching and learning:
  - a. A comprehensive, knowledge rich Curriculum: that supports student's growth in learning, knowing and remembering - every day.
  - b. Cognitive Science (the Science of Learning): Developing our understanding about how people learn; to overcome the limits of working memory to maximise student learning and to build long-term memory in all key subjects.
  - c. High impact Pedagogies: Regular and intensive coaching to assist our educators in actively applying Science of Learning principles as we design highly efficient and effective teaching and learning methods in the classroom.
2. CET's rollout of Year 11 and 12 to more of our Secondary Colleges, provides students with a straightforward pathway to remain at school, continuing their education at the school they are familiar with, alongside peers and educators they have already established relationships with.

## **CET Pastoral Care Considerations**

Schools must ensure appropriate support services for students are readily accessible and include career guidance and psychological support as required.

If students choose to transition to a senior college post year 10, systems and schools must ensure the provision of effective orientation and transition programs to support academic outcomes and long term social and emotional wellbeing. It is important that schools and colleges are inclusive of diversity and offer multiple opportunities for students to develop a strong sense of connection and belonging. Students should be supported to establish more sophisticated study habits earlier in secondary school so that the level of accountability and personal responsibility required to complete Year 12 is clearly understood by all students and they are therefore more likely to manage the pressures.

A range of flexible pathway options should be extended to students to maximise engagement and achievement. An adaptive approach is supportive of students who may have essential part time work or caring commitments. Schools should consider how best they can provide opportunities for students to undertake personalised programs of study in areas they are most passionate about.

## CET Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Perspectives

For Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, completion of Year 12 can be significantly improved by ensuring their schooling experience integrates strong cultural identity and offers tailored pathways that resonate with their personal goals and aspirations. Catholic Education Tasmania has already made strides in this area through initiatives that focus on cultural safety, community engagement, and academic support.

- **Strong Cultural Identity as a Foundation for Success:** Supporting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students to embrace and express their cultural identity throughout their schooling builds a strong foundation for academic success. By embedding culturally relevant content into the curriculum and providing access to Aboriginal Elders and knowledge sharers through the Aboriginal Knowledge Sharers and Educators Portal (AKSEP), students are more likely to stay engaged and connected to their education. CET's ongoing focus on cultural safety ensures students feel valued and supported, which is critical for attendance and retention.
- **Tailored Mentorship and Support:** The roles of Aboriginal Student Success Teachers (ASSTs) and Key Teachers, are crucial in mentoring Aboriginal students, monitoring their progress, and providing personalised academic and well-being support. These educators act as role models and advocates, helping students navigate the transition from Year 10 to Years 11 and 12, a period often marked by disengagement for some Aboriginal students.
- **Career Pathway Guidance and Transition Support:** Aboriginal Transition Officers within CET play a vital role in ensuring Aboriginal students are supported as they move into Years 11 and 12. These officers work closely with students, their families, and institutions such as UTAS and TasTAFE, helping students explore a variety of post-school pathways, whether that be university, vocational training, or employment.

For Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students to complete Year 12, the following priorities should be considered:

- **Increased Focus on Cultural Identity and Relevance in Education:** A strong cultural identity is key to keeping Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students engaged. Embedding Aboriginal histories, languages, and perspectives into the curriculum, as CET has done through AKSEP, ensures that the content is culturally relevant and

meaningful to students. This not only enhances student engagement but also reinforces the importance of education in connection to cultural background.

- **Seamless Pathways and Transitions into Further Education and Employment:** It is crucial to ensure that Aboriginal students have access to clear, supported pathways into further education or employment. CET is already supporting this through Transition Officers, who provide Aboriginal students with guidance on further study, vocational training, and employment opportunities. Expanding partnerships with TasTAFE, UTAS, and employers to offer structured apprenticeships, internships, and scholarships for Aboriginal students will further encourage retention and completion.
- **Comprehensive Mentorship and Academic Support:** Having dedicated Aboriginal Student Success Teachers (ASSTs) and Key Teachers ensures that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students receive the ongoing academic and pastoral support they need to complete Year 12. These educators provide targeted assistance, both academically and culturally, to help students stay on track with their studies.

Supporting choice for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students involves ensuring they have access to a broad range of educational and career pathways that align with their interests, strengths, and cultural identity.

- **Culturally Inclusive Career Pathways:** Aboriginal students are more likely to pursue and complete post-school pathways when they feel these align with their cultural identity and aspirations. CET has been successful in using AKSEP to connect students with Aboriginal Elders and community leaders, who offer mentorship and share experiences of career success. Expanding these connections to include Aboriginal professionals in various industries helps students envision diverse career possibilities.
- **Tailored Post-School Options:** It is important that post-school pathways are made visible and accessible from an early stage in secondary school. Aboriginal Transition Officers work with students, families, and further education providers to help students navigate pathways into higher education, vocational training, or employment. This support is particularly crucial for Aboriginal students in rural and regional areas, where access to opportunities can be limited.
- **Flexible and Varied Learning Pathways:** To support choice, CET is committed to providing flexible learning pathways that reflect the diverse interests of students. This includes expanding access to vocational education, apprenticeships, and pathways that support entrepreneurial or community-focused careers. By offering diverse routes to success, Aboriginal students are empowered to choose options that are both culturally meaningful and academically fulfilling.

By integrating strong cultural identity, mentorship, and clear pathways into CET's educational strategies, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students are better supported



to succeed in completing Year 12 and transitioning into fulfilling careers or further education. These strategies help ensure that First Nations students are equipped with the skills and confidence to make informed choices about their futures.

## Theme 4 - Support for our teaching workforce

How do we attract, support and develop teachers and school leaders to be effective and successful practitioners who can confidently deliver high quality, evidence-based teaching that meets the needs of students at all levels?

### Catholic Education Tasmania System Perspectives

Supporting teachers through professional development and instructional support is essential for creating a thriving educational environment. Teachers who know how to teach the most effectively, retain a deeper level of satisfaction in their work. CET offers regular, high-quality professional learning opportunities that are relevant to teachers' needs through All System Days, professional learning workshops, professional coaching opportunities and online resources and courses.

The Curriculum and Pedagogy Team provide targeted and direct support for schools and teachers on a needs basis. This allows individualised support, considering the unique context of each school, class, and teacher. Personalised instructional and pedagogical coaching and mentoring is tailored to each teacher's strengths and areas for growth.

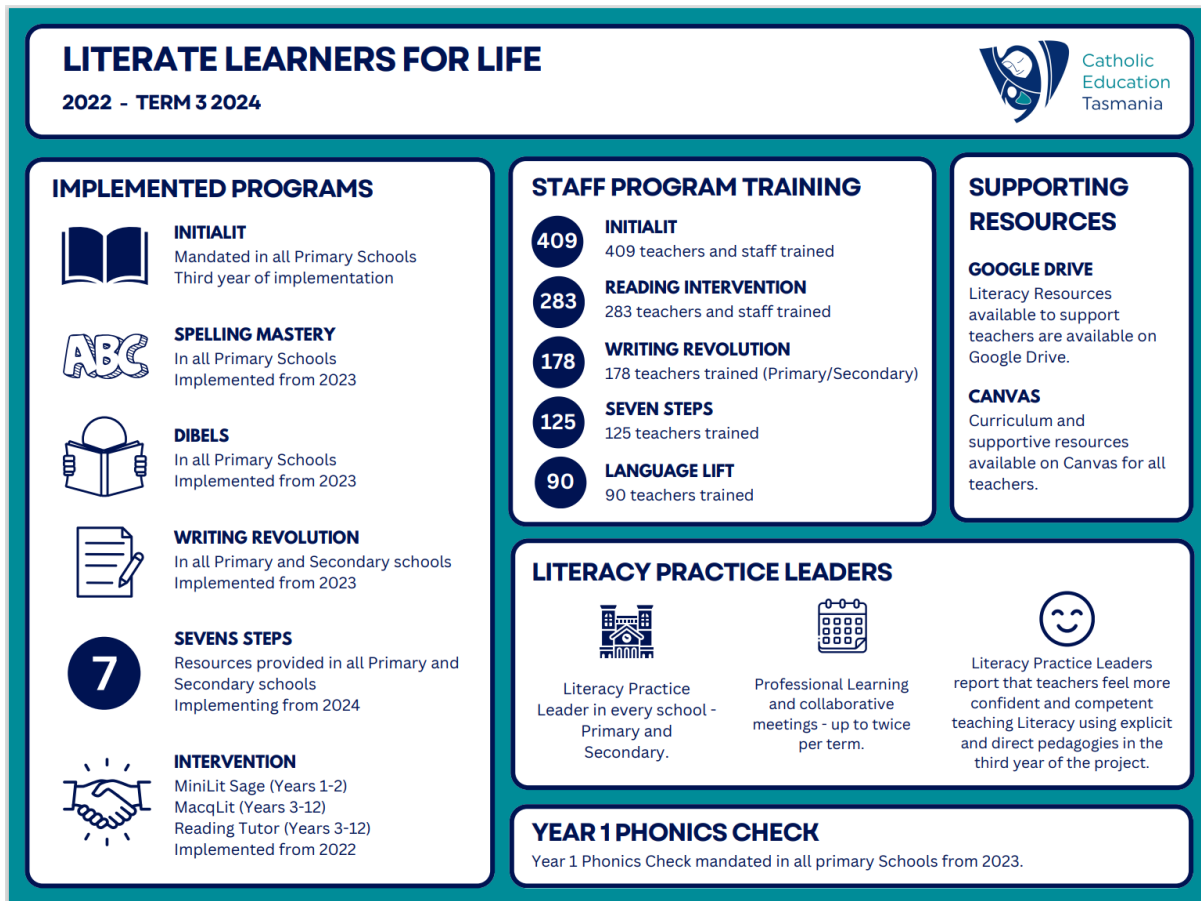
CET have also provided programs and accessible resources to ensure that teachers have access to necessary practical, consistent and sequential materials, making it easier for them to implement effective teaching strategies across literacy and other learning areas. Professional learning and support are provided for these programs and resources, ensuring system wide consistency and support networks.

Emerging leaders are developed through leadership growth opportunities that provide pathways for career advancement, such as leadership roles or specialised positions in literacy leadership. School and literacy leaders are engaged to support decision-making processes regarding curriculum, pedagogy, and professional development initiatives, fostering a sense of ownership and investment.

CET understands the essential role of our educators in our instructional transformation processes. We support professional development and value the collaboration and contributions of our educators and leaders, as we acknowledge how crucial this is for professional growth and job satisfaction.

## CET Literate Learners for Life

Our *Literate Learners for Life* initiative supports all educators in their explicit instruction of literacy, the table below depicts the breadth of support extended across our system over the past three years.

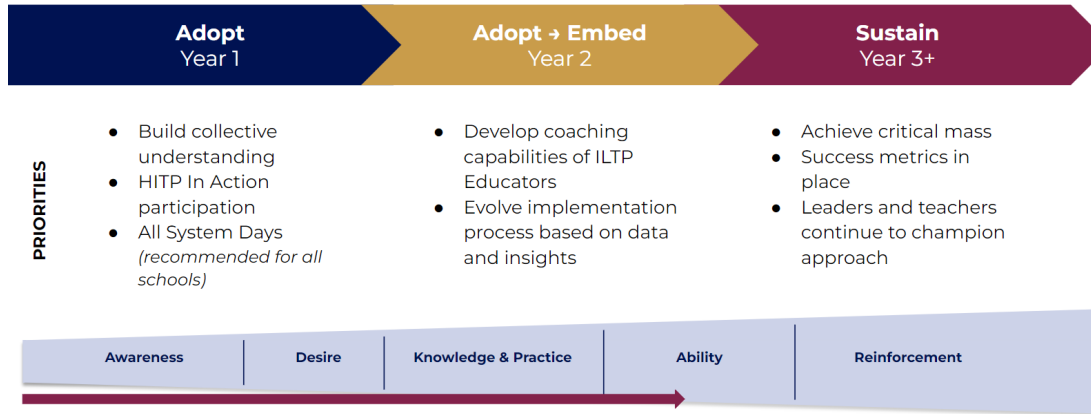


2023 marked a period of innovation and growth for educators in CET. With a dedicated focus on advancing teaching practices, CET has embarked on a journey of continuous improvement, reinforcing explicit teaching and embedding the Science of Learning (SoL) principles. At a system level, CET is embedding High Impact Teaching Practices (HITP) and Principals are directing pedagogy as Instructional Leaders in their schools, improving student outcomes by embracing this evidence informed approach to learning. This is driven through school-based on-site coaching, immersive workshops and (HITP) demonstrations. This provides educators with the necessary tools and knowledge to implement effective teaching strategies across both primary and secondary schools and colleges.

CET *Insight*



Journey to improved teaching and learning



The *Insight* initiative was launched at the beginning of 2023. Based on the Science of Learning (SoL), *Insight* is a system-wide initiative that encompasses the way we teach in every school and every classroom. This teaching approach empowers all educators to help their students grow in knowledge, wisdom, and service.

CET has set a bold goal - to be the most improved education system in Australia. Selected teachers from each *Insight* school have been named Instructional Leader Teacher Practice (ILTP) Educators and are given specific coaching in High Impact Teaching Practice methods by external consultant providers, COGlearn and Shaping Minds. COGlearn are engaged to work with ILTP educators in *Insight* primary schools, and Shaping Minds are engaged to work with our secondary cohort. Of our 38 Schools and Colleges, 21 primary schools initially came on board alongside 4 Secondary Colleges.



**INSIGHT**

**BOLD GOAL**  
To be the most improved educational system in Australia

- Theory of Learning**  
approach to teaching and learning, based on Cognitive Science and Rosenshine's Principles of Instruction
- Knowledge Rich Curriculum**  
Imparting the knowledge our students need to function, flourish and contribute to human society
- Empowered Educators**  
Improving teacher practice as the key to efficient learning, deep understanding, rich knowledge and accurate recall for every student
- Fidelity to Catholic Mission**  
Forming faith-filled students who are inspired to bring Christ to the world

Our Primary School Coaching Model is a five-day model, facilitated by COGlearn, delivering HITP Instruction in our Primary Schools across the state. We had 56 Primary Teachers receive this instructional coaching in 2023 and 72 Primary Teachers are currently on the coaching journey in 2024. Across the two years to date, we have 128 primary ILTP educators statewide.

Our Secondary College Coaching Model is a three-wave model, with Shaping Minds Australia delivering HITP Instruction in our Secondary Colleges statewide. We had 78 Secondary Teachers receive this instructional coaching in 2023 and 106 Secondary Teachers are currently on the coaching journey in 2024. Across the two years to date, we have 184 secondary ILTP educators statewide.

11,709 students received *Insight* SoL focused instruction in 2024 across 31 of our 38 schools - 7189 in Primary and 4520 in Secondary.

With CET's implementation of SoL approaches to teaching and learning we have committed to providing resources and training for teachers in evidence-informed teaching practices, based on the Science of Reading and the Science of Learning. We have created three opportunities per year, for all staff in our system to attend professional learning days. These system-wide, state-wide professional learning opportunities are delivered by industry professionals and academics in the Science of Reading (SoR) and the Science of Learning (SoL) alongside our internal Curriculum and Pedagogy Team Subject Matter Experts and System Leaders.

In 2023 and 2024, CET hosted the Teaching Matters Science of Learning National Summit. With 500 attendees in March 2024, we will host a third Summit in September 2025, welcoming all educators nationally across jurisdictions – Catholic, Government and Independent.

### **CET Canvas Learning Management System and Science of Learning Curriculum Resources**

A suite of resources for Professional Learning and school-led learning have been uploaded to CANVAS, CET's digital learning platform. These include foundation and knowledge building units as well as SoL resources, showcasing the best practices in SoL pedagogies. Readily available to all educators across CET to access, these resources support our intention to promote and embed low variance curriculum statewide. Resources are continually updated, and the body of knowledge shared allows for consistency in classrooms statewide. This supports our teachers to focus on their pedagogy and delivery of lessons, rather than being all consumed by the extensive content they are required to teach. This in turn assists in lowering teacher anxiety and reduces workload.

An example of Science of Learning Resources created so far includes:

- A suite of CET-branded mathematics resources, developed with the support of Jordan O’Sullivan (Shaping Minds Australia)
- A suite of CET-branded English and HaSS resources, developed by CETs Curriculum and Pedagogy Subject Matter Experts (SMEs) and supported by experts such as Dr Nathaniel Swain (LaTrobe University) and Dr Lorraine Hammond (Edith Cowan University)



## Support and resources



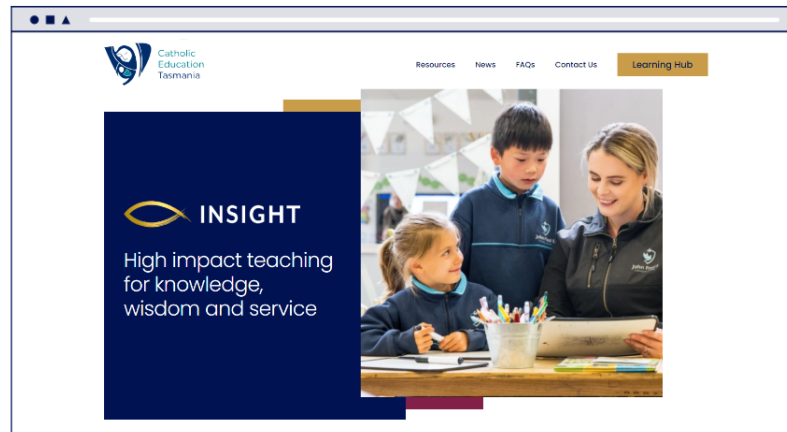
CET Principals are supported as the Instructional Leaders of *Insight* in their school. They are empowered as part of a broad collegial network through our website, CANVAS learning platform, external coaches and CET subject matter experts.

As part of their quarterly Principal Network days across the year, CET Principals are provided with an opportunity to engage in SoL focused Professional Learning. Our leaders have enjoyed this renewed focus on learning and teaching amidst the diverse portfolio a Principal navigates daily. The time we have set aside for our Principals to reflect on their knowledge and understanding of High Impact Practices and the research that underpins this pedagogy, has been gratefully received. We are now building collective efficacy and shared system responsibility to build empowering, rigorous and efficient practice in our classrooms.



## Foundational research & resources, program priorities & focus areas, latest news and FAQs

Scan the QR  
code explore  
the website



As we move towards year three of our project, we continue to build capacity both in leadership habits and teacher practice. Our website: [Insight.catholic.tas.edu.au](https://insight.catholic.tas.edu.au) includes a FAQ page that provides clarity around a number of questions. The website also provides public facing access to the foundational research that underpins *Insight*.

### CET ICT Perspectives

CET is future focused and implementing new and robust ICT systems to support staff through seamless and efficient working environments. By focusing on ensuring that new technology is reliable and user-friendly, ICT Teams help reduce the administrative burden on teachers and school leaders, allowing them to focus on their core responsibilities of teaching and leadership. This supportive environment can make the profession more attractive to current and future staff by improving satisfaction and effectiveness.

Effectively navigating multiple software platforms can be a significant challenge for teaching staff who are already pressed for time. To address this, CET is streamlining Student Management and Learning Management systems. By consolidating these systems, CET ensures that when staff transition between different Schools and Colleges, they don't need to spend additional time learning new systems. This initiative allows educators to dedicate more of their valuable time to classroom activities and student engagement, ultimately enhancing the learning experience.

## Early Career Teacher Support Initiatives

CET's approach moving forward will be to continue to support Early Career Teachers (ECTs) outside of their school environment to engage with individualised professional learning and to provide them with a network of support and individualised Professional Learning based around gaps they identify in their knowledge and practice. It will involve pastoral visits and additional mentoring support. This ensures that the support is targeted to context and need.

Research also indicates that quality mentoring is a critical component of induction into the teaching profession. In 2025, work will begin to target the development of mentors to support and equip them with the skills to help ECTs reflect and grow. Part of this training will include the use of structured observations, another element of research to support ECTs. To celebrate the work of mentors, a focus for this group will be to support them with certification of Highly Accomplished and Lead Teacher (HALT) status.

Research also indicates that teacher appraisal and feedback significantly improve teacher quality and hones the personal approach to teaching significantly making the job more rewarding and affirming. It is crucial also that teachers' classroom experiences are shared; celebrated and acknowledged. The HALT process is one such way excellent practice can be recognised and refined as teachers demonstrate their leadership and commitment to excellence in teaching. Practitioners who feel valued are far less likely to burn out.

## CET Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Perspectives

Attracting and supporting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff is vital for ensuring culturally relevant education and for providing positive role models for Aboriginal students. However, there are several key challenges including addressing the burden of cultural load and the lack of broader pathways for Aboriginal students to enter the teaching profession.

- **Addressing the Burden of Cultural Load:** Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff often carry an additional responsibility known as the cultural load—the expectation to represent and advocate for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives in all areas of school life, often beyond their immediate role. This can lead to burnout, as these educators are tasked with supporting both students and staff in cultural competency while also managing their usual teaching responsibilities. CET is working to mitigate this burden by ensuring appropriate professional support through its Aboriginal Student Success Teachers (ASSTs) and Key Teachers roles. These positions are designed to share the load, ensuring that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander educators do not have to carry this responsibility alone. Additionally, the AKSEP



platform provides resources that support all staff in embedding cultural knowledge, thereby reducing reliance solely on Aboriginal educators.

- **Creating Broader Pathways into Teaching:** Currently, there are limited structured pathways for Aboriginal students to enter the teaching profession. CET recognises the need to broaden access to teaching for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, starting with secondary education and building partnerships with higher education institutions. One approach is to develop mentoring and transition programs that connect Aboriginal students with Aboriginal educators, helping them to see teaching as a viable and rewarding career path. Collaborations with institutions such as the University of Tasmania (UTAS) can also help establish scholarship programs, vocational pathways, and specific recruitment campaigns aimed at increasing the number of Aboriginal teachers in CET schools.
- **Culturally Responsive Professional Development for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Staff:** To support Aboriginal educators in excelling at their jobs, CET provides tailored professional development through AKSEP. This includes direct access to Elders and knowledge sharers, enabling Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff to further develop their cultural leadership while also ensuring that they have the support and resources needed to embed their culture into school life effectively.
- **Mentorship and Leadership Opportunities:** CET recognises the importance of creating clear pathways to leadership for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff. The roles of Aboriginal Student Success Teachers (ASSTs) and Key Teachers offer opportunities for leadership and influence within schools, allowing Aboriginal educators to shape cultural and educational programs. These roles also support the development of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander teachers into senior leadership positions, ensuring a strong pipeline of future Aboriginal leaders in education.

Retaining Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander educators requires addressing both the cultural load placed on them and ensuring they have the necessary support and professional development to thrive in their roles.

- **Managing the Cultural Load:** Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander educators often feel the weight of cultural load, where they are expected to be cultural ambassadors within their schools. This additional responsibility can lead to exhaustion and burnout if not managed properly. CET acknowledges this challenge and is actively working to distribute cultural responsibilities across the entire school community. By equipping all staff with the necessary cultural competence through AKSEP and professional development, CET is helping to reduce the reliance on Aboriginal staff to carry this load alone. The use of Aboriginal Student Success Teachers (ASSTs) and Key Teachers ensures that this load is shared among trained personnel, while also providing peer support to those facing the additional pressures of representing their culture within the school.

- **Recognition and Celebrating Success:** Recognising the contributions of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff is crucial to their continued engagement and motivation. Through the AKSEP platform, Aboriginal staff can share their successes, receive recognition, and feel valued for their cultural and educational contributions. Story Mapping, which allows staff to document and share their achievements across the CET network, ensures that their work is celebrated, creating a sense of accomplishment and community.
- **Targeted Professional Development and Growth Opportunities:** CET supports the ongoing professional growth of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander educators through tailored professional development that aligns with their cultural responsibilities and career aspirations. Aboriginal educators have access to professional learning focused on leadership, cultural engagement, and educational practice. These opportunities not only enhance their skills but also help them feel supported and valued within their roles, reducing turnover and ensuring long-term commitment.
- **Reducing Workload and Administrative Burden:** To retain Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff, it is important to address workload concerns, particularly the additional cultural load. CET's AKSEP portal helps reduce the administrative burden by providing easy access to resources and lesson plans, freeing up more time for educators to focus on teaching and mentoring students. By streamlining access to culturally relevant materials, CET ensures that Aboriginal educators are not overburdened with the added responsibility of creating cultural content from scratch.
- **Broader Pathways for Career Progression:** In addition to creating pathways into teaching for Aboriginal students, CET is committed to providing clear progression routes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff. This includes offering leadership training, mentorship opportunities, and involvement in broader school governance. By ensuring that Aboriginal staff have access to these pathways, CET is empowering them to see a long-term career within education, with opportunities for growth and development at every stage.

By addressing the cultural load, creating broader pathways into teaching, and providing continuous support and recognition for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff, Catholic Education Tasmania ensures that these educators can thrive, remain energised, and feel valued in their roles. These strategies are critical in retaining Aboriginal educators and ensuring a culturally rich and supportive environment for all students.

## CET Catholic Mission Perspectives

Through its Professional formation Accreditation Framework and Accreditation Policy (Policy No. 01:2017), CET provides all employees with a suite of Professional Learning & Formation for Mission Pathway to Work, teach and teach Religious Education in Catholic schools.

Fundamental to Christian education is the initial and permanent formation of teachers. The Catholic school depends upon them almost entirely for the accomplishments of its goals and programmes. In partnership with Catholic school communities, CET provides professional learning and formation of teachers that is systematic, collaborative, gradual and ongoing. At the heart of this professional formation is the objective of equipping the teachers to uphold the dignity of each and every student, irrespective of background, creed or perceived ability.

Specifically, the disposition behind the Catholic teaching is to affirm and accept each person, encouraging them to be truly themselves, while at the same time seeking to inspire and equip them to ensure that the school is, as a Catholic school, true to its identity and mission.

CET provides both non-qualification and post-graduate qualification professional learning opportunities to support teachers and school leaders in their development to:

- Respond to the changing needs and culture of contemporary Catholic schooling;
- Recognise, promote and affirm appropriate forms of professional learning relevant to Religious Education teaching and leadership in a Catholic school;
- Promote the attainment of academic knowledge and skills in the areas of Religious Education and Catholic school leadership;
- Provide opportunities for participants to become familiar with and to be immersed in the culture of Catholic education;
- Enhance teachers' professional growth and vocational motivation.

In the first three-years of their professional life, Early Career teachers are provided with support in their growth in professional development and faith to teach in Catholic schools, marked by, and raised to, a supernatural and personal vocation in the Church.

## CET Teaching Schools

Catholic Education Tasmania is leading the way with investing in, supporting and developing future educators through the St Thomas Aquinas Teaching Schools Institute (STATSI). From college graduates to mature-age students who have been called to the teaching profession, the STATSI pre-service teachers (cadets) are nurtured in a supportive environment and offered remuneration whilst completing their university studies as they prepare for a career in education. Upon completing the program, our cadets are offered ongoing employment within the Catholic system, providing a highly skilled local workforce.

The program is divided into two days. Day one encompasses practical, in-classroom teaching experience (Immersive) and Day two consists of structured professional learning and development (Intensive).

During Intensive days, systemic subject matter experts provide our cadets with a wealth of knowledge, practical skills, and resources. This comprehensive preparation equips our cadets to deliver high-quality, evidence-based teaching that meets the needs of students at all levels when they enter the classroom.

In addition to learning about curriculum content and pedagogical approaches through our *Insight* program, the cadets also interact with system leads in Student Support Services, exploring the legal and practical realities of meeting the needs of our most vulnerable students. Work, Health and Safety experts work with our cadets, exploring our legal obligations to care for our students and the practical application of this in the school setting. Furthermore, our safeguarding officer helps our cadets develop an understanding of child safety practices.

Cadets engage with health and well-being experts and have access to internationally renowned speakers and their related resources. They are supported to develop a toolkit to care for themselves and their students' well-being. Discussions of behaviour management techniques and strategies, together with an understanding of professional boundaries and expectations in the school setting, form a crucial component of the STATSI program. This emphasis ensures that our cadets are well-prepared and aware of the responsibilities that come with their profession. The relationships developed with systemic leads, subject matter experts and other TCEO staff, provide a professional learning network for the pre-service teachers as they move into the early career teaching workforce.

On immersive days, cadets are nurtured in the classroom environment as they work alongside and are mentored by experienced Catholic school educators one day per week. During this time, cadets observe and discuss best teaching practices with their mentor teacher and implement learnings from the professional development gained during

intensive days. This collaborative teaching environment allows both the teacher and the cadet to engage in mutual learning. The experienced teacher shares their practical knowledge, classroom management techniques and subject expertise, while the cadet brings fresh perspectives, innovative ideas and the latest educational theories. Together, they create a dynamic space where both gain insights and grow professionally. Through weekly engagement in the school setting, cadets begin to understand the subtleties of teaching and the realities of classroom management.

Each cadet's needs are met through an individualised program lasting 2-4 years, tailored to their strengths, areas of growth and professional development. The program provides personalised guidance, targeted real-time feedback and flexible learning opportunities, ensuring each cadet receives the support necessary to develop their teaching skills. Cadets are facilitated with the opportunity to gain work experience in different schools and year levels during their training, learning from diverse educators in a variety of school settings.

Cadets report that an invaluable part of the STATSI program is the development of collegial relationships amongst the peer group as they support each other in their University studies, engage in professional dialogue regarding their practical experiences in the classroom setting and develop long-term friendships and support networks that will continue with them as they enter the teaching profession upon graduation. Cadets also report the invaluable professional learning and development that extends beyond their university studies and applies to the real classroom environment and TCEO system for example:

- Faith formation learnings - belonging to the Catholic system and its shared values
- Supportive nature of the program - adaptable to school, cadet and mentor needs
- Professional learning for mentors to upskill and develop their capabilities to provide feedback and support to colleagues
- Collegial network for mentors and cadets
- The gap between Uni learning and pedagogy delivered in schools. Inquiry-based learning vs Explicit Direct Instruction

## **CET Workforce Strategies**

Catholic Education Tasmania attracts, supports and develops an approximately 4,000 employee strong workforce. The vast majority of these 4,000 employees are directly involved in the education of young Tasmanians. During the past 12 months Catholic Education Tasmania has reimaged our Talent Acquisition practices to evolve our processes from a reactive state to a pro-active state.

Whilst we note there is no easy solution to the Teacher shortage or issues facing our teacher communities, the engagement of Teacher talent through pathways such as structured

recruitment programs, Teacher talent pools, and the use of LinkedIn Learning has proved very beneficial and has resulted in an increased pool of Teachers in 2024.

Attracting Teachers to remote parts of Tasmania has resulted in Catholic Education Tasmania providing incentives through our 'Journey's Package'. This package provides financial support, development support and family connectivity support when working remotely.

Attracting Teachers to Catholic Education Tasmania or indeed back to the Teaching profession is one that we continue to connect to the Brand Tasmania and/or the Local Community Brand.

The proposed CET Workforce Plan will look more deeply than the National Teacher Workforce Action Plan as it will consider CET's Vision, Strategies, Aspirational Targets and Influences (both internal and external) with a view to consider 5 to 10 years ahead and build a fit for purpose plan that addresses the direction of our workforce.

The National Teacher Workforce Action Plan talks to five key areas of:

1. **Improving teacher supply** – To increase the number of people choosing teaching as a career.
2. **Strengthening initial teacher education** – To ensure initial teacher education supports teacher supply and delivers classroom ready graduates.
3. **Keeping the teachers we have** – To improve retention by increasing support for teachers, enhancing career pathways, reducing unnecessary workload and freeing up teachers to focus on core teaching tasks and collaboration.
4. **Elevating the profession** – To recognise the value teachers bring to students, communities and the economy.
5. **Better understanding future teacher workforce needs** – To improve the information available for teacher workforce planning.

Covid-19 has undoubtedly changed the dynamics of the workforce. Post pandemic attitudes revealed a greater number of employees perceiving career transition and flexibility not as difficult as previously imagined, but something achievable and attractive. This coupled with the pressures teachers feel in the classroom means that educators can find easier, more lucrative opportunities outside of teaching. The question for the Tasmanian community is, what is our point of difference in both attracting talent to the industry and how do we leverage this on the national stage? At Catholic Education Tasmania we are focusing on the connection of teachers to our vision of a Student Focused, Christ Centred, Learning for Life organisation that has both the teacher and student at its heart.

## Theme 5 - Accountability for improved outcomes

How do we ensure that policy initiatives are implemented, and resources are used to improve learning outcomes?

### Catholic Education Tasmania System Perspectives

#### CET Policy Initiatives

In developing CET policy initiatives to improve learning outcomes, the TCEO and/or Catholic Education Commission Tasmania (CECT) endeavours to consult with the relevant stakeholders within CET to ensure the final policy and initiative can be implemented by schools at the operational level. Part of this process includes identifying appropriate resourcing for the initiatives, such as our current *Insight* project, during the development stage, to ensure implementation of the project is financially viable for a small education system. Appropriate resourcing initiatives are subsequently incorporated into CET's annual budget planning cycle.

TCEO monitors and tracks the implementation of initiatives, evaluating educational outcomes and regularly reviewing the resourcing of the policy initiative. These matters are considered when discerning future policy initiatives, considering whether to pivot a policy initiatives approach, questioning whether the initiative is succeeding in its intention or whether the system needs to reconsider its approach.

If the education policy initiative being implemented is a Government policy initiative that is resourced by Governments (State and/or Federal) for education jurisdictions to implement, then CET implements in accordance with Government parameters and in accordance with relevant funding agreements established. This includes reporting and analysing the relevant data at system level and reporting on the use of initiative funding as per Government requirements. If Government/s change education priorities or change at an election and a Government initiative and funding is discontinued, then the initiative at CET's end is also usually discontinued at this point.

#### CET Strategic Improvement Planning

As a system, we believe that when planning for school improvement, we must rely on data and ascertain a clear understanding of the current landscape through honest assessment. In 2025, CET has 10 schools engaging in a discernment year as part of a cycle of school effectiveness (cyclic strategic improvement planning). The process these schools will undertake will enable leaders and teams to better understand how they might work

together more effectively, while considering what their ideal state looks like. We are cognisant that the most effective School staff are most likely to implement new initiatives if purpose and vision is clarified and leaders are active participants in the decision-making processes. Maintaining the focus requires collaborative strategic planning, ongoing professional development, leadership, mentoring and evidence that the initiative is contributing to the desired change. It is vital a clear vision is set with developed strategies and reform to guide and shape the transformational change journey.

### **CET Insight**

In 2023, Catholic Education Tasmania launched the *Insight* project. Based on the principles of the Science of Learning, the *Insight* project builds upon decades of research around how students most effectively learn, retain and recall information.

*Insight* aims to improve student learning outcomes by upskilling and improving the practice and pedagogy of all teachers and leaders by:

- Providing coaching and mentoring for Principals and Leaders to support planning and implementation of the project.
- Providing coaching and mentoring for selected teachers within our system around high-impact pedagogies and practices aligned with the Science of Learning.
- CET's facilitation of All System days attended by all staff for professional learning informed by Science of Learning principles.
- Supporting key CET staff to develop explicit teaching resources to support this style of teaching.

### **CET Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Perspectives**

In contributing to Catholic Education Tasmania's broader response to the Independent Education Review, the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Team can reference the findings and actions from its own independent review, which was commissioned to improve the outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students. The report, produced in collaboration with Deakin University and the University of Tasmania, outlines key strategies and recommendations that Catholic Education Tasmania (CET) is actively implementing to address these critical areas.

In the context of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, Catholic Education Tasmania maintains its focus on improvement through several key initiatives, guided by findings from its independent review:



- **Cultural Safety and Responsiveness:** CET places a strong emphasis on cultural safety and respect for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures in its schools. This has been a central theme of its commissioned review, which highlights the importance of cultural responsiveness in improving student outcomes. By embedding respect for Country, language, and cultural identity in schools, CET ensures that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students feel safe and supported, which contributes to better engagement and academic performance.
- **Dedicated Roles and Staff Support:** CET employs Aboriginal Student Success Teachers (ASSTs) and Key Teachers who focus specifically on supporting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students. These teachers play a crucial role in implementing initiatives aimed at improving cultural and educational outcomes. The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Team provides ongoing support, ensuring that teachers and school leaders are well-equipped to deliver effective, culturally responsive education.
- **Professional Development and Learning Communities:** CET's independent review found that staff confidence in teaching Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students improves significantly with appropriate professional development. CET provides professional learning that aligns with AITSL standards 1.4 and 2.4, focusing on the cultural and educational needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students.
- **Community Engagement:** Strong partnerships with local Aboriginal communities and knowledge sharers are key to maintaining focus on improvement. The review emphasised the importance of authentic community collaboration to support cultural initiatives and build trust between schools and Aboriginal communities.
- **The Aboriginal Knowledge Sharers and Educators Portal (AKSEP)** is a vital resource developed by Catholic Education Tasmania (CET) in partnership with First Nations Direct, an Aboriginal-owned information systems platform. This innovative portal is designed to support schools in Tasmania by connecting them with Aboriginal knowledge sharers, resources, and events, all of which contribute to enhancing learning, well-being, and cultural outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students.

#### Key Features of AKSEP:

1. **Connection to Knowledge Sharers:** AKSEP provides schools with direct access to a wide network of Aboriginal knowledge sharers, including Elders, cultural practitioners, artists, and educators. Schools can use the portal to engage these individuals for events, cultural programs, or classroom activities that enhance cultural awareness and learning experiences for students. The ability to directly connect with knowledge sharers ensures that the cultural education provided in schools is authentic and community-driven.

2. **Alignment with Curriculum:** AKSEP is fully aligned with the Australian Curriculum Cross-Curriculum Priority: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Histories and Cultures, ensuring that the resources and activities available through the portal meet national education standards. This alignment allows teachers to integrate Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives into their daily lessons in a meaningful and systematic way.
3. **Resource Library and Educational Support:** The portal includes a comprehensive library of resources that teachers can access to support professional development and classroom instruction. This includes lesson plans, cultural activities, and case studies that align with the goals of enhancing Aboriginal cultural understanding and improving student outcomes. AKSEP also provides information on Aboriginal businesses and external resources, such as cultural burning practices, which schools can utilise to further their connection to local Aboriginal communities.
4. **Story Mapping:** A unique feature of AKSEP is Story Mapping, an interactive space where staff, Aboriginal knowledge sharers, and businesses can share experiences and best practices related to Aboriginal cultural education. Story Mapping enables schools within the CET network to document and share their successes, offering practical examples and inspiration for other schools to implement similar initiatives. This aligns with the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Strategy and fosters collaborative learning across the CET community.
5. **Support for Professional Development:** AKSEP plays a critical role in CET's professional learning strategy by providing staff with access to culturally responsive pedagogy resources. This supports the professional growth of educators, enhancing their understanding of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories, cultures, and contemporary issues. The portal facilitates direct engagement with Aboriginal educators and experts who can offer guidance on integrating cultural perspectives into teaching practices.
6. **Practical Tools for Schools:** The portal offers schools a user-friendly platform to:
  - Search for knowledge sharers by name, region, or age group.
  - Book cultural practitioners for classroom visits, professional development sessions, or cultural events.
  - Access detailed profiles of each knowledge sharer, including their background, areas of expertise, and availability, making it easy for schools to find the right fit for their needs.

**Impact of AKSEP:**

The introduction of AKSEP has significantly improved the ability of schools in the CET network to deliver culturally responsive education and build stronger ties with Aboriginal communities. It acts as a central hub for sharing knowledge, fostering community connections, and ensuring that schools are not only meeting educational standards but also

enriching staff and student wellbeing. The portal reflects CET's commitment to reconciliation and its role in promoting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander success in education.

By providing schools with easy access to Aboriginal knowledge and expertise, AKSEP ensures that cultural learning is embedded in the daily experiences of students, and that teachers have the tools they need to deliver meaningful, respectful, and engaging lessons.

Catholic Education Tasmania's independent review provides a framework for ensuring that policy initiatives are effectively implemented and that resources are aligned with improving educational outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students:

- **Data-Driven Accountability:** The review highlights the need for system-wide data to measure the impact of initiatives and guide resource allocation. CET is developing more comprehensive data systems to track the progress of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, enabling evidence-based decisions and ensuring resources are targeted where they are needed most.
- **Clear Outcome Areas and Prioritisation:** The implementation of initiatives is guided by clear priorities, as outlined in the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Strategy and further detailed in CET's strategic planning. The focus areas include literacy, numeracy, attendance, cultural identity, and pathways to further education. Resources are allocated to ensure schools can meet these goals, with a particular focus on cultural responsiveness as a key driver of student success.
- **Student Success Grants:** CET's Student Success Grants have been a critical tool in supporting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students. These grants allow schools to design and implement locally relevant initiatives that improve both academic and well-being outcomes. The independent review recommended continuing and refining this funding model to ensure it remains targeted and impactful.
- **Ongoing Review and Adaptation:** CET has established mechanisms for ongoing review of its initiatives, ensuring that policies are adapted to meet the evolving needs of students. The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Team plays a vital role in monitoring progress and supporting schools in aligning their practices with the broader objectives of improving outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students.

By integrating these strategies into its broader response to the review, Catholic Education Tasmania demonstrates its commitment to ensuring that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students receive the support they need to succeed, both culturally and academically.

## Acknowledgements

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