



26 August 2024

Response to Tasmanian Government Inquiry into Discrimination and Bullying in Tasmanian Schools

This submission addresses the areas of (b) and (d) of the terms of reference: (b) inquire into and report upon the measures necessary to prevent and remedy discrimination and bullying in Tasmanian schools regarding students and staff (d) examine and recommend what efforts are being made and should be made towards meeting those obligations by Tasmanian schools regarding students and staff

Sacred Heart Catholic School is a one-and-a-half-stream school in Ulverstone. Our current student enrolment numbers from Kinder to Year 6 are 279. Among our students, 15.8% identify as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander, and 67 students require additional accommodations and support on the NCCD census. We are grateful to have a total staff of forty-six, including seventeen teachers and twenty-nine support staff.

***Our shared Vision** is that through living the Josephite Tradition and in partnership with our community, we nurture all to grow and flourish. A foundational quote from Saint Mary MacKillop guides our thoughts and actions: "Never see a need without doing something about it."*

***Our shared Mission** states: "Guided by the love of Jesus, we are committed to working together to reach our full potential in an environment supported by our values of Compassion, Sustainability, Gratitude, Honesty, and Inclusion." We continue to emphasise the importance of our school being a safe and welcoming environment for staff, students, and families alike.*

At Sacred Heart Catholic School, our shared purpose is to:

Live our school values based on the teachings of Jesus and our Josephite charism.

We welcome families from the marginalised: We offer fee assistance for any family requiring support and reach out to families when we know they have difficulty paying fees or providing daily necessities for their children. This assistance ensures that all students have access to the quality education and support services we provide, regardless of their financial situation. Our inclusive practices and welcoming environment ensure families from all backgrounds feel accepted. We strive to provide support and resources to those who need them most, ensuring equal opportunities for all staff and students. Students surveyed commented: "I feel happy at Sacred Heart Ulverstone because I belong." "I feel safe at Sacred Heart because the people and staff at Sacred Heart are amazing and wouldn't let anyone ever feel unsafe. If someone did feel unsafe, they would talk to them about it and try to make them feel better about the situation." "I feel safe at Sacred Heart Ulverstone because all of the staff and students care for one another."

We welcome all families who seek the education we provide: Currently, 22.2% of our students are Catholic, with the remainder belonging to other religions and/or no religion. Through our enrolment process, we provide consistent communication to clarify the expectations for working together in a positive partnership to support all children and families. Our school community proudly lives out our faith through our daily actions. We aspire to provide consistent communication to families via our media platforms, newsletter, or portal information regarding our shared values and





expectations. Feedback from a recent parent survey state: "It's a warm and open community where children are allowed (and encouraged!) to be themselves and thrive in a safe and nurturing environment. Regardless of academic ability or placement, children thrive and are celebrated."

Develop the whole child:

We aim to develop students in a holistic way, including their growth spiritually, physically, intellectually, emotionally, and socially. Our Religious Education curriculum educates students about God's plan for their happiness and the unique role of each person in His creation. Rooted in our values, our lessons emphasise the importance of our shared humanity and the dignity of every individual. Through the teachings of our Catholic faith, we encourage students to develop their understanding of their self-worth and the worth of others. We believe all members of our community bring their unique gifts to contribute to our place and space. Our staff foster a sense of belonging and responsibility, teaching students how to live out their faith in ways that promote positive relationships, social justice, and a deeper sense of community. Our onsite counsellors provide both individual and group sessions to support students and staff. From a recent parent survey: "I know my child is loved and safe. All staff are invested in the children's academic and overall wellbeing. Teaching and administration staff are passionate about their roles." "As a mother of a child with additional needs, I can honestly say that SHU has catered beyond what is required for my child to thrive. He is celebrated for being himself and reaching milestones at his own pace. Children are encouraged to understand and appreciate diversity at a young age in a way which is refreshing and compassionate."

Promote a strong, safe, and supportive partnership between home, school, and the wider community:

We maintain a consistent, clear process for mandatory reporting and ensure staff feel supported through this process. Examples include sitting beside staff who require support and displaying visual flowcharts prominently to clarify the importance of reporting. We support pastoral care through our comprehensive wellbeing initiatives, including the presence of a Catholic Care social worker, a wellbeing officer, and a dedicated wellbeing team. These professionals collaborate to provide emotional and social support, ensuring that every student receives the care and guidance they need. Our wellbeing team meets fortnightly to prioritise students who require support. Our school counsellors seek parent permission prior to providing support for students and, if appropriate, meet with parents beforehand. Onsite, we provide spaces for students to regulate their emotions, including a sensory room and outdoor garden areas that remain fully supervised when students are present. Our school is committed to fostering connections with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander elders, recognizing the invaluable knowledge and cultural heritage they bring to our community. We actively facilitate events and learning opportunities that invite elders to share their stories, traditions, and perspectives, enriching our students' understanding of Indigenous cultures.

Hold high expectations of ourselves and others:

We have zero tolerance for bullying. Sacred Heart staff have a clear understanding of the processes for PBS (Positive Behaviour Support). We encourage positive behaviour through consistent reminders of expectations, celebrations, and recognition of students who demonstrate exemplary behaviour. We ensure that minor and major incidents are collated





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and followed up appropriately to ensure communication and support are implemented in a timely manner. Staff have implemented the 'Friendology' program in recent years, enabling a common language and understanding to create a collective understanding. This program provides explicit lessons for staff to unpack the skills of friendships with students. Feedback from staff and families indicates that the program has assisted students in developing confidence in their ability to recognise unhealthy relationships and develop strategies for responding to mean-on-purpose behaviour. This program, combined with our overall commitment to wellbeing, promotes an atmosphere of respect, courtesy, and consideration for all.

Provide an educational program that uses research-based best practice teaching strategies:

Our teaching and learning curriculum and approaches support a diversity of students, ensuring everyone can succeed. Our staff receive ongoing support from our system to ensure clarity around best teaching practice, expectations and pedagogies. We implement evidence-based teaching programs that provide resources for teachers and support staff in explicit instruction. We are in the process of developing a behaviour curriculum and scope and sequence to collectively respond to agreed behaviour norms across teaching teams. Staff continue to work closely together to monitor, assess, and provide timely feedback to ensure children have access to intervention or extension, ultimately supporting students to overcome challenges and achieve their full potential.

Sacred Heart Catholic School staff remain dedicated to promoting positive relationships, nurturing the whole child, and encouraging all to flourish in a faith-based community where all feel safe and belong.



Charlene Best
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