



SACRED HEART COLLEGE

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RESPONSE TO GOVERNMENT INQUIRY INTO DISCRIMINATION AND BULLYING IN TASMANIAN SCHOOLS

This submission addresses the particular 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 in regard to students and staff (d) examine and recommend what efforts are being made and should be made towards meeting those obligations by Tasmanian schools in regard to students and staff

Sacred Heart College is co-educational Catholic college located in New Town, welcoming students from Kindergarten through to Year 10 with a current enrolment of 986 students.

Sacred Heart College prides itself on being a welcoming community for all. The charism of our founders, the Sisters of St Joseph, is intricately woven throughout our Vision and Mission Statement. Sacred Heart College values diversity and the dignity of each individual, and we work consistently to ensure that every member of our community feels respected, safe, and supported.

We actively celebrate the diverse backgrounds and cultures of our students and staff and work to cultivate an inclusive atmosphere where students of all backgrounds and abilities are welcomed and supported to access the curriculum and assimilate into all aspects of the life at the College.

Our students are encouraged to have an awareness of other cultures, respect differences, consider different points of view and value all people and cultures.

- Our Learning Support Team works closely with classroom and subject teachers to support differentiation and the accommodations needed for students to access the curriculum where they are at. This involves implementing strategies and developing a clear understanding of the nature of students' abilities and disabilities so that they have the best possible opportunity to engage in classroom learning opportunities invisibly, equitably and with success.
- Our English as an Additional Language or Dialect (EALD) Team provides students with specific support to learn and build their English language skills and ensure access to the curriculum. Students from over thirty cultural backgrounds have found a home at Sacred Heart College.
- We believe that embracing diversity enriches our educational environment and prepares our students to become compassionate and empathetic global citizens.

Sacred Heart College strives to provide a safe, caring and supportive school environment to help each student reach their full potential. A shared responsibility for the dignity and worth of every member of the College Community are cornerstones of our Vision and Mission Statement. We uphold these by showing and promoting respect for oneself, for others and for the environment in which we work.

- We expect the highest standard of behaviour from our students, to maintain a positive, productive and safe learning and teaching environment for students and staff, ensuring all members of our College Community feel welcome, safe and experience a sense of belonging.
- To foster a respectful community, we provide students, staff and parents with clear expectations regarding behaviour towards others. Our College Expectations emphasise the importance of treating everyone with kindness, respect, and dignity and are consistently communicated through classroom discussions, assemblies, age-appropriate signage in classrooms and play areas and throughout our published documentation.

- We have procedures in place for reporting and addressing incidents of bullying and discrimination. Students have both formal and informal avenues to voice any concerns through our pastoral care structure, Student Wellbeing Team and the regular delivery of confidential bullying surveys. Our staff members are trained to recognise signs of bullying and intervene appropriately, ensuring that all concerns are addressed promptly and effectively. We also offer support services, such as counselling, mediation and restoration to assist students or staff who may be experiencing difficulties.
- As a college that welcomes students from Kindergarten through to Year 10; our response to bullying, discrimination, or any form of unproductive behaviour, is educational in nature. Our focus is to teach the young people in our care why a particular behaviour is unacceptable, aiming to foster responsibility for actions and to encourage positive and respectful behaviour applying age-appropriate language and strategies.

Increasingly, our staff are dealing with instances of students, and on occasion parents, using online platforms to express negative or harmful comments that they might not voice in person. We are continually adapting our procedures to address these issues.

- Our student personal development programme provides age-appropriate education for students focussing on specific topics such as cyber safety, acceptable use of technology, racism, developing empathy, regulating emotions and making responsible decisions.
- Our *Phones Off & Away* Policy has been in place across Years 7 to 10 for a number of years. In 2023, this expectation of students was extended to include the entire Primary Campus as there is a greater prevalence of children in these year levels having phones at school.
- We work with parents to help them understand the importance of monitoring their children's online activities and encouraging positive online behaviour.
- Staff are encouraged to disconnect from school related communications each evening and to reply to parent communication as a team.
- Our expectations for respectful parent communication are detailed in our Primary and Secondary Parent Handbooks. This is an area we are currently reviewing to further support our staff.

Sacred Heart College is a place for students, families and educators to come together to celebrate the development of the whole child as they travel their individual pathways towards the future. We realise the importance education plays in the success of each child's journey and are committed to creating a place where all members of our community feel respected and valued regardless of faith, cultural background or ability.

Community at Sacred Heart College is about having shared goals and values, showing respect and care for all and taking an active role in building and sustaining the group to which we belong.

To this end we actively seek to address and respond to incidents of bullying and discrimination, or any behaviour that diminishes the life of our community, embracing our ethos as a Catholic school where the values of the Gospel are enshrined in all that we do.



Elizabeth McDougall
Principal - Sacred Heart College