

# St Thomas More's Catholic School

INSPIRED BY CHRIST WE ARE A COMMUNITY  
OF LIFELONG LEARNERS BECOMING THE PEOPLE  
GOD CREATED US TO BE.

Wednesday 28<sup>th</sup> August, 2024

## Re: Response to Government Inquiry into Discrimination and Bullying in Tasmanian Schools

To whom it may concern,

### Terms of Reference

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, and 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.

### School Details

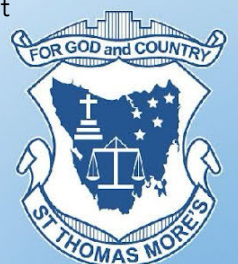


St Thomas More's Catholic School is a Catholic Primary School located in Launceston in the suburb of [redacted]. St Thomas More's Catholic School has 360 students enrolments from Kinder to Year 6 at capacity, and currently have 114 families on the waitlist for entry into our school for the next school year.

St Thomas More's Catholic School is a safe place for our students because we are a positive learning community that values inclusion, belonging and connection. We prioritise the physical safety and emotional safety of our students, through our positive behaviour support framework, emergency preparedness routines, and regular community involvement in the life of the school. We are continually implementing further measures through increased funding, awareness and education of evolving Federal and State Legislation in Child Safety, professional development for staff, policy review, and [redacted] partnerships with all key local stakeholders, including Members of Parliament [redacted]. In the School Validation Student Survey, our students were prompted with the statement: "I feel safe at school", to be evaluated on a five-point scale. The mean score of the data set was 4.1, which is defined by the survey as a result that is: "An excellent outcome that indicates a real commitment on behalf of the organisation". In the School Validation Student Survey, one of our Grade 5/6 students wrote: "I have an amazing teacher who helps me and I can talk to about personal issues. I have amazing friends. The work doesn't have to be rushed because we get given time to do our work. I like that we go outside for fruit breaks because it helps me not to be so stressed."

### School Vision

We welcome all families who seek the education we provide, and the vision for that education is for St Thomas More's Catholic School to be a vibrant and energetic learning community, where every child is valued, and where relationships, the Gospel, and our Josephite charism are at the heart of every aspect of our educational program. We have high expectations for student learning and student behaviour, and aim to support our students to grow into independent and confident learners, but community-minded contributors to society.



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Students are invited into an intimate relationship with Christ. We know we have achieved this goal when our students smile when they arrive at school, and are still smiling when they leave. In the *School Validation Parent Survey*, our parents/guardians were prompted to respond to the statement, "St Thomas More's is an energetic and vibrant learning community that values inclusion, belonging and connection", to which 94.4% of parents/guardians responded with agree or strongly agree. Not one single parent selected disagree or strongly disagree. In the *School Validation Parent Survey*, a parent with multiple children attending the school wrote that what they value most: "Connections our family has made with the school community, our children's enjoyment at attending, inclusive nature, always warm and welcoming. Wonderful school!"

## Student Wellbeing

We believe that student wellbeing comes from being accepted and welcomed and from experiencing success in learning. All of our education programs are aimed at these goals. St Thomas

[REDACTED] school engages in *The Resilience Project* which is a research-based, curriculum-based wellbeing program which enhances the development of student leadership and social skills, and actively develops positive mental health strategies through teaching mindfulness, and mindfulness practices. As a school we are significantly invested in *The Resilience Project*. This is evidenced by the recent *Little GEM Production Evening*, which was held in the school's Main Auditorium with over 500 families in attendance. The production was a collaboration between the school and *TasDance* who over a period of months choreographed the event with all 180 of our Kinder-Grade 2 students. The GEM principles from *The Resilience Project* of Gratitude, Empathy and Mindfulness were explored through the medium of song and dance for our school community. This event was funded through the Federal Government's *Student Wellbeing Boost Grants*, and this funding included videography of the evening, and the production of [this short celebration video](#), which captured the journey, scope, joy, and wonder that were all experienced through this significant student wellbeing project. Also, as part of our engagement with *The Resilience Project*, [REDACTED] participated in the annual, national *Resilient Youth Survey*, and in 2023, our students were prompted with the statement: "I think I am doing pretty well", to which 88.5% of students responded with agree or strongly agree. In the *School Validation Parent Survey*, one of the parents/guardians of our Prep-Grade 2 students wrote that what they value most: "That staff are warm and caring; I have felt that my child's wellbeing and needs are considered important by staff; My child's happiness and safety at school is as, if not more, important than academic achievement, so this is important to me."

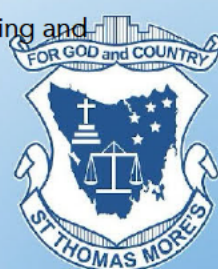
## Anti-Bullying & Harassment

St Thomas More's Catholic School has zero tolerance for bullying. Tackling bullying and harassment is everyone's responsibility, and our approach is informed by our Gospel Value of Respect. Proactive measures established to prevent and reduce bullying include; the formulation and communication of school-wide positive behaviour expectations; school-wide supervision and effective, consistent behaviour management by all staff; school curriculum and pastoral initiatives which address discrimination and harassment; and opportunities and structures for students to report bullying and discuss concerns.

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The goal of Positive Behaviour Support at St Thomas More's Catholic School is to create and maintain a positive and safe learning environment that enhances our school culture where we maximise individual academic and social growth. The school's Positive Behaviour Support framework provides the overview and structure of our approach to promoting positive and safe behaviour in the school community. The focus of the approach with our students is on our 'PBS Statements': *Be Respectful. Be Responsible. Be a Learner.* This includes a comprehensive acknowledgement and rewards system for those students displaying these behaviours, and a behaviour curriculum where our behaviour expectations and behaviour routines are explicitly taught. The teaching, modelling and acknowledgement of desired behaviours is the most critical aspect of driving a culture of positive behaviour and bullying prevention. In the national *Resilient Youth Survey*, our students were prompted with the statement: "At school I have adults who set a good example", to which 88.5% of students responded with agree or strongly agree. This data set is significant, as the national average in student survey response to this statement is just 48% agree or strongly agree. However, the online [REDACTED] is difficult for schools and families to teach, model and regulate positive behaviour. In the *Resilient Youth Survey*, our students were prompted with the statement: "I am not [REDACTED]" which 96% of students responded with agree or strongly agree.

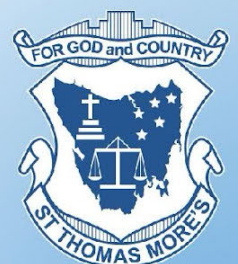
[REDACTED] diversity

St Thomas More's Catholic School welcomes families from the margins as informed by our school's Gospel Values of Empathy & Justice. This includes providing fee assistance to families through a process that is formal, but non-invasive, invitational, and open. St Thomas More's Catholic School has a DMI score of 96, which for the local context reflects a comparatively high socio-economic demographic. However, 9.2% of families at the school receive fee assistance through either concession card benefits or Catholic Education Tasmania's fee remission process. We welcome students from different cultural backgrounds and ethnicities, and 5% of our students come from families where English is not the primary language. St Thomas More's Catholic School has a registered [REDACTED] Action Plan, which was written in collaboration with and approved by the Tasmanian Aboriginal Centre (TAC). We have an active and inclusive approach toward celebrating our Indigenous and First Nations culture and history, and 4% of our students identify as Aboriginal and or Torres Strait Islander. This diversity is also reflected in the presentation of student learning needs at our school, which includes Autism Spectrum Disorder, speech/language disorders, Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder, physical impairment, intellectual impairment and specific learning disorders. For the purposes of funding students with disabilities, we provide evidence of adjustments and student learning plans for the Nationally Consistent Collection of Data (NCCD), for which we have 18% of our students represented. Therefore, one in every five students have a diagnosed and recognised learning need. Christ said to those gathered around him as he preached: "Come all you weary. Come gather round near me". His words of welcome did not contain any stipulations or regulations, all were welcome no matter where they were on their journey. Just as at St Thomas More's Catholic School all are welcome no matter where they are on their educational journey.

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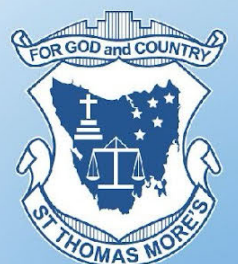
## Religious Education

Our approach to the Religious Education of our students is informed by our Gospel Values of Dignity & Integrity. That is, the purpose is to invite our students into a relationship with Christ, to support their understanding that God loves them, and to know that they are seen, valued, heard, and have a powerful voice as members of our faith community. The key programs and initiatives associated with the faith formation of our students are the *Good News for Living* curriculum, the *Making Jesus Real (MJR)* program, the *Gospel Values Awards*, weekly Christian meditation practice, daily classroom prayer, and Monday morning Prayer Assembly. Our Josephite charism informs an approach to faith formation that cherishes every individual learner; and the scope and variety in our broad curricula and co-curricula programs, and our Religious Education program, cater for our students holistic development through their exploration of themselves, their exploration of their world, and their exploration of their relationship with God. These learning experiences are presented in a manner that is accessible, safe, welcoming, and educational for our families from non-Catholic backgrounds.

Integral to the success of our Religious Education program and the promotion of our Catholic identity, as whilst we are a Catholic school, 52.4% of our families are non-Catholic. In the *School Validation Parent Survey*, our students were prompted with the statement: "St Thomas More's Catholic School lives out Catholic beliefs and practices in their words and actions." This statement was evaluated on a five-point scale. The mean score of the data set was 4.15, which again was a result that is: "An excellent outcome that indicates a real commitment on behalf of the organisation". In the *School Validation Parent Survey*, one of our Grade 5/6 parents/guardians wrote: "St Thomas More's Catholic School represents the very best of our Catholic faith. The staff are the embodiment of Christian love. They create an environment where children feel safe and are able to learn. I do not believe there could be a finer school in Tasmania."

## Pastoral Care

St Thomas More's Catholic School's culture of welcome, inclusion, and belonging is predicated on the quality of pastoral care provided for all members of the school community. Pastoral care provides a visible presence of God's love within the actions, words and demeanour of all within the school. It draws on gospel values of faith, compassion and justice, demonstrating a deep respect and acknowledgement of the dignity of each individual, who is made in the image of God. Our approach to pastoral care includes our implementation of *The Resilience Project* and our Positive Behaviour Support framework, but is measured in the quality of relationships at the school characterised by the Good Shepherd, to embrace the role of the helper. In the *School Validation Student Survey*, our students were prompted to respond to the statement, "My school encourages me to help other people", to which 95% of students responded with agree or strongly agree. The school also has a dedicated full-time *Student Wellbeing & Diversity Officer* who provides a range of wellbeing programs for our students including individual play therapy; small groups focused on grief, anxiety or emotional regulation; facilitates familial wellbeing interventions, coordinates the daily breakfast club program, and hosts the wellbeing drawing club at each break time. However, our duty of pastoral care is not only for our students and families, but also our staff.



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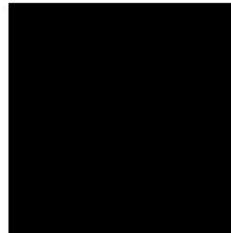
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St Thomas More's Catholic has an articulated vision and explicit program in place to support staff wellbeing. In the *School Validation Staff Survey*, our staff were prompted to respond to the statement, "Morale is positive among staff at St Thomas More's Catholic School", to which 91.2% of staff responded with agree or strongly agree. Not one single staff member selected disagree or strongly disagree. In the *School Validation Staff Survey*, a staff member wrote that: *"St Thomas More's Catholic School cares about its employee's health and wellbeing, which assists in creating an inclusive work environment and building relationships. I feel very proud to be part of the STM team and the opportunities provided to the students is a credit to the school."*

If you have any questions regarding this submission, please do not hesitate to contact me.

God bless,



Mr Casimir Douglas

**Principal**

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