

Response to Government Inquiry into Discrimination and Bullying in Tasmanian Schools

Monday 26th August, 2024

Mount Carmel College is a Catholic College that provides education for boys and girls aged three to four years old in our Early Learning Centre, and girls from Kindergarten to Year Ten. Located in Sandy Bay, we offer a wide range of learning and co-curricular opportunities for 596 students. At Mount Carmel Catholic College, we are committed to providing a holistic and faith-centred education that empowers young women to thrive academically, spiritually, and personally. At Mount Carmel College, each girl is inspired to grow into a confident, empowered individual ready to make a positive impact in the world.

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.

Mount Carmel College, grounded in its Catholic perspective, embraces a mission of welcoming and inclusivity that reflects the core teachings of the Church. Central to its educational philosophy is the belief that every person, regardless of their background or circumstances, is made in the image of God and deserves respect and dignity. This perspective drives the college's commitment to creating a community where all students and families feel valued and included. By integrating Catholic teachings into its daily operations and interactions, Mount Carmel College ensures that its environment is one of compassion and acceptance, providing a supportive space where every individual can flourish.

Additionally, the college upholds the Catholic principle of the "option for the poor and marginalised," prioritising support for those who are most in need. This commitment is reflected in the school's outreach programs, scholarship opportunities, and community service initiatives that specifically target underserved populations. Mount Carmel College's dedication to this principle not only addresses the immediate needs of marginalised groups but also fosters a broader culture of justice and equity within the school community. By actively engaging in acts of charity and advocacy, the college seeks to embody the Gospel's call to love and serve the less fortunate, making a tangible difference in the lives of those who are often overlooked.

Aligned with the mission of the Church, Mount Carmel College strives to embody principles of compassion, service, and social justice. Mount Carmel College actively engages in initiatives that promote the well-being of the entire community, reinforcing the values of dignity and respect for all individuals. Through partnerships with local organisations and dedicated efforts in community service, the college extends its reach beyond the campus, making a tangible impact in the lives of those it serves. This mission-driven approach reflects our dedication to living out the teachings of the Church and creating a more just and inclusive society.

Mount Carmel College embraces families in need and marginalised communities with a profound commitment to inclusivity and support. The college provides various programs and resources designed to ensure that every student, regardless of their background, receives a high-quality education. This includes financial assistance, counselling services, and community outreach initiatives aimed at addressing the unique challenges faced by these families. By fostering a nurturing and supportive environment, Mount Carmel College ensures that all students have the opportunity to thrive academically and personally.

At Mount Carmel College we believe that the wellbeing of all students is paramount in allowing all of our students to achieve both academic and personal success. As a whole community we are trying to capture and capitalise on a learning environment that focuses on strengths, resilience, gratitude and how the brain works. Through the workings of positive psychology our students will 'become - just not be' with a direct relationship to our core values given to us by the Sisters of Charity. Mount Carmel College is a safe place because we are passionate to ensure everyone is supported and work to build people up rather than bring them down. We have a strong community of staff who work together to ensure that physical, emotional and learning safety is visible across the school grounds.

We have zero-tolerance for bullying here at Mount Carmel College and encourage our community to reach out should they have any concerns in this space. We have policies and guidelines in place, with a regular review, refine and share process to ensure all stakeholders are aware of procedures and processes. We regularly encourage families and students to share any concerns, support those they know who may be struggling and remind families that we cannot help if we are unaware of any issues. We work closely with families to report concerns to authorities where appropriate, utilise supportive resources and work in partnership with Mount Carmel College to ensure the safety of our students is at the heart of every conversation and meeting.

One key initiative at Mount Carmel College has been to develop and implement the role of Director of Wellbeing in the College, a role designed to ensure the wellbeing and safety of every student, staff member and family. From the facilitation of wellbeing meetings, daily check-ins with students, data collection and development of projects as needs arise to the continual prioritisation of our wellbeing agenda in leadership meetings and strategic planning, this role is crucial in ensuring we address the needs of our students. This initiative has seen a significant drop in the number of bullying and behaviour incidents reported in 2024 as well as the proactive initiatives of processes, strategies, programs and guest speakers to support our priorities and changing needs.

Mount Carmel College also engages in a range of programs sourced from the e-safety commissioner, Headspace, Student Wellbeing Hub, ReachOut and Bullying! No Way websites. We pride ourselves with our engagement in Restorative Practice, where a number of our students train

to be Restorative Practice representatives. We use the URSTRONG and TeachPEEC programs to upskill students in their social and emotional needs, and promotion of being an upstander rather than a bystander. We engage with the *Making Jesus Real and Spirit of Jesus* programs, along with having dedicated wellbeing periods across the school each week where community members are sourced to speak with the students throughout the year.

We have also developed a program for our Year 8 students called STRIVE. This is specifically targeted at this age group to empower them to try new things and break the cycle of being on devices by giving them the chance to try new and exciting experiences, meet new people and make new friends. With a girls-only environment and a school size that facilitates personalised attention, STRIVE is dedicated to meeting the specific requirements of girls during this critical period by challenging, engaging, and igniting their passion for learning.

We believe that student wellbeing is essential and continue to upskill students, staff and families in our community about the importance of reading the signs of the child's wellbeing to ensure they have every opportunity to be their best selves for success to be possible in their learning. We know that every student is different and work towards empowering our staff to be role models for our students because of the vital role they play in students' lives each day

Mount Carmel College lives its mission through a commitment to welcoming and nurturing every member of its community, fostering an environment where a profound sense of belonging is tangible. The college's dedication to inclusivity and the wellbeing of all students and families is evident in its supportive practices and communal spirit. By prioritising compassion, respect, and mutual support, Mount Carmel College not only upholds its Catholic values but also creates a vibrant and cohesive community where everyone can feel welcomed and thrive.

'Mount Carmel is such a welcoming and inclusive school. When each of our daughters came to the school they did not know anyone and they were welcomed instantly, supported both by staff and students. Anytime we have questions or are needing extra support at school all staff go above and beyond to make this happen in a timely manner, this may be around friendships or study.

Staff are always quick to notice when students need support, and the school creates an environment where there is zero tolerance for bullying amongst students and teachers. Our daughters are Aboriginal and they have been given opportunities to share and express their culture in safe and meaningful ways, and this is so special to us as a family. Our daughters are Christian and Mount Carmel creates an environment where faith can be expressed and explored in safe ways, it's fantastic.'

([REDACTED] - Parent of Year 7 and 10 students)

'Mount Carmel is a welcoming, caring and inclusive school. As a parent whose daughter entered the College in Year 3, it has been wonderful to see how the school embraces and caters for individual needs and backgrounds. The College has a student focused approach, prioritising wellbeing and spirit. I have seen great acts of kindness amongst the students and leaders at the school. My daughter's self-confidence and self-worth have remarkably improved since being a part of the school community.'

[REDACTED] - Parent of a Year 3 and Kindergarten students)

I feel accepted and I love spending time with my friends everyday. There are also lots of opportunities. There are lots of after school sports for everyone. The teachers at my school are supportive, friendly, engaging and help me through everything. They are so much fun and make me love going to school! I feel happy at Mount Carmel because everyone is so kind and I have great teachers and friends to hang around with and I love to learn new things every day. I feel safe because the school is a big family and everyone is so sweet and kind and makes me feel like I'm part of the community.. In our school we are kind to each other because it doesn't matter who you are, everyone should still be kind. [REDACTED] - Year 6

I like my school because I get many opportunities to do things that will benefit me in all kinds of ways and the teachers are all very kind and supportive and make every lesson fun and easy to understand. The best thing about my school is that most teachers and students are very comforting and kind natured to everyone surrounding them and Everyone makes friends with people they didn't even know a year before. The teachers at my school make learning very easy and understandable so we can use it in our work. I feel happy at Mount Carmel because I feel proud of myself that I have worked very hard to get many responsibilities and leadership roles. I feel safe at Mount Carmel because whenever anyone is scared there are a crowd of people asking if they are Ok or if they need anything. In our school we are kind to each other because we do not judge others because they might look a certain way or have different groups that might be rude or bullied. We all treat each other with respect and inclusiveness. [REDACTED] - Year 6

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