

27<sup>th</sup> August 2024

## **Response to the Government Enquiry 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

St. Francis Flexible School (SFFS) is a community that is located in West Moonah, Hobart. It is a school designed to support marginalised young people, from Year 7 to Year 12 (12 to 19 years old) who have become disconnected from mainstream education.

St Francis Flexible School supports the most vulnerable young people from the greater Hobart area, such as: New Norfolk, Rokeby, Carlton, Moonah, Bridgewater, Brighton, Snug, etc. This is done utilising a flexible model, reduced class sizes, significant wellbeing, social and emotional support, and many other significant adjustments.

The majority of St Francis Flexible School student cohort comes from a low socio-economic background. To help support our family's needs, we rely on donations from various organisations, including Foodbank, Woolworths, St Vincent de Paul, etc. St Francis often send home food parcels, frozen meals, clothing (which are also donated from the community) and other household essentials.

St Francis Flexible School has 165 young people enrolled (capacity), with 34% (56 students) identifying as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander and a significant above average representation of young people identifying as LGBTQIA+. We have many in class and outside class supports in place. Every class consists of a teacher and a youth/social worker to assist the students in accessing both educational and wellbeing curriculums/programs.



All our students enrolled have previously been enrolled at another school. In 2024, 20 students (12%) have come from another Catholic School and 145 students (88%) have come from the Tasmanian Education Department or other educational jurisdiction.

For the 2024 year, St Francis Flexible School has 146 students that need various levels of adjustments according to the NCCD guidelines. (111 students who require extensive levels of adjustment and 35 students who fall in the substantial level of adjustment).

Everyone in our community operates with a set of four principles: Respect, Safe and Legal, Honesty and Participation. The principles help us to ensure that our communities are safe, diverse, and inclusive. We follow a comprehensive Collaborative Problem Solving (CPS) process to address all behavioural concerns at St Francis.

 ent figures for 2023:

Physical Bullying: 39

Indirect Bullying: 22

Cyber Bullying: 34

Young people that make the choice to engage in our learning environments are choosing to engage in a program that focuses on them as an individual and that holds them in unconditional positive regard. We acknowledge that education is the right of every young person, and we feel incredibly privileged to walk alongside each of our young people as they develop as young adults and flourish through our holistic learning environment.

At St Francis School we endeavour to break down the barriers for the young people to participate in education. There are many initiatives that we have in place that differ from all other schools. Some of these are:

- It does not cost our students and families anything to attend St Francis.
- We provide breakfast, morning tea and lunch daily to the school community free of charge.
- All excursions, functions and camps are free of charge for our students.
- We transport our students to and from school with our school vehicles at no cost to families.
- Students who are unable to attend onsite are offered outreach classes, supported by teachers and youth/social workers.
- We openly celebrate diversity through a variety of different measures.
- Students are placed in specific class groups to best support their needs
- We provide a uniform for all our students free of charge.
- All students are free to wear casual clothes if they wish to school.
- For safety purposes any student that requires a phone is purchased by the school and phone credit is provided.



- We distribute food hampers to students and families who require additional support.
- Our student and staff facilities are non-gender specific.

St Francis Flexible School is a Catholic institution steeped in inclusivity and education for all regardless of ability, economic status, and disability. We believe our school is gaining increasing confidence in the community by supporting Hobart's most vulnerable young people and families.

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



*Nick McGann  
Principal  
St Francis Flexible School*

