



VIC-EDU-F-055 Aboriginal Cultural Statement

1. Introduction

MacKillop Education respectfully acknowledges the Traditional Owners and Custodians of the lands and waters where we live and work and recognise that our work is delivered on many lands across this great nation. Always was, always will be.

MacKillop Family Services (MacKillop) exists to support children, young people, and their families to respond to the challenges and vulnerabilities they face in life and to thrive in strong communities. At MacKillop, we want to see every child and young person enjoy their youth feeling secure in their cultural identity and having a genuine sense of belonging and safety.

All MacKillop Education schools and programs are underpinned by our Reforming Learning and Teaching Environments (ReLATE) education model, as well as being informed by the Sanctuary care model. Both models are evidence-supported, whole-of-organisation frameworks that are trauma-informed, focused on safety and guide how we respond as an organisation to strengthen our support for children, young people, and families to recover, heal, and achieve their goals.

Truth-telling is essential and lies at the heart of building understanding and respect. At MacKillop we acknowledge the diverse experiences of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander (Aboriginal) peoples, and the impact their history has on their lives. By listening deeply to Aboriginal people telling their truths and sharing stories, we seek to understand past injustices and move forward together. Healing and prevention underpin many of the recommendations that inform our Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP2). We will continue to meet and consult with Aboriginal peoples and communities where they live and work, respecting self-determination.

As we continue to grow in our cultural knowledge and competence, we will listen deeply and respectfully to the voices of Aboriginal peoples. We deeply value our relationships with Aboriginal Community-Controlled Organisations (ACCOs), and we know that our work is improved by our ongoing connection with Aboriginal peoples, history, truth-telling, and culture.

At MacKillop, we know that for Aboriginal communities' culture is healing, and that our purpose is to provide high quality services to promote healing from trauma and loss, and to enable hopeful futures.

2. Our Commitments

In our work we aim to deepen our commitment to Aboriginal self-determination, reconciliation and cultural safety.

As an organisation, MacKillop Family Services will ensure that:

- We return regularly to communities and stakeholders to listen, seek guidance, and provide updates on MacKillop programs and commitments toward Aboriginal self-determination, reconciliation, and cultural safety.

- We are innovative and responsive leaders by developing best practices and advocating for social justice.
- We establish and maintain mutually beneficial relationships with Aboriginal stakeholders and organisations.
- Our systems prioritise the safety and wellbeing of Aboriginal children, families, volunteers, and staff, to strengthen organisational and financial sustainability.
- We embed a visible culture of child safety, and strengthen the culture of continuous improvement and participation, through feedback from our Aboriginal students, community, and workforce.

In ensuring that all MacKillop Education settings are culturally safe for all, we make a commitment to:

- Support the cultural safety of the Aboriginal students and families we work with; collaborating with ACCOs to provide opportunities for them to connect to culture, country and community.
- Provide opportunities for Aboriginal students to express and enjoy their cultural identity and self-expression.
- Promote reconciliation and celebrate the history and culture of Aboriginal people through truth-telling and consideration of Aboriginal perspectives within curriculum.
- Consult with Aboriginal individuals, communities and stakeholders - including our MacKillop Education Cultural Advisory Group - to foster reconciliation and cultural safety for our Aboriginal students and families
- Collate and analyse Aboriginal students' educational outcomes data, to inform program development and improvement.
- Recognise and show respect for First Nations people through Welcome or Acknowledgment of Country at the commencement of all meetings, school events, and at the beginning of each school week.
- Recognise and/or celebrate key events such as NAIDOC Week, National Reconciliation Week, National Sorry Day, Aboriginal Children's Day, and Indigenous Literacy Day.
- Provide opportunities for staff to develop their cultural understanding through accessing professional development and immersion opportunities, which focus on cultural awareness , Aboriginal perspectives and the strengths of Aboriginal culture and its importance to the wellbeing and cultural safety of Aboriginal students.
- Ensure racism towards Aboriginal members of the school community is identified, confronted and not tolerated and followed with appropriate consequences, as outlined in the MacKillop Education's VIC-EDU-P-009 Anti-Bullying Policy.
- Undergo annual cultural safety audits at all campuses, led by the Director of Aboriginal Service Development for MacKillop Family Services.
- Review MacKillop Education policies, procedures, and practices on a scheduled basis, and adapt as required to ensure they are culturally safe.