

St Patrick's College Indigenous Education

2016 Programme Overview



Introduction

The College's Indigenous Education Programme (IEP) continues to develop in terms of programmes and students with forty-nine students enrolled at the College in 2016. The College Headmaster and Board have shown considerable leadership and foresight in this area providing students with excellent educational opportunities that have already produced positive outcomes for students and their communities.

The College has developed a range of educational and vocational pathways for Indigenous students, whilst also ensuring that students are fully embraced by the College and immersed within the rich traditions of St Patrick's College, Ballarat. The College acknowledges that whilst it is imperative that we have the same expectations of all students at St Patrick's, it is important to acknowledge the cultural and social context of Indigenous students. The College's commitment to Indigenous education is central to its mission as a Catholic school for boys in the charism of Blessed Edmund Rice.

The introduction of targeted programmes for Indigenous students has been complemented by the appointment of staff to clearly articulated roles to better meet the needs of students, some of whom come from remote community where English is spoken as a second language. These appointments have greatly increased the level of support provided to students, both in and outside of the classroom and have played an important role in student retention and educational achievement.

Mr Rick Balchin, Indigenous Education Manager have been proactive in identifying the needs of students and staff and have backed this up with programmes, meetings, resources and personal mentoring that have been recognised by other schools and educational agencies as being consistent with best practice principles for Indigenous education and residential care.

The College is continuing to refine and expand its programmes to accommodate better the needs of students and to redress the significant imbalance in educational outcomes for Indigenous and Non-Indigenous Australians. In 2010 the College signed a Memorandum of Understanding with local Registered Training Organisation (RTO), the Tracy Group, to provide students nationally accredited vocational courses in areas such as hospitality, administration, automotives, building and education. This relationship continues in 2016

The College also has an innovative mentoring agreement with Mars Snackfoods which enables students to spend time with executives from Mars within a structured mentoring programme. Such experiences greatly expand the educational experience offered to students and are unique to the St Patrick's College Indigenous Education Programme.



Our Students

The College, sited on the traditional lands of the Wathaurung people, enjoys positive two way relationships with a number of Indigenous communities throughout Australia. These relationships have largely developed through word of mouth endorsement from Indigenous elders and are a testament to the commitment of staff to working with students to achieve positive educational outcomes for all boys at the College.

The College has boys from the following communities:

- Ballarat (VIC)
- Corella Creek (NT)
- Ngukerr (NT)
- Swan Hill (VIC)
- Alice Springs (NT)
- Tennant Creek (NT)
- Darwin (NT)
- Tiwi Islands (NT)
- Hamilton (VIC)

The College has had staff visit the communities and continues to work closely with elders, family and other significant community representatives to support boys at Ballarat and to commence planning for siblings to make the transition to the College in the years to come. The College also enjoys an excellent working relationship with the Ballarat and District Aboriginal Co-Operative which assists with student healthcare and social and emotional wellbeing programmes. Students are able to access the Co-Op's health clinic at short notice if unwell or requiring dental procedures.

Case Study – Calvin Anzac (SPC 2007-2008)

The effort of Calvin Anzac in obtaining his VCE in 2008 is quite exceptional. He is the first student from the remote Northern Territory community of Timber Creek to obtain a mainstream Year 12 and defies the damning statistics that continue to reduce the life chances and life expectancy of Indigenous Australians.

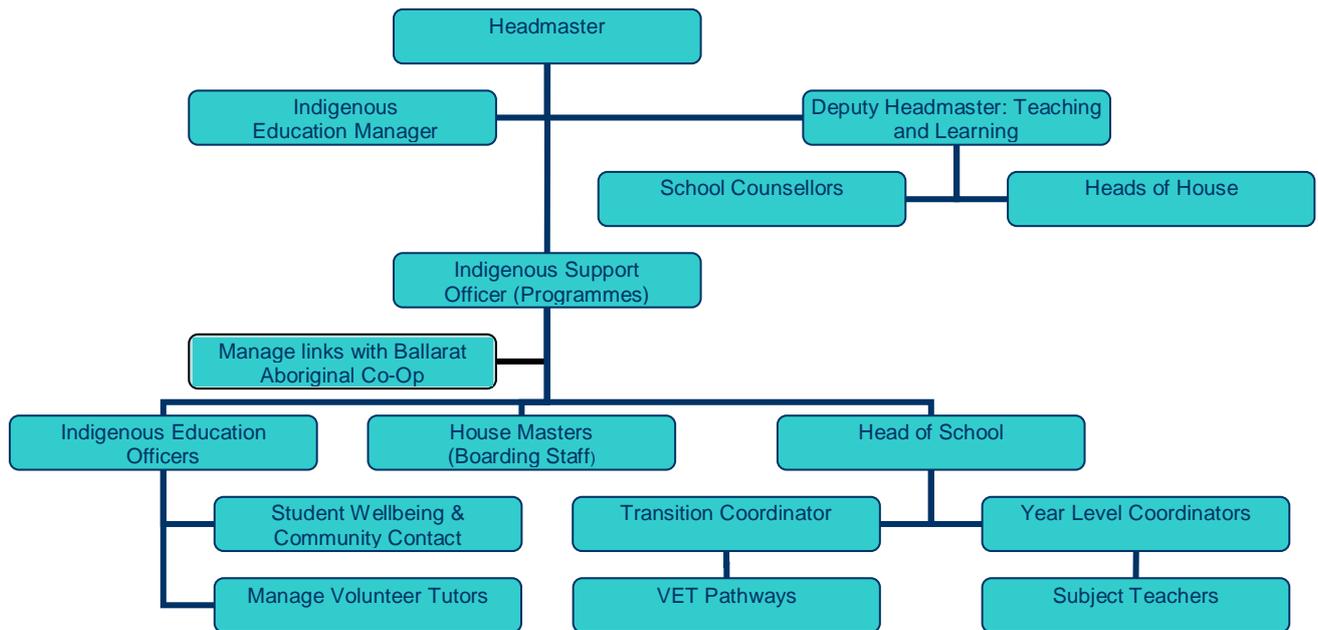
Calvin was also a boarding house leader and was actively involved in the life of the College. He taught students and staff about the richness of his culture and challenged students to look past stereotypes. Calvin would happily acknowledge that he is not a talented footballer; his passion is with reading Shakespeare! Some revelations help all students understand that we are all made in God's likeness with our own unique gifts and that in all our dealings we must look past the superficial to see our common humanity and the richness it brings to us all.

In 2009 Calvin lived in Dundalk in Ireland, working as a GAP student with the Simon Community, undertaking invaluable work with homeless Irish men. The role was challenging and confronting, but it has greatly raised the educational expectations of students in Timber Creek and other communities and highlights for boys the value of attending and successfully completing school. In 2011 Calvin commenced an Arts degree at Monash University in Melbourne having worked for the past year in the Timber Creek Community Health Centre. Sadly aspiring to finish school or go to University is not always the norm for Indigenous students but Calvin's story challenges and inspires boys at St Patrick's, 'if Calvin can do it, why not me'?



Staffing

The St Patrick's College Indigenous Education Programme is coordinated by the school's Director of Community Development, Mr Mark Waddington who has spent considerable time visiting and working with key representatives from student's home community. The overall staff structure is depicted below:



Summary of Staff Roles

Name	Key Roles
Mr Rick Balchin Indigenous Education Manager	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Oversee/manage Indigenous education programme at SPC - Liaison with Indigenous communities - Funding submissions for programmes, equipment and capital purposes
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Developing programmes that address the educational needs of Indigenous students - Development of specialist programmes for Indigenous students – NALP, Quicksmart - Manage the College's Indigenous Mentoring programme with Mars Snackfoods - Coordinate meetings with teachers of Indigenous students - In servicing of staff in relation to learning and teaching needs of students
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Mentoring support for Indigenous students - Liaising with teachers of Indigenous students - Coordinating Teacher Aides and Volunteer Tutors to work with Indigenous students - Liaising with Pastoral Support services within College - Liaising with external support services – Ballarat Aboriginal Co-Operative for example
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Mentoring support for Indigenous students - Development of vocational programmes for students – arts, life skills, recreation, first aid, health and wellbeing - Coordinate work experience programmes for Indigenous students

Vocational Pathway Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Identifying optimal vocational pathways for each student - Developing alternate reporting and qualification framework to enable students to experience success within SPC structures - Examining timetabling and teacher implications of offering/developing specialist programmes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Enhanced Learning Department 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Managing delivery of literacy and numeracy programmes that will increase literacy levels of students - Conducting regular testing of students to assess improvements in literacy outcomes - Providing professional development for staff

Programmes for Students

Staff members within the Indigenous Education Programme have developed a range of programmes, partnerships and networks to support students, both inside the classroom and also in relation to their social, emotional and physical growth whilst enrolled at the College.

These developments are in line with the aspirations of community who are generally seeking the following outcomes for their boys:

- The boys are safe, happy and healthy – in particular removed from an environment where drug and alcohol abuse are of great concern to elders;
- The boys' completion of secondary school – this does not necessarily equate to attaining a VCE;
- Boys have confidence to 'exist' within a white man's world – this implies that they are not being educated in 'Indigenous class groups'
- The boys are 'work ready' and have skills, education and experience that make them employable;
- The boys have sound numeracy and literacy skills to be able to access future study or work opportunities; and
- The boys have the skills, confidence and life experience to have a life away from community if this is what they desire.

The College is continuing to refine and expand its programmes to accommodate better the needs of students and to redress the significant imbalance in educational outcomes for Indigenous and Non-Indigenous Australians. Significant additions to the College's programmes since 2010 have been the introduction of the National Accelerated Literacy Programme (NALP) and the Quicksmart Numeracy programme. This is used on a needs basis dependant on students skill and competency.

Students do up to two hours per day intensive literacy and numeracy development sessions in small groups to increase skills and confidence in these critical learning areas. Testing of students entering St Patrick's College from regional and remote areas highlights that many are up to seven years behind non-Indigenous students in literacy and numeracy domains, making it very difficult for them to progress to vocational pathways such as tertiary study, TAFE studies, traineeships and apprenticeships.

NALP and Quicksmart are supported by a range of practical experiences which provide students with real life experiences which form the basis of work undertaken within the classroom environment. Examples of activities include:

- Reconciliation Experience with Rostrevor College students from Adelaide – May each year;
- Melbourne Experience;
- Vocational 'taster' programmes through the University of Ballarat;
- Music, Dance and Story Telling Workshops – students run classes with local primary school students;
- Life skills Programmes – health and wellbeing, medical screening, housing, domestic skills;
- Mentoring programme with representatives from Mars Snackfoods; and
- Vocational education and training subjects undertaken with the Tracy Group as part of a Memorandum of Understanding with the College.

Students are also actively engaged in the College's sporting programme with representation at all levels in Australian Rules football, basketball and athletics. Whilst a small number of students play at elite (1st XVIII) level, most of the boys simply play for health, fun and friendship.

Specific examples of programme components include:

Curricular Programmes

- Literacy and numeracy Testing and delivery of the National Accelerated Literacy Programme (NALP) and Quicksmart programme.
- Articulation of vocational pathways and accompanying certification for students to enable them to leave the College with a Year 12 equivalent education and recognised VET and other qualifications that will increase their future employment or study options in the future;
- Regular vocational interviews with students to assist them in identifying pathways and acquiring skills and experiences that will benefit them and their community;

- Opportunities to study certificated work related courses through local registered training organisation, the Tracy Group;
- Teacher aide support for students in classes – the main focus has been with Maths and English and subjects with a relatively high literacy component;
- Coordinated work experience opportunities for students;
- Coordination of a volunteer tutoring scheme has been established between the College and the Australian Catholic University to increase in-class and out of class support;
- Themed excursions for students, including visit to Art Gallery and meeting with Indigenous players from the Melbourne Football Club.

Out of Class – Pastoral and Social Programmes

- Relationships with key external agencies including the Ballarat & District Aboriginal Co-Operative, Brambuk, Framlingham, DEEWR and the Local Aboriginal Education Consultative Group (LAECG);
- Development of an Indigenous Mentoring programme with Mars Snackfoods executives;
- Weekend activities programme for students. Feedback from community was that boys are easily bored over the weekend and this increases feelings of homesickness and disconnection from schooling;
- Networks with other providers of Indigenous education such as Rostrevor College, Adelaide and schools within the Victorian Indigenous Education Network;
- Establishment of work simulation programme, providing students with an opportunity to undertake part time work;
- Shared social activities with Ballarat Grammar School where female siblings from Timber Creek are now studying; and
- Development of two way relationship with elders and other key stakeholders from community.



Future Needs

The College is committed to providing educational opportunities for Indigenous students to redress the inequities that exist in relation to educational access and outcomes for Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians. Clearly linked to this, these inequities are reflected in social, health and economic indicators and it has been widely accepted that education is the key to closing the gap in these confronting indicators.

To further develop the College's programme and enhance outcomes for Indigenous students, attention must be given to:

1. Construction of additional residential facilities for students. Population data highlights significant growth in population in Indigenous communities. Schools in the Northern Territory cannot keep up with demand for residential places and are hoping that 'Southern schools' will assist in catering for this demand.
2. The construction of an Indigenous Language and Cultural facility at the College – as noted we must have the same expectations for all students but it is also critical to recognise the cultural context of Indigenous students. A facility that recognises, celebrates and promotes Indigenous culture within the College is essential. The facility would also be used as a community centre for the teaching of language and culture to people from the wider community.
3. Scholarship support for Indigenous students – government support will provide for the basics but students require funds for access to technologies, programmes and experiences that will enhance their holistic education at St Patrick's;
4. Funding assistance to enable parents and community elders to regularly visit the College to assist with student transition and cultural awareness initiatives.
5. Work experience opportunities beyond secondary schooling – for example cadetships and traineeships for working in a range of industries. Students need an opportunity to commence their career and in so doing will become invaluable role models for members of their community.

Contact Details

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