

# BCE Media Release – BCE students connect to culture this World Harmony Week

With students from more than 36 cultural backgrounds speaking 32 different languages at home – Harmony Week (20 to 26 March) is a special celebration at St Francis Xavier Primary School Goodna.

Leading one of Brisbane Catholic Education's (BCE) most diverse school communities is Principal Kellie Jacobsen, whose heritage stems from the Juru Nation, from the Bowen area of North Queensland.

"I feel a deep spiritual connection with our land and water which I believe comes from my First Nations heritage," says Kellie, who joined the school as Principal at the start of 2023.

"At St Francis Xavier we have 5.8 percent of our student population identifying as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander.

"I know my students also feel deeply connected to their culture, heritage, and lands, which is why World Harmony Day is celebrated in our school community.

"We have a wonderfully diverse group of students whose parents have not been born in Australia but have come from different countries such as Samoa, Tonga, the Pacific Islands, Vietnam, India, Africa, Malaysia, Philippines, New Zealand and many more.

"World Harmony Day is a celebration that recognises the diversity and brings Australians together from all different backgrounds.

"The day is about inclusiveness, respect, and a sense of belonging for everyone. I am blessed to be able to lead this dynamic faith-filled multicultural school."

Kellie added sharing in culture is important to her students.

"For Harmony Week we will be hosting a Harmony Day assembly, where students have the opportunity to recognise their heritage by dressing in their traditional clothing and sharing in cultural dances and language," she says.

"We know culturally diverse schools lead to richer and more inclusive educational experiences for students.

"Our students are exposed to unique cultural perspectives and ways of thinking – one of the many benefits of diverse schools.

"When students from different cultural backgrounds come together, they can broaden everyone's understanding and knowledge of the world we live in.

“With the world becoming increasingly interconnected, it is important students develop cultural competence and an ability to work with people from diverse backgrounds.”

Kellie says because English is a second language to many of her parent community, it’s important she is active and visible within her school community.

“With diverse school communities and language barriers, we cannot assume parents know how to access a Parent Portal or a school’s Facebook page to access important communication,” she says.

“I’ve learned very quickly in this role it’s important to have lots of face-to-face contact with parents.

“I ensure I am visible at drop off and pick up times so my parent community knows they can approach me with their questions or concerns.

“We give our community opportunities to gather by hosting welcome barbecues, celebration of learning mornings, and assemblies that allows us to work in partnership with families.

“In my new role, I plan to start a breakfast club for our school which will provide our students with the energy they need to learn and create strong connections with community organisations in our local area.”

BCE’s Head of Education Marisa Dann says, “at BCE we pride ourselves on the number of diverse cultures and backgrounds represented across our 146 schools.”

“We have students born in 145 countries outside of Australia and 155 different languages are spoken across our schools,” she says.

“With some of our largest student populations born in New Zealand, England, India, Philippines, South Africa, Ireland, the United States of America, Iraq, and Vietnam to name a few.

“Some of the most common languages spoken by our students at home include Vietnamese, Punjabi, Arabic, Malayalam, Korean, Dinka, and Mandarin.

“We believe that this diversity enriches the educational experience for our students, fosters a greater understanding and respect for different perspectives and ways of life, and prepares our students to be global citizens who thrive in an increasingly interconnected world.”

For more information about Saint Francis Xavier School Goodna and to enrol [click here](#).

***Prep enrolments for 2024 are now open.***

**Harmony Week (20-26 March)** is a celebration recognising diversity, bringing Australians together from all diverse backgrounds. The day is about inclusiveness, respect, and a sense of belonging for everyone.

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