



STUDENTS AT CATHOLIC SCHOOLS BROKEN BAY AMONG FIRST IN WORLD TO PILOT AND SHARE VIRTUAL LEARNING EXPERIENCE

Students from Catholic Schools Broken Bay have been among the first in the world to explore an innovative immersive digital experience of St. Peter's Basilica in Rome, the spiritual heart of the Catholic Church.

Peter is Here: AI for Cultural Heritage, is the latest creation from Minecraft Education that inspires creative, inclusive learning, and interactive experiences.

It brings the cultural and spiritual heritage of St Peter's Basilica to students' computer screens in the classroom.

Catholic Schools Broken Bay is one of only two dioceses globally selected to pilot this groundbreaking educational initiative, which offers students a unique opportunity to engage with the history, tradition, and spiritual significance of the Basilica as a symbol of the universal Church and St. Peter's role as the first Pope.

Students at Our Lady of the Rosary Catholic Primary School, Waitara, were among the first to step into this virtual masterpiece during a live session with Microsoft's global Minecraft Education team, including Director of Learning Experiences Justin Edwards and Senior Program Manager Laylah Bulman. The interactive experience allowed students to explore the Basilica's breathtaking architecture, learn about its role in the Catholic faith, and reflect on the Church's rich history, while also providing feedback to the developers.

Following the pilot last month, students described the experience as "awesome" and a "cool way to see inside St Peter's and the Vatican". Their suggestions on content were adopted and *Peter is Here* is now available world-wide. It is also being rolled out to all CSBB primary students with supplementary teaching resources being developed.

Most Rev Anthony Randazzo, Bishop of Broken Bay, praised the initiative for creating new ways to connect young people with their faith.

"This remarkable experience invites our students to walk virtually in the footsteps of St. Peter, enriching their understanding of our Church's foundations and traditions. By engaging with this immersive platform, students are invited to encounter Christ in a new and meaningful way, inspiring them to reflect on their own journey of faith," Bishop Randazzo said.

Director of Schools, Danny Casey, said, "We are thrilled to be part of this project offering our students a dynamic way to explore their faith and deepen their understanding of the Church's history and their connection to the global Catholic community.

"This collaboration highlights Catholic Schools Broken Bay's commitment to innovative learning, ensuring students experience Religious Education in engaging and meaningful

ways. The success of the pilot program now brings this unique educational tool to Catholic schools worldwide.”

Principal of Our Lady of the Rosary, Trish Biok described the experience as transformative for her students saying, “*Peter is Here* provided our students with a highly detailed and immersive experience of St. Peter’s Basilica, keeping them fully engaged and making it an invaluable tool for integrating interactive and meaningful learning into the Religious Education Curriculum.”

National Catholic Education Commission Executive Director, Jacinta Collins, also welcomed the unique collaboration between the Catholic Church, CSBB, Minecraft Education and Microsoft.

“By integrating learning with Minecraft, a platform already popular among students, this initiative meets them where they are – making Church history accessible, relevant, and engaging,” Collins said.

In thanking all those who helped develop and progress *Peter is Here*, the Secretary General of the Fratelli tutti Foundation at the Vatican, Fr Francesco Occhetta, said the new resource is “fully in line with the spirit of the Jubilee to allow everybody, even those who cannot physically be in Rome, to come closer to the beauty, history, and spirituality of St. Peter’s Basilica”.

ENDS

For information regarding this release contact:

Katrina Lee 0403 950 652

Email: Katrina.Lee@bbcatholic.org.au

General Information

At Catholic Schools Broken Bay, our vision is to provide ‘authentic, professional Catholic education, delivered with care and compassion’. The vision is underpinned by our exciting and robust Towards 2025 Strategy which places students at the centre of everything we do, and which brings schools and Parishes together to work as one. The Towards 2025 Strategy commits our system of schools to being at least as good as the very best, to maximise the learning growth of every student, and to inspire hearts and minds to know Christ and love learning. Covering an expansive geographical area which includes the Central Coast and Sydney’s Northern Beaches and North Shore, Catholic Schools Broken Bay is a system serving 45 Catholic Schools with over 18,000 students from Kindergarten to Year 12.

Further information on Towards 2025 is available at the CSBB website Our Strategy - Towards 2025 - Catholic Schools (csbb.catholic.edu.au)