

This World Teachers' Day BCE celebrates a growing First Nations teacher workforce

This World Teachers' Day (30 October), Brisbane Catholic Education (BCE) is celebrating the growing number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander educators working in its schools.

From Xavier Catholic College, Hervey Bay to St Flannan's School, Zillmere, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander teachers are choosing a [career at BCE](#).

Supported through BCE scholarships, mentoring programs, and leadership opportunities, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander educators are building rewarding careers across BCE's 146 schools, enriching learning, and strengthening school communities.

At Xavier Catholic College, a strong First Nations workforce is helping students see what is possible. The College currently has seven Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander teachers, including a Guidance Counsellor and a Support Teacher.

Head of Campus Ursula Witham-Young said with 122 Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander students, representation played an important role in helping students feel supported and connected.

"Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander educators bring cultural knowledge, lived experience and professional expertise that enrich learning for all students," she said.

"It is important for our students to have strong, positive role models so they know we see them, we support them, and we want the greatest success for them."

Guidance Counsellor and Aboriginal woman Ms Deb Farrell of Xavier Catholic College, along with fellow Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander colleagues and teachers Ms Katelyn Bell, Mr Micheal O'Shea, Mr Robert Young, and Ms Laurel Ball have helped establish Xavier's 'Empowering our First Nations Young People for Life Beyond School' mentoring program.

"In partnership with BCE, the program helps Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students build confidence, strengthen cultural pride, and explore future pathways including employment, apprenticeships, further training, university, and community leadership," Ursula Witham-Young said.

"The program reflects the important role Aboriginal and Torres Strait educators play not only in classrooms, but also in creating opportunities that help young people thrive beyond school."

St Flannan's School Principal Cheryl Bell said her school also has a growing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander workforce.

"Our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander educators bring a wealth of knowledge, experience, and cultural leadership to our school," she said.

The school continues to support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff to pursue careers in education, including through pathways into teaching, [read more here](#).

Cheryl also highlighted the contribution of Year 2 teacher Kaitlyn Spiteri, a Gamilaroi woman.

"This year Kaitlyn worked with our students on the painting called, 'Together' for our school, drawing on culture, story, and connection to reflect the identity of the St Flannan's community," she said.

Following the new BCE Indigenous Cultural Intellectual Property rights process, the artwork will be turned into digital reproductions on story poles which will welcome the St Flannan's community into their bush tucker garden.

Reconciliation is everyone's responsibility

BCE Senior Manager, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Dr Mayrah Dreise said while Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander educators play an important role in shaping culturally responsive learning environments, reconciliation cannot be left to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff alone.

"The strongest outcome for our students occurs when entire school communities walk together in this journey," she said.

"There can be an expectation that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff will naturally lead every cultural conversation, initiative, or learning opportunity.

"While many are passionate about this work, creating culturally safe, and inclusive schools is a shared responsibility."

At Trinity College, Beenleigh, that shared responsibility is reflected in the work of Library Coordinator and Cultural Coordinator Kirby Beckett.

Trinity College Principal Allison Elcoate said Kirby has spent the past two years helping strengthen cultural understanding and creating opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students and staff, including cultural immersion days and supporting students in their chosen career pathways.

"One of Kirby's most significant contributions has been leading a comprehensive review and modernisation of Trinity College's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander library resources," she said.

"Over the past two years, Kirby has reviewed hundreds of library resources to ensure students and staff have access to contemporary, culturally appropriate, and relevant materials.

"Kirby has also introduced new resources by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander authors, academics, and storytellers."

Allison adds that beyond the library Kirby has worked closely with teaching staff to strengthen cultural capability across the College.

"Kirby has supported teacher professional learning, developed curriculum resources, and created a central database of teaching materials, community contacts, language resources,

and culturally responsive lesson plans, that staff can confidently access and use in their classrooms," she said.

"This work has made it easier for teachers across all learning areas to embed Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives in meaningful ways."

As the mother of four Wakka Wakka, Gooreng, and Ugurapul children, Kirby said cultural safety is a priority.

"It is important to me that our students can look around the school and see themselves reflected in their learning, their environment, and the opportunities available to them," she said.

"I've always advocated passionately for my own children," Kirby said.

"What's another 40 young people?"

"All students deserve to feel a sense of belonging, pride, and opportunity at school."

An education to believe in starts with you

BCE continues to invest in initiatives that support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander educators throughout every stage of their career journey.

From scholarship pathways for aspiring teachers, to mentoring and leadership opportunities for existing staff, BCE's goal is to build a sustainable workforce that reflects and serves the communities in which schools operate.

BCE offers many teaching scholarships with the following benefits:

- financial support for tuition fees,
- connection to a supportive and inclusive community,
- guidance and support navigating your educational and career paths, and so much more!

For more information about BCE's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander teaching scholarships or to submit an expression of interest click [here](#).

About Queensland World Teachers' Day

Queensland World Teachers' Day is a wonderful opportunity to recognise and applaud our teachers for the important role they play in our communities and for the positive impact they have on the lives of students. This year's Queensland theme is **teachers change lives**.

This year's BCE theme is a message directly from our students '**Thank you for believing in us,**' and throughout October, our school communities are invited to share messages of gratitude.

If you would like to thank a staff member at a BCE school, share your appreciation on your school's Gratitude Wall, take a photo and tag BCE on social media.

BCE media release



Thank a BCE staff member via your school's Gratitude Wall or share a message via our BCEnewsroom using **#ThanksBCESTaff** and **#WTDQLD**