

Guidelines for Koorie Education Workers

IN VICTORIAN CATHOLIC SCHOOLS

2019–2022

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The term 'Aboriginal' is used in this document to refer to both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. The terms 'Koorie' and 'Indigenous' are retained in the names of programs and initiatives and, unless noted otherwise, are inclusive of both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

Introduction

The Catholic Education Commission of Victoria Ltd (CECV) relies on the skills, knowledge and capabilities of all involved in education and policy-making in diocesan offices and schools to implement programs and policies that ensure ongoing successful educational outcomes for Aboriginal students.

One of the key strategies developed by the CECV to support improved educational outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students is the provision of funding to employ Koorie Education Workers (KEWs) in schools with an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander student enrolment.

KEWs are considered to be a vital link in the development of a strong partnership between the school, family and community. KEWs do not have a specific award; therefore, they are employed under the classification of 'Education Support' in the *Victorian Catholic Education Multi-Enterprise Agreement 2018*.

Background

The *National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Strategy 2015* (Education Strategy) provides guidance for the educational journeys and employment pathways of all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people in Catholic schools in Victoria.

The Education Strategy outlines actions at national, systemic and local levels across seven priority areas, including:

1. leadership, quality teaching and workforce development
2. culture and identity
3. partnerships
4. attendance
5. transition points including pathways to post-school options
6. school and child readiness
7. literacy and numeracy.

Placement of KEWs

In recognising the vision of the Education Strategy, the most important determining factors in the placement of KEWs in Catholic schools will be:

- high student enrolments
- high educational and cultural needs of smaller numbers of students
- available funding.

The placement of KEWs in Catholic schools and their ongoing employment will be of great assistance and value by:

- providing positive role models for Aboriginal students
- nurturing cultural identity
- improving awareness of the diversity of Aboriginal cultures, languages and pedagogies
- strengthening family and community connections
- providing student support – individual and group mentoring
- supporting teachers' cultural understanding regarding students and curriculum.

It is recommended that schools conduct regular policy and program reviews to inform the appropriate placement of KEWs to ensure that the needs of all Aboriginal students, and those of school communities, are addressed.

Appointment of KEWs

The rationale for appointing KEWs in Catholic schools in Victoria is to provide educational and cultural support to Aboriginal students.

The applicant must provide confirmation of Aboriginality, as defined by the Department of Aboriginal Affairs (see www.alrc.gov.au/publications/36-kinship-and-identity/legal-definitions-aboriginality).

An Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander:

- is a person of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander descent
- identifies as an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander
- is accepted as such by the community in which he [or she] lives.

The CECV was granted an exemption from the provisions of the *Equal Opportunity Act 2010* (Vic.) by the Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal (VCAT) on 23 July 2012. VCAT considered this conduct to be a 'special measure' within the meaning of the Act and therefore not discriminatory. Consequently, all employment advertisements must include the exemption number: A103/2012.

The applicant should meet the following key selection criteria by demonstrating:

- knowledge and understanding of the local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community and issues related to these cultures in Australian society
- the ability to effectively communicate with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, their students, families and carers
- the ability to effectively communicate with school principals, leadership teams and staff
- knowledge of and commitment to improving learning outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students
- knowledge of and commitment to child safety, including the provision of a child safe environment.

Each interview panel must include a recognised and respected Aboriginal person, Elder or representative of a local Aboriginal community group, for example:

- Aboriginal co-operatives
- education groups
- Traditional Owner groups
- Local Aboriginal Networks (LANs).

Roles and Responsibilities of KEWs

The role involves four key areas of responsibility:

- 1.** Provision of assistance and support to Aboriginal students to achieve improved educational outcomes by:
 - assisting students with classroom activities
 - supporting teachers to understand the cultural protocol regarding the educational, health and wellbeing needs of Aboriginal students in their school
 - working with small groups and individual students
 - acting as a cultural support person, mentor or advocate.
- 2.** Participation in school activities to assist in creating a culturally inclusive environment by:
 - engaging with appropriate local Aboriginal communities
 - assisting in the delivery of culturally inclusive curriculum
 - assisting with the professional learning of teachers
 - attending staff meetings if required
 - organising cultural days with school support
 - assisting with camps, excursions, etc. where cultural support is needed.
- 3.** Encouragement of Aboriginal communities to participate in school education by:
 - participating in and attending local Aboriginal education committees where applicable: Traditional Owner groups, Elders groups, National Aborigines and Islanders Day Observance Committee (NAIDOC), LANs, Local Aboriginal Education Consultative Groups (LAECGs) and other committees formed with a focus on student justice, health, pathways or reconciliation etc.
 - assisting with the engagement of local community in school activities
 - attending parent support meetings.
- 4.** Participation in school activities to assist in creating a child safe environment by:
 - providing students with a child safe environment
 - being familiar and complying with the school's child safe policy and code of conduct, and any other policies or procedures relating to child safety.

Note that KEWs may be required to supervise students while performing normal duties in line with child safety standards.

Support provision for KEWs

Principals support KEWs in their roles by providing:

- induction processes, including familiarity with the school's child safe policy and code of conduct
- information to staff about the role of KEWs
- cultural, pastoral and educational support
- guidance in all activities that involve Aboriginal students and their families/communities
- development of curriculum with staff to integrate Aboriginal cultures and perspectives
- regular agreed meeting times to review progress
- opportunities for consultation on Aboriginal education matters
- opportunities for planning Aboriginal cultural events, such as NAIDOC Week
- professional learning
- effective communication
- mentorship
- appropriate resources and equipment to support cultural and professional activities.

The diocesan Education Officers also have a responsibility to provide ongoing support and advice to both school communities and KEWs in the following ways:

- CECV Koorie Education Worker seminars
- diocesan professional learning
- access to credentialed courses
- networking
- mentoring
- resources, updates and pathways to learning
- pastoral care.

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