

Indigenous Education Statement

Preamble

The Lutheran Church of Australia (LCA) has had a long history of involvement in Indigenous education. From 1839, when the first Lutheran missionaries taught Indigenous children in their own Kurna language on the banks of the River Torrens in South Australia, and provided lessons for the Indigenous children at the Zion's Hill Lutheran mission in Queensland, through to today's schools where a significant number of Indigenous children attend Lutheran schools across the nation, Indigenous education has been an important feature of Lutheran Education Australia (LEA). In partnership with their families, LEA has maintained a strong commitment to providing high quality Christian education to Indigenous students.

The unique nature of this relationship has created fertile ground for supporting students in their development. Trust and shared values mean that it is possible to achieve a commitment to educational and spiritual growth through rich cultural experiences. The combination of Lutheran and Indigenous values and beliefs creates a positive context for nurturing new opportunities for Indigenous students and their families.

Principles

The following statements are underlying principles for this document:

- Indigenous students need to feel safe in their learning environment and know themselves to be loved children of God.
- Lutheran schools value and respect Indigenous people as Indigenous custodians and acknowledge their contributions to Australia's heritage - past, present and future.
- An Indigenous Australian is a person of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander descent who identifies as an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander and is accepted as such by the Indigenous community in which he/she lives.

Priorities

Celebrating Indigenous culture and spirit has been a significant aspect of LCA activity for many generations. Lutheran schools need to build on this tradition, by strengthening their engagement with Indigenous families and communities. This engagement can occur through focussing on being places of welcome and nurture for Indigenous students, as well as building a school community awareness of Indigenous culture, language and history.

Such activities require the prioritisation of resources to create or strengthen Indigenous cultural awareness programs and the integration of Indigenous perspectives across the curriculum by way of implementing the National Curriculum in each school.

LEA shares the Australian Government's commitment to improving educational outcomes for Indigenous students by means of the six key priorities:

- Readiness for school
- Engagement and connection
- Attendance and retention
- Literacy and numeracy
- Leadership, quality teaching and workforce development
- Pathways to meaningful post-school options

Responsibilities

Lutheran school systems have initiated a structure of support for Indigenous education through the creation of broad, systemic strategic plans and the employment of system-based Indigenous education facilitators whose work across schools is funded by the Government. These initiatives have been crucial in ensuring the emphasis on Indigenous education is a systemic priority across all Lutheran schools. Schools have highly visible celebrations of Indigenous culture throughout their facilities and grounds and work towards integrating Indigenous perspectives across the curriculum as a matter of priority.

LEA will continue to work with Lutheran systems in ensuring a strategic focus on Indigenous education, which includes:

- the responsibility to lessen the gap in achievement for Indigenous students;
- informing all students of Indigenous history;
- promoting employment of Indigenous Australians in schools.

LEA acknowledges the progress made so far and will continue to encourage schools to play a vital role in strengthening programs and procedures which promote the inclusion of Indigenous perspectives across the curriculum and achieve more equitable learning outcomes for Indigenous students.