



Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Policy

Title: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Policy
Approved by: Morling College Board
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Introduction

Morling College acknowledges the Darug people as the traditional owners of the land on which MC is situated.

This policy is based on the recognition of the unique place of Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders as indigenous peoples in the multi-ethnic, multicultural context of today's Australian society. Unlike other ethnic and cultural groups, they are not part of modern Australia by their own free choice. They are part of this society as a result of conquest and subjugation. We recognise that this historical reality is a cause of many of the unique problems faced by the indigenous peoples of Australia today.

We also recognise that indigenous communal life and identity was further disrupted by the exclusion of indigenous peoples for more than a century from the democratic decision making processes of Australian society during which time they were subjected to official policies that, although often well intentioned, were nevertheless unjust and oppressive in their effect. We further recognise that Christian institutions were, at times, well-meaning agents in the implementation of these policies.

We also recognise that, primarily because of differences in historical circumstances, there is wide diversity among the Aboriginal communities. We recognise that Torres Strait Islanders have an identity that has similarities to and yet is distinct from that of the Aboriginal communities.

In the light of these historical realities, we recognise that we have a responsibility to take measures to promote reconciliation between indigenous communities and other Australians through the programs we offer.

Cultural diversity and course design

As a Christian institution we are committed to viewing the whole of human life from a biblically informed perspective, consequently MC encourages all its students to engage in a critical evaluation of the worldview beliefs that are embedded in all cultures, directing this critique particularly to the culture that shapes the patterns of their own lives. We regard all cultures, as part of God's creation, as embodying valuable features and all cultures, as part of fallen human life, as embodying significant weaknesses.

We do not, therefore, attribute any inherent superiority to the western culture that dominates modern Australian society. Students from communities shaped by this culture are expected to subject it to a penetrating critique. Similarly students from indigenous communities are expected to critique their cultural heritage, including the influences of western culture that have in many cases become part of that heritage. This cultural critique is fundamental to the critical thinking that is a basic objective of MC's programs.

Meeting the needs of indigenous students

We see this challenge as one of preparing members of indigenous communities to take their place as leaders and members of Australian society without compromising their distinctive communal identity. We aim that indigenous students will be able to graduate from any of our courses with an award that will both allow them to take their place with pride as the equal of any of their colleagues in the contemporary academic life of Australia without having in any way compromised their indigenous identity in achieving this.

Promoting understanding and reconciliation

As well as ensuring that our programs meet the needs of indigenous communities, we are committed to ensuring that they promote an understanding of these communities that will aid the process of reconciliation among other students. We also aim, through the process of cultural exchange of understanding, to sharpen our students' critique of their own worldview and culture. It is also our desire to encourage students from indigenous communities to share with other students, insights and understandings that are developed within their own unique historical, social and cultural context.