Improving schooling and outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander learners in South Australian Catholic Schools and Centres

A narrative review of the literature

Samantha Schulz, Anne Morrison, Faye Rosas Blanch, Joanne Buckskin and Steve Corrie

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Cover design: Artwork produced for CESA by Artist Nikki Carabetta-Baugh in 2023, a Yamatji woman from WA and Malak-Malak woman from the NT, who has lived in South Australia for 26 years. Nikki is an active member of the Aboriginal community in Adelaide. Nikki's art style reflects both her traditional upbringing and modern urbanisation.

The story of the artwork: "In this painting I have tried to depict the connections made between faith and education, city and country and first Nations people and Catholic Education SA, as well as our two faiths. Traditionally white represents the 'Dreaming' including our Creator ancestors and spirituality, our connection to culture and 'Country'; it's what connects us as First Nations peoples across this vast country. The ochre-coloured circles represent the thirty Aboriginal nations across South Australia and are varied in size as some communities are smaller/larger than others. They are joined by white dots surrounded by blue and green dots; the white connects us spiritually and the blue/green represents the life-giving waters and vegetation spotted across our barren landscape. The circles spiral out from a large central circle indicative of the CESA Office in Adelaide, stretching out to all of South Australia, including regional and remote schools. I have superimposed the CESA logo over the circles and melded the symbol with one of our most recognisable Dreaming stories, the Rainbow Serpent, a universal story. This is to show the connection between our religions and our mutual respect for one another's cultures and is symbolic of the connection being made by CESA who want to develop better ties with our communities. I have used pastel colours in the serpent/logo symbol as they represent children, education and nurturing which is what CESA is aiming to do by achieving better outcomes for Indigenous students across South Australia."

Note: A black background is used intentionally on the cover to symbolically reverse the norm of a white background, and in so doing, to stimulate reflection and discussion.

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Acknowledgements

This work has been carried out on the traditional Country of the Kaurna people of the Adelaide Plains. We pay our respects to Kaurna Elders past and present, recognising and respecting their cultural heritage, beliefs, and relationship with Country. We acknowledge Country in expansive terms including landforms, waters, air, trees, rocks, plants, animals, foods, medicines, minerals, special places, and stories.[1] We acknowledge that Country is of continuing importance to Kaurna people, who have custodial, community and spiritual responsibilities to care for and protect Country. We also extend our respects to other Aboriginal Language Groups and First Nations, recognising that Catholic Education South Australia's (CESA) footprint stretches from Bunganditj/Boandic Country in the state's southeast (Mt Gambier), Kokatha Country in the far mid north (Roxby Downs), Barngarla Country in the west (Port Lincoln), and Naralte Country in the east (Renmark).

The authors thank:

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[1] Adapted from Adelaide City Council:
https://www.cityofadelaide.com.au/community/reconciliation/welcome-and-acknowledgement-of-country/
and Victoria University: https://www.vu.edu.au/about-vu/university-profile/moondani-balluk-indigenous-academic-unit/acknowledging-country/acknowledgement-of-country.

Abbreviations and acronyms

AC	Australian Curriculum
ACARA	Australian Curriculum and Reporting Authority
AITSL	Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership
APST	Australian Professional Standards for Teachers
CEO	Catholic Education Office
CESA	Catholic Education South Australia
CBL	Creative and Body-Based Learning
CCP	Cross-Curriculum Priority
CRP	Culturally Responsive Pedagogy
CRSL	Culturally Responsive School Leadership
LANTITE	Literacy and Numeracy Test for Initial Teacher Education
NAIDOC	National Aborigines and Islanders Day Observance Committee
NAPLAN	National Assessment Programme – Literacy and Numeracy
NHMRC	National Health and Medical Research Council
OBL	Object Based Learning
PL	Professional Learning
SAE	Standard Australian English
UNDRIP	United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples

Glossary of key terms/concepts

Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander People(s)	We use the terms Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander, Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander (recognising that an individual may belong to both groups), Aboriginal, Indigenous, and First Nations somewhat interchangeably, though problematically. These terms are located within contested power relations and tend to "homogenise the multiculturalism and multilingualism of Aboriginal peoples" (Carey, 2008, p. 8). Carey asserts the possibility of resisting the colonising impulse associated with such terms by investing them with new meanings that subvert white supremacy. In the context of these relations, we use the abovementioned collective terms whilst recognising the processes of raced domination inherent in them and, where possible, use specific names; for instance, Kaurna, Peramangk, Bindjali.
Aboriginality	Similar to whiteness, which denotes racialised structural relations within which 'white' people are differentially if collectively positioned, Aboriginality is used here, not to homogenise First Nations multiculturalism and multilingualism but to signal the collective positionality of First Nations peoples – at once sovereign whilst colonised. It must be recognised that the idea of 'Aboriginality' did not exist in 1788 "but was invented by the invaders" (Hollinsworth, 1992, p. 138). Aboriginality as such is contested, evolving, and produced through dynamic interactions between Aboriginal and White societies – what Hollinsworth, Raciti and Carter (2021) call contested Aboriginalities, or the ways in which "Indigenous Australian identities are enmeshed in racializing discourses that often occlude diversity, hybridity, and intersectionality" (p. 112). Hollinsworth (1992) notes that discourses of Aboriginality within Australia have since constellated around ideas including 'Aboriginality as descent' (the idea that 'authentic' Aboriginal identity is linked to bloodline, underpinned by erroneous beliefs in the genetic inferiority of Aboriginal peoples); 'Aboriginality as cultural continuity' (the notion of a universalistic Aboriginal commonality deriving from shared cultural heritage, with the absence of perceived cultural practices or attributes leading to inaccurate claims of 'lost culture'); and 'Aboriginality as resistance' (the emergent and ongoing performance and creation of Aboriginal identit(ies) through, among other dynamics, resistance to white authority, political struggle and collective solidarity). Whilst Aboriginality when used as a homogenising term is generally problematic, there also exists a long history of common Aboriginal identity serving as means of advancing solidarity and resistance – prior to invasion in 1788, such a collective concept was neither conceivable nor necessary. Aboriginality in this document is a broad identity marker that is used cautiously and derived from a resistance standpoint, that most commonly refers to the multiple and dynamic cultures that constitute First Nations peoples, recognising that individual and group identification practices vary.
Aboriginal axiology, ontology, and epistemology	Axiology refers to values, ethics, protocols, and guidelines. Within the context of research as well as education with Aboriginal peoples, an appropriate axiological approach may include the proper incorporation of values and practices of reciprocity, respect, equality, responsibility, survival and protection, spirit, and integrity. Ontology refers to ways of being (as well as the

nature of being) and epistemology refers to the nature of knowledge (as well as being entangled in power relations concerning whose knowledge counts). When applied to schooling, axiology, ontology, and epistemology raise questions concerning whose values and ethics, ways of being, and knowledges are valorised, included and practiced (Henry & Foley, 2018; Dudgeon, et al., 2020). To raise questions pertaining to axiology, ontology, and epistemology in any given setting is to question how power relations are operating and in whose favour they operate.

Capitalising and emphasising key terms	White/'white' and Black/Blak are dynamic terms whose meanings evolve with time and context. White (capitalised) and 'white' are sometimes used to denote the paramount group in a race structured society to whom privileges flow owing to their structural location – 'white' and White, then, are racial categories. Inverted commas are applied to highlight the socially and politically constructed nature of the subject position 'white' which, distinct from skin colour, is a racial category that is particularised through entwinement with race, class, gender, sexuality, ability, location, and other social indicators – in other words, a person is not only raced but classed and gendered (etc.). These criteria account for the complexity of cultural identity. Social indicators such as race and class constitute identity *in relation to* others, and result in privileges being distributed unevenly to 'white' people. Given its historical constitution, 'white' is also often used to signify Australians of Anglo, or more explicitly, British heritage. When capitalised, White is sometimes used to separate institutionalised systems of power from personal, individual identity (i.e. a 'white' person working within a White system). Not dissimilarly, Black/Blak are used to indicate racial categories and are capitalised "in recognition of the historical racial injustices against Black people and as a way to 'right a historical wrong'" (Diversity Council, 2022, p. 9). Blak is often used in Australia to differentiate "Blak experience from the racialised experiences of non-Indigenous communities of colour" as well as to signal an "actively engaged, critical-political conscience" (Latimore, 2021, p. 19).

We use White and Black (capitalised) to denaturalise and challenge structural relations that reproduce a racialised status quo; for example, White education system or White curriculum are terms that illuminate racialised aspects of schooling that are typically normalised. We use 'white' to describe people of European ancestry who by virtue of origin are racially (albeit unevenly) privileged, whether this is recognised by 'white' individuals themselves. For readability, we generally do not use single quotation marks throughout. |
| Country | Burgess, Thorpe, Egan and Harwood (2022) explain Country as "an Aboriginal English (as different from Standard Australian English) term that describes land as a living entity, the essence of Aboriginality and includes relational connection to people, culture, spirituality, history, environment, and ecologies of the non-human world" (p. 160). Country describes the far-reaching relationality that lives within Country; "Country is agentic and encompasses everything from ants, memories, humans, fire, tides and research. Country sits at the heart of coming to know and understand relationality as it is the web that connects |

humans to a system of Lore/Law and knowledge that can never be human-centric" (Tynan, 2021, p. 597).

Decolonisation and Indigenisation	Decolonisation and Indigenisation are contested terms. Drawing from the work of Stein et al. (2021), we recognise Indigenisation as a process of centring and normalising "Indigenous knowledge systems and making them evident to transform spaces, places, and hearts" (p. 6). This process works hand in glove with decolonisation as the complex act of questioning, deconstructing, destabilising, resisting, and refusing ongoing colonial structures that sustain racial hierarchy.
Race and racism(s)	For a clean reading experience, we relinquish the habitual use of inverted commas though recognise 'race' as a social and political construction that is reproduced through everyday gestures, beliefs, and language opposed to biological fact. As a discursive production (i.e., repeated act of language as well as embodied performances or gestures), race is collectively reproduced through everyday interactions that bear material effects. Race functions as a technology for the management of human difference and is the cornerstone of a hierarchical political system that actively 'produces' differences (Lentin, 2020). As a dominant belief system, race was crucial to colonisation of the land that came to be known as Australia and justified discriminatory practices, including invasion; moreover, race remains fundamental to settler colonialism. Lentin (2020) says, the central ruse of race is that everything has a fixed or natural place, thus 'race' naturalises the very inequalities that it produces.
	Racism denotes a dynamic set of practices and beliefs rooted in race thinking, which fundamentally reproduce racial hierarchy. Racism can be described as prejudice backed by power (Diversity Council Australia, 2022). Racism inheres in words, attitudes, systems, frameworks, norms and policies, with individuals and systems co-active in its re-creation. Racism can be overt or covert, it evolves with social contexts, and may include interpersonal, internalised, institutional or cultural expressions, including the dominant racial group's everyday acceptance of a racialised status quo. An insidious form of contemporary Australian racism is 'not racism' (Lentin, 2020): the belief that racism does not exist or must be overt and intentional to be racist. 'Not racism' is often accompanied by sanitising statements – i.e., *it's just a joke* – which function like gaslighting to deny or minimise racism, or to distance the speaker from association with racism. Discursive practices of 'distancing, deflection and denial' are fundamental to the reproduction of 'not racism' (Lentin, 2020). Another common contemporary expression is 'reverse racism': the idea that white people can be racially disenfranchised or are the victims of racial equity policies designed to support minority groups. While racial prejudice can be directed at white people, this is not racism because it is not backed by systemic power (Diversity Council, 2022, p. 23). Put simply, racism can be interpersonal and structural, overt and covert, intentional and unintentional. Racism is consistent and stable in its impulse to reproduce racial hierarchy, yet its expressions can be highly changeable given that racism changes and is renewed with the social relations that produce it.

We use the term racism to denote these complex, dynamic, interpersonal as well as structural/systemic characteristics, and at times use *racisms* to recognise the myriad forms that racism can take. Other covert racisms covered in the review, which typically surface within schools, include colour or race blindness, deficit thinking, curricula exclusion, and white fragility.

Racism: Anti-racism and non-racism	The Diversity Council Australia (2022) delineates between anti-racism as active and socio-politically informed, and non-racism as passive. When adopting a non-racist standpoint, individuals or organisations may recognise that racism exists and is wrong but will relinquish or avoid responsibility for doing anything about it. Non-racism can also manifest in a well-meaning but limited 'colour-blind' perspective characterised by a benevolent impulse to 'treat everyone the same' (Schulz et al., 2023). Colour-blind standpoints fail to address the grounds of racial inequality and can advance assumptions of a pre-established cultural equality – i.e., the idea that we are all 'structurally' the same, that social life is racially neutral, or that we all begin from the same starting point in life. Denial of racial inequality is a problematic and insidious form of racism that can be experienced as 'psychological gaslighting' (Tobias & Joseph, 2020). Non-racism can inhere in beliefs that racism is limited to a 'few bad apples' (Ahmed, 2012), and is also typically expressed by individuals or organisations who deny the power they have to address racism. In contrast, anti-racist standpoints acknowledge racism in its multiple forms and are characterised by accountability and reflexivity: i.e., critical self-reflection on the roles that we as individuals, organisations and groups play in reproducing racism, even if unintentionally, as well as the power that we have to do something about it, even on a small scale.
Racial literacy	Deriving from the work of Guinier (2004), and Twine (2004), racial literacy is a set of discursive tools for identifying and talking about racism whilst developing collective drive for anti-racist action (Laughter et al., 2022). Scholars accentuate 'literacy' to mark a reading practice that can be learned (Twine & Steinbugler, 2006), which is honed by historical analyses of contemporary manifestations of racism (Oto et al., 2022), especially real-life examples that prioritise the perspectives of non-white people (Lentin, 2020). Racial literacy is context specific, thus, to be racially literate in Australia is to recognise that all forms of contemporary Australian racism remain rooted in colonisation and the denial of Indigenous sovereignty (Brown et al., 2021). Racial literacy is underpinned by an understanding of 'literacy' as a social practice that enables individuals and groups to negotiate life and live together, rather than viewing literacy as a purely decontextualised skill that is neutral, apolitical, individualistic, or competitive and amenable to ranking. Put simply, racial literacy is about learning to live together well within contexts of increasing social diversity – oftentimes, schools as convergence points for multiple communities, are society's clearest expressions of 'superdiversity'.
Self-determination	Conceptually and in practice, self-determination has many meanings. In Australia, discourses of self-determination have acted as a strategy of governance and attempt to reconcile Black and white Australia. Like

extermination, Christianisation and assimilation, self-determination has functioned as a strategy and attempt "to deal with the difference that Aboriginal people and their cultural practices present to the project of white Australian nationalism" (Wadham, 2013, p. 38). Conservative standpoints see self-determination in terms of what Aboriginal people need to do to become 'self-determining'. Self-determination of a more reflexive kind contributes to a process of disintegrating the logic of colonialism by focussing on what the 'white' Self needs to do to support decolonisation. This standpoint refuses to see Indigenous self-determination as an Indigenous 'problem', goal or responsibility but acknowledges whiteness processes and the problems they generate for everyone.

Settler colonialism	In this review we use 'colonisation' to designate a *time period* when governing power over a group of people is originally asserted (i.e. from 1788). We use the terms 'colonialism/coloniality' to describe *racialised logics* of oppression, and 'settler colonialism' to denote *an enduring system* of social and material relations, policies and practices built on white, male, heteronormative supremacy, as well as an orientation to subjectivity grounded in 'possessive individualism' (Stein et al., 2020). Settler colonial societies like Australia are those in which the colonisers never leave.
Sovereignty	Under current international law, sovereignty is the power, authority and jurisdiction over a people and territory. Sovereignty can also be understood as a "discourse in which power relationships are conceptualized, theorized and activated according to historical legacies as well as current landscapes of power" (Nicol as cited in Bauder & Mueller, 2021, p. 2). In this sense, sovereignty is not fundamentally natural but a political construct. Inherent in Australia's Westphalian use of sovereignty are Eurocentric property-owning connotations that position humans in relation to land as territory – norms that are reproduced through dominant discourses of Australian schooling and socio-political life. Australia as a nation-state claims sovereignty, as vested in the Crown in Parliament, and this is recognised internationally by other sovereign nation-states. However, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples did not cede power or relinquish sovereignty. Thus, Westphalian sovereignty functions as a tool of Indigenous dispossession and a treaty is required to negotiate a solution to ongoing Indigenous oppression. Sovereignty is therefore contested both practically and conceptually in Australia. In contrast to Westphalian sovereignty, "Indigenous sovereignty describes a more relational form of self-determination" (Bauder & Mueller, 2021, p. 2). It is not a purely "legal source of political authority, but rather a social and cultural way of defining community" (p. 10). In addition, Indigenous sovereignty is not a fixed concept but evolves in relation to ongoing political struggles. Broadly speaking, Indigenous sovereignty is ontological and relational in that it does not vest power in a single entity or in people over land, but recognises relationships between people and land including the rights and responsibilities of Indigenous peoples to look after and fulfil their cultural obligations to Country. In terms of the connections between sovereignty and education, both the Coolangatta Statement on Indigenous Peoples' Rights in Education (Morgan et al., 2006) and the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UN

General Assembly, 2007), place emphasis on the sovereign rights of Indigenous peoples to an appropriate, empowering, and equitable education. Although contested, there is thus a general sense that the sovereignty of Indigenous peoples can and should be realised *through* education including through school reform, but also in terms of "more far-reaching systemic change" (Bishop as cited in Vass & Hogarth, 2022, p. 11).

Whiteness	Whiteness transcends skin colour and refers to a hierarchical social system in which people are differentially positioned according to 'race' as a mode of classification – a system which (unevenly) privileges those marked 'white'. Conceptually, whiteness signals the cumulative effects of a race structured society in which the material and psychological benefits of race are channelled to 'white' people (albeit that privileges are experienced differently owing to the intersections between race, class, gender, and other social markers). For Lucashenko (2020), whiteness is a system of imposed normality; "it defines what's seen as normal" and in creating boundaries between ab/normal, constitutes the fundamental grounds of inequality in Australia which tend to be "invisible to white people" (p. 2), hence the importance of racial literacy.

Preface

This narrative literature review has been produced for Catholic Education South Australia (CESA) as part of a larger research-consultancy entitled *Re-imagining Catholic Education for First Nations Sovereignty* (University of Adelaide HREC Approval H-2022-085)*. CESA commissioned the authors to help develop their Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Strategy (The Strategy) with input from various Indigenous and non-Indigenous knowledge holders and stakeholders connected to Catholic South Australian schools. The research investigates the emergence of The Strategy using a framework of decolonial and Indigenist approaches to explore the process of re-imagining schooling for greater equity and collective benefit. The project is framed as an effort to move towards decoloniality considering the contested and ongoing nature of this idea. 'Sovereignty' is equally problematised owing to its Eurocentric foundations that position humans in relation to land as property – norms that have historically been reproduced through dominant discourses of Australian schooling that naturalise notions of (white) human exceptionalism (i.e. the idea that humans are separate from and have dominion over land, animals, waterways, etc.). Indigenous sovereignty is a broader idea that frames sovereignty in ontological terms of presence, relationality, connectedness and belonging (Bishop, 2022; Bauder & Mueller, 2021). Indigenous sovereignty is at odds with dominant conceptions that reproduce Indigenous oppression, intentionally or otherwise. The term 'sovereignty' is therefore contested but retained in the title of the project to flag the weight and complexity of efforts to advance Indigenous rights through schooling – an endeavour for which there are neither simple solutions nor consensus, though strategising for equitable change is viewed in the project as an urgent and hopeful act.

Questions of decolonisation and sovereignty are currently playing out on Australia's national stage. A change of Federal government in May 2022 saw immediate commitments to advance Voice, Truth, and Treaty.[2] This literature review emerges within the context of these debates and following the release of version 9.0 of the Australian Curriculum, both of which influence schooling. For example, at the state-based level of Catholic Education, questions of decolonisation and sovereignty give us pause to consider whether Western schooling can ever truly support and advance Indigenous rights as articulated in the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) (UN General Assembly, 2007) as well as the Coolangatta Statement on Indigenous Peoples' Rights in Education (Morgan et al., 2006). These frameworks establish that First Nations peoples have a basic human right to an equitable and empowering education that advances Indigenous rights and cultures. There are valid arguments that highlight the incapacity of Western schooling to achieve these ends (see for example Bishop, 2021; Hogarth, 2018a, 2018b), as well as examples of First Nations schools and educational organisations that exercise self-determination by operating independently from mainstream schooling.[3] This review fundamentally considers the agency of individuals and groups including teachers, schools, students, parents/caregivers, Country, and communities working relationally within the South Australian Catholic Education sector to transform Indigenous-settler relations (Rice et al., 2022), to the extent that this is possible. And while the work of improving

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[2] See https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2022/may/22/voice-treaty-truth-what-does-labors-commitment-to-uluru-statement-from-the-heart-mean.
[3] See for example Ngutu College (https://www.ngutucollege.org.au/) and Children's Ground (https://childrensground.org.au/).

schooling for First Nations students – (indeed all students) – is acknowledged here as being complex and gradual, we also recognise its urgency and seek to move through an awareness *of* and struggles *against* educational and social problems, to struggling *for* social and educational possibilities.

The story that this review unfolds is as follows. We present an unvarnished story in recognition that truth-telling is a fundamental starting point, but we also wish to write from a strengths-based perspective that seeks opportunities while acknowledging Aboriginal wisdom, resilience, and strength. And while we are forthright about Australia's past and ongoing oppression of Aboriginal peoples, we also caution against non-Aboriginal readers developing a deficit or 'disadvantaged' view of Aboriginal peoples as requiring White Australia's 'help'. To co-opt an expression often attributed to Lila Watson (1990) (who in turn attributes the phrase to a group experience):

> If you have come here to help me, you are wasting your time. But if you have come because your liberation is bound up with mine, then let us work together. (Watson, 1990, n. p.)

Aboriginal peoples' experiences of Australian schooling have been characterised by overlapping phases that intersect with the broad governance and oppression of Aboriginality within White Australia: i.e. from exclusion/extermination through segregation, inclusion/assimilation, integration, self-determination, and more recently, mutual obligation (or neo-colonialism, see for example Carter & Hollinsworth, 2017; Rowlands et al., 2022). Ranzjin et al. (2009) assert that Aboriginal education has involved, "decades of paternalistic and patronising policies that have sought to exterminate, segregate, civilise, indoctrinate and assimilate Indigenous peoples" (as cited in Bishop, 2021, p. 423). While mass compulsory schooling took root across most Western countries between 1869 and 1882 (Miller, 1998), Aboriginal children were mostly excluded from compulsory Australian schooling until the 1960s owing to deeply racist beliefs concerning their supposed ineducability or the contamination risks they were thought to pose to white children (Anderson, 2002; Hogarth, 2018b). Exclusion from an overtly White system[4] eventually gave way to mediated inclusion into a system which has remained fundamentally White – that is, Aboriginal children were included on the terms of the dominant racial group, not all Aboriginal children were included, and for those who were, exclusion remained a looming threat owing to policies such as 'Clean, Clad and Courteous' or 'Exclusion on Demand',[5] which could trigger an Aboriginal child's expulsion (Hogarth, 2017). Indeed, the Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership (AITSL) admits:

> Australian education systems were never designed for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students […]. The legacy of colonisation has undermined Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students' access to their cultures, identities, histories, and languages. As a result, they have largely not had access to a complete, relevant, and responsive education. (AITSL, 2021, p. 4)

Brief periods of 'empowerment' of Aboriginal peoples through self-determination, multiculturalist and reconciliation discourses spanning the 1970s to early 1990s – which included, for example, cultural

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[4] A system modelled on English and Scottish curricula, delivered in Standard Australian English, taught by white people, and limited to white European perspectives, voices and ways of being (Connell, 2019).

[5] Policies availed by white parents or school staff to exclude Aboriginal students on the pretence of 'uncleanliness' or poor behaviour.

sensitivity training for white teachers, the widespread adoption in school curricula of Australian Aboriginal studies, and the development of education policies by bodies such as the newly formed National Aboriginal Education Committee (NAEC)[6] – were impeded from the mid-1990s by the second phase of Australia's neoliberal turn (Stratton, 2011). Under neoliberalism, and notwithstanding that private/independent schooling differs markedly along a spectrum, private schooling in Australia has generally strengthened in aspect to a more residualised public sector (Reid, 2019). Public schools enrol most First Nations students (84%), and over 90% of Australia's most disadvantaged schools are public schools (Cobbald, 2022). These relations are thus important as they affect Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people and shape the unfolding story of First Nations Education.

Neoliberal policy formations have ushered in a raft of standards and accountability frameworks that establish whiteness as a norm against which 'Others' are judged (Moreton-Robinson et al., 2012). A clear expression of this includes dominant conceptualisations of literacy and numeracy at the heart of national testing regimes, which are standardised on the language and capitals of the urban-dwelling, Anglo mainstream (Rudolph, 2013). Whilst all young people have rights to access the language and culture of power through schooling, and whilst standardised literacy and numeracy tests such as the National Assessment Programme – Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN) might be used diagnostically to highlight where this process is failing, too often such tests are used in Australia as shallow comparative tools tethered to notions of an educational 'gap', which fuel competition between individuals and schools, facilitated by league tables such as the MySchool federal website (Connell, 2013; Vass, 2017; Rudolph, 2019). Rather than standardised test scores being seen as symptoms of structural inequalities inherent to the tests, they are thus reconfigured through dominant discourses and practices of schooling as 'evidence' of Aboriginal failure (Maher, 2022; Vass, 2017).

Under neoliberalism, Australian education has therefore grown more competitive and divided despite the ongoing efforts of Indigenous peoples and their non-Indigenous allies/collaborators[7] to reconfigure schooling to be more equitable. These developments underpin the present moment, which is coloured by a fundamental paradox: teachers and schools across all sectors are expected to meet standardised accountability frameworks that naturalise whiteness whilst simultaneously catering equitably for the growing cultural diversity of the student cohort. With respect to Aboriginal students, the mandate to cater equitably for cultural diversity includes:

- demonstrating broad knowledge and understanding of the impact of culture, cultural identity and linguistic background on the education of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students (Australian Professional Standards for Teachers, focus area 1.4)
- understanding and respecting First Nations cultures and histories to promote reconciliation (APST focus area 2.4)
- Indigenising curriculum by utlising the Australian Curriculum and Reporting Authority (ACARA) 'Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Histories and Cultures' Cross-Curriculum Priority (CCP), all of which being discussed more fully in upcoming sections of the review.

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[6] The NAEC ran from 1977-1989. See for example Holt (2021).
[7] We acknowledge the contested nature of these terms and the potential for white allyship to slip into complicity with whiteness (see for example Bargallie & Lentin, 2020). We also understand that the terms such as 'collaborator' are nowadays preferred over 'ally' or 'accomplice' (see https://ma-consultancy.co.uk/blog/language-is-important-why-we-will-no-longer-use-allyship-and-privilege-in-our-work).

Constrained by the aforementioned paradox – in other words, the need to cater for diversity whilst satisfying standardised mandates – many Australian teachers report feeling ill-equipped or even paralysed in their efforts to meet the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers (APST) and ACARA frameworks. Teachers and schools report having *insufficient time* to incorporate Aboriginal perspectives (Williams & Morris, 2022), being *reluctant/fearful* of getting Aboriginal Education wrong (Riley et al., 2019; O'Keefe et al., 2019), *lacking knowledge*, confidence, or know-how (Harrison & Greenfield, 2011; Thorpe et al., 2021), being *scared* of causing offense or saying the wrong thing (Maher, 2022), or being *bereft of adequate support* structures to do this work well (White et al., 2022). The situation is compounded for First Nations teachers who, constituting only 2% of the teaching workforce, are structurally marginalised. Moreover, the ACARA Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander CCP positions Aboriginal epistemologies as a sideline to a dominant if naturalised White curriculum, and the APST focus areas can be satisfied tokenistically (Buxton, 2017; Maxwell et al., 2018; Salter & Maxwell, 2016; Maher, 2022). Shallow or tokenistic representations of Aboriginality can have the effect of erasing and denying Aboriginal wisdom and knowledges and, as some writers argue, may therefore do more harm than good (Yunkaporta & Shillingsworth as cited in Thorpe et al., 2021; Zubrick et al. as cited in Maxwell et al., 2018).

Recently, the practice of cultural responsivity has surfaced in Australia as a hopeful means of not only offsetting these complex inequalities through valuing cultural diversity as a rich learning asset (see for example Morrison et al., 2019), but in recognition that student engagement, wellbeing and educational outcomes can only flourish when learner lifeworlds are centred (Osborne et al., 2020; Lowe, Skrebneva, Burgess, Harrison & Vass, 2021). The term 'cultural responsivity' has grown so popular, however, as to mean just about everything and nothing. Whilst the terms cultural 'responsivity', 'nourishment', 'humility', 'sensitivity' or 'competence' are often used interchangeably, the latter terms – sensitivity and competence – can problematically manifest in feelings of 'sorriness' for Aboriginal students who are perceived by members of the cultural majority as needing 'help' to meet (White) educational or behavioural standards (Schulz, 2018; Tualaulelei & Halse, 2022) – this is a deficit perspective grounded in the assumption that culturally responsive schooling is necessary *for* cultural 'Others' in a compensatory sense, but not applicable to *all*. Not dissimilarly, cultural competence is sometimes informed by assumptions of culture as fixed quotients possessed by 'Others' – (a term used problematically here to highlight the divisive effects of racialised language) – to which schools and teachers must somehow competently respond through gathering sufficient knowledge about an 'Other' culture (Bawaka Country et al., 2022, p. 10).

In contrast to deficit or homogenised conceptualisations of 'Aboriginal culture', there exists a view of culture as simultaneously dynamic and stable (Castagno & Brayboy, 2008). While certain elements of culture may be shared across groups – i.e. such as holistic worldviews (Bignall & Rigney, 2019) or shared experiences of dispossession and ongoing oppression – Aboriginal cultural identity is neither homogenous nor entirely fixed. Culture is at once rooted in context, can resist or change with social dynamics, and is filtered through and embodied by individuals such that culture is performed and adjusted in myriad, dynamic ways. This view of culture reinforces that there is no 'one way' of teaching Aboriginal students nor a single checklist for being culturally responsive. Instead, creating educational contexts that allow for respectful encounters between people, relationship-building, rich dialogue, and deep listening allows for learning 'with' culturally located individuals (Chown, 2019). Furthermore, all people are cultural beings, and all people are culture producing. Thus, schools are not, and never

have been, culturally neutral. Transmission of dominant cultural knowledge and norms occurs far more frequently in Australian schools than does the transmission and normalisation of First Nations cultures, and this needs to be acknowledged as an element of institutional racism.

A core aspect of cultural responsivity is thus the need for school and centre staff to adopt practices "that actively address the negative effects of systemic racism and racial discrimination" (Vass, 2017, p. 452). From here, culturally responsive schooling is about everyone's critical re-education and may include (though is not limited to):

- the ongoing development of racial literacy on the part of all staff
- viewing curriculum as a site of co-construction, decolonisation, reflexive dialogue, and deep listening
- understanding students as culturally located yet unique individuals
- the replacement of deficit discourses of Aboriginality with high expectations and intellectual challenge
- strong connections to learner lifeworlds
- expanded and contextualised understandings of literacy and numeracy
- dialogic, interactive and creative learning experiences that centre relationship-building
- relational classrooms where power is shared
- the development of 'common visions' for what constitutes education success; and
- community-engaged learning informed by understandings of Country and of First Nations communities as bearers of rich cultural wealth

In line with this, culturally responsive leadership is about creating a climate that makes whole schools or centres welcoming and accepting of cultural diversity. This includes (but is not limited to):

- establishing culturally responsive expectations of all staff
- promoting dialogic learning to open education to learner lifeworlds
- aligning schooling to learners' cultural assets
- challenging beliefs and practices that continue to marginalise or exclude minority cultures
- celebrating the cultural wealth of diverse groups
- having courageous conversations about complex issues such as racism
- restructuring resources to facilitate this work (especially with respect to granting teachers adequate time)
- consciously creating a diversified educational workforce; and
- generating authentic overlapping school-community spaces. (See Sleeter, 2011; Khalifa, 2020)

This is complex work and the section of this review on Leaders and Educators recognises their already challenging roles, providing starting points for equity-oriented change.

From a standpoint of cultural responsivity, school-community connections are thus imbued with a relational ethic that extends to encompass pedagogical relationships; relationships to and with knowledge; relationships within schools/centres; relationships that stretch beyond the school or centre gates; and relationships to/with and for Country (see for example Lowe, Skrebneva, Burgess, Harrison & Vass, 2021). Cultural responsivity does not mean being an expert on all cultures – such

expectations, impossible to meet, tend to fuel educator anxiety (Price et al., 2020; Maher, 2022). Rather, cultural responsivity means adopting a relational approach that is caring, critical, dialogic, imbued with high expectations, and inclusive of relational understandings of wellbeing. As Zubrick and colleagues (2014) attest, colonisation continues to play a key role in shaping the wellbeing of Aboriginal peoples, and this includes: "unresolved grief and loss; trauma and abuse; violence; removal from family; substance misuse; family breakdown; cultural dislocation; racism and discrimination; exclusion and segregation; loss of control of life; and social disadvantage" (p. 99). Given these complex, intergenerational dynamics, our understandings of wellbeing must move beyond 'individual' to 'relational' conceptualisations that do not locate blame or overly simplistic solutions to poor wellbeing solely *within* the individual. Aboriginal wellbeing means the "social, emotional, and cultural wellbeing of the whole community" (National Aboriginal Health Strategy Working Party as cited in Murrup-Stewart et al., 2021, p. 1833), and this requires fundamental whole-of-school or centre and community efforts to redress racism and respond to trauma.

Supporting and safeguarding Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health, safety, survivance, and wellbeing therefore requires schools and centres to actively adopt anti-racist and trauma-informed approaches whilst supporting teachers to work within and against the grain of performativity frameworks (Dooley et al., 2013) – or what Keddie (2016) calls, the pressure to perform and conform. Pedagogies of care (Dadvand & Cuervo, 2020), sometimes referred to as subversive or sustaining pedagogies (Ladson-Billings, 2009), may also require school staff to develop the fortitude and flexibility to work with communities who, for good reason, may be resistant to or untrusting of formal schooling at the same time as wanting the best possible education for their children. Lampert (2020) says that a challenge for non-Indigenous school staff is thus to engage with

> … family or community members who have, for instance, had negative experiences of schooling, do not speak English, or who live in poverty or precariously from day to day, who resist, disagree with, or refuse school practices. (Lampert, 2020, p. 450)

As we look to the future and take a sober but necessary view of Australian schooling for First Nations young people that acknowledges past and ongoing colonial harms, we also observe a strengths-based perspective that is optimistic about the ways in which Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education is enriching for everyone. This perspective celebrates the tenacity and commitments of Aboriginal peoples who have persisted staunchly against the grain of pervasive racism, oppression, and marginalisation. Lucy Beedon (1829-1886), for example, was an Aboriginal teacher, businesswoman and activist in Van Diemen's Land (Tasmania) during the 1800s when colonial authorities sought to eradicate Aboriginal peoples. Nancy Barnes nee Brumby (1927-2012) was South Australia's first qualified Aboriginal kindergarten director in 1956. Amy Levai nee O'Donoghue (1930-2013) was South Australia's first qualified Aboriginal infant teacher in 1958. And activist/educator Alitja Rigney (1942-2017) was Australia's first Aboriginal woman principal in 1986 (Whitehead, 2022; Whitehead et al., 2021; MacGill et al., 2022). All four of these women negotiated the oppressive hierarchies of race, class, and gender to not only endure but succeed in systems designed neither by nor for Aboriginal peoples. Yet, it is not the story of the individual who succeeds against the odds that we wish to surface in this review as an enduring truth – too often, such decontextualised 'truths' are used to assert that it is *individuals* who must change to 'fit in' to inequitable systems, rather than changing *systems* which exclude and oppress. As this literature review will demonstrate, the broad wealth of research on

Aboriginal education is focused, not on changing or discretely catering for individual Aboriginal children, but on systemic and structural change and on exploring ways that our collective relationships with systems of oppression can be transformed for everyone's benefit. In this sense, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education is an opportunity for everyone.

Just as the nation is committing to deep, broad, and difficult discussions about an Australia re-shaped by Voice, Truth, and Treaty, now is time for those of us involved in education and committed to social equity to have:

> … deeper, broader, collective, and conscious discussions about the purposes of education, and from this, to then go about doing education in ways that differ from dominant practices of the past. (Vass & Hogarth, 2022, p. 12)

We hope that this literature review and associated research-consultancy contributes meaningfully to these processes within South Australian Catholic schools – schools that serve communities which extend from the unceded Bunganditj/Boandic Country in the state's southeast, Kokatha Country in the far mid north, Barngarla Country in the west, and Naralte Country in the east.

Key points drawn from across the review:

- Australian mainstream education has never served First Nations' peoples adequately and in many ways, has continued colonial harms through denying Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander sovereignty, languages, knowledges, and cultures. In their place, the dominant culture has developed and reproduced deficit conceptualisations of Aboriginality in aspect to naturalised assumptions of White authority, with these beliefs and practices becoming normalised in schools and society. Education is a site where these historical patterns can and must be reversed.
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education incorporates this work. It is for everyone and is an opportunity to value the oldest living – and dynamic – cultures on earth in ways that are mutually enriching.
- Research says that South Australian educators are under immense pressure with many reporting that they are 'at breaking point' (Windle et al, 2022). The paradoxical need to 'satisfy standardised accountability frameworks' (such as the NAPLAN) while 'catering equitably for cultural diversity' adds to this pressure.
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education should not, therefore, be presented as an additional task but a shared endeavour to do education differently with full support of local and state-level leadership.
- There is no 'one way' to 'do' Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education. There is no 'one' Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander culture – there are dynamic and evolving First Nations cultures.
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education is both about centring First Nations perspectives as well as re-educating everyone to unlearn deficit beliefs and practices.
- Thriving educational environments are those that celebrate cultural diversity and bring it to the centre of learning whilst directly combatting racism.

Cultural responsivity

- Cultural responsivity has emerged as a strengths-based approach to valuing cultural diversity as a learning asset.
- Cultural responsivity is about creating educational contexts that allow for respectful encounters between people, relationship-building, rich dialogue, and deep listening that allows for learning 'with' culturally located individuals.

- A core element of culturally responsive schooling is the need to move beyond deficit understandings of Aboriginality to recognise the wisdom and deep cultural wealth of Aboriginal peoples, communities, and Country.
- Culturally responsive education is 'good' education for everyone.

Racial literacy

- Racial literacy expresses the capacity to read a racialised world and act from an anti-racist standpoint.
- Racial literacy involves at least 5 key insights:
    1. Understanding that racism is a contemporary problem, not just something in the past
    2. Understanding that race is socially constructed but has a profound effect on educational experiences and outcomes (in other words, racism manifests materially)
    3. Recognising ways in which racism is institutionalised in systems like education (for example, through recognising curriculum which fails to include and centralise First Nations' perspectives as racism-as-curricula-exclusion)
    4. Gaining comfort/practice in reading, reflecting upon, discussing, and addressing racially stressful encounters
    5. All educational staff can apply a racial literacy lens and skills to their understandings of their roles
- Racial literacy is about exposing and dismantling deficit racialised beliefs about Aboriginal and other racial minority groups, which remain in high circulation in Australia.

Leaders

- The work of educational leaders in Australia is highly complex. It is nonetheless important that leaders develop deep awareness of past and ongoing negative impacts of mainstream education on Aboriginal peoples.
- Culturally responsive leaders are reflexively self-aware, share power, and build inclusive cultures across schools/centres and communities.

Non-Indigenous Educators

- Most Australian teachers are white.
- Research finds that white people's acknowledgement of racism is typically much lower than that of the non-white communities who may surround and attend schools/centres. When non-Indigenous, particularly white educators have not developed racial literacy, they may unintentionally form deficit opinions of non-white students before setting foot in the classroom/centre.
- An equity-oriented disposition which includes awareness of Australia's past and ongoing colonial harms is crucial for all Australian educators, especially those who are white.
- Whilst non-Indigenous educators often express fear or apprehension to incorporate First Nations perspectives, it is important that fear does not manifest as paralysis – token or initial efforts can be grown into genuine educational programmes that embrace, celebrate, and learn from Aboriginal ways of knowing and being.
- Educators do not need to be experts – they can learn 'with' students and community.
- Non-Indigenous educators are best supported to engage in this work through team-teaching and whole-of-school or centre approaches, and through shared awareness that this work requires stamina. It can be messy or imperfect, but it is about everyone's enhanced education and wellbeing.

Indigenous Educators

- Indigenous teachers represent a minority in Australia and often face the challenge of establishing a professional identity that is not racialised (Burgess, 2017).
- Indigenous educators and paraprofessionals play vital roles but may be poorly remunerated, lack power, and often lack status in the institutional hierarchy.
- Indigenous educators and paraprofessionals must be recognised for the vital roles they play, which can include fast-tracking Indigenous staff, with adequate support, to occupy higher-status roles within the institution, as well as setting targets/quotas and timelines to employ more First Nations staff.

Learners

- Not all First Nations learners are the same.
- Not all Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander students learn the same way.
- There is no 'one way' to teach Aboriginal students.
- Teachers may not know if they have Aboriginal students in their presence.
- Learning to listen to and learn from Aboriginal students (indeed all learners) is a starting point for establishing an ethic of care that underpins successful learning and relational trust.
- Aboriginal students may or may not be deeply connected to their Aboriginal cultural heritage owing to the impacts of colonisation.
- Some Aboriginal young people are not connected to their Aboriginal cultural heritage and may feel a sense of loss or shame about these intergenerational disconnections over which they have had no control.
- It is inappropriate to automatically position Aboriginal students as experts on Aboriginality – they may be learning too.
- Urban, rural, and regional Aboriginal students will have different experiences of Aboriginal identity. All experiences of Aboriginal identity are authentic.
- Successful learning for Aboriginal students must involve curriculum and pedagogy that respectfully represents Aboriginality as heterogenous, evolving, empowered, and dynamic.
- Research indicates that many Aboriginal learners express strong desires to be connected to other First Nations learners, to learn on and with Country, and to learn from Elders.
- Connecting learning to Country and community/family underpins a culturally nourishing education, which has benefits for all learners.
- The exclusion, underappreciation, or misinterpretation of Aboriginality in curricula and pedagogy can be experienced by Aboriginal youth as 'everyday' or covert forms of racism, which is deeply damaging.
- Aboriginal learners, across various studies, articulate appreciation when educators/schools make efforts to expand their learning repertoires and are hopeful that schools will move beyond lip service and towards more substantial, genuine educational programmes that embrace, celebrate, and learn from Aboriginal ways of knowing and being, for everyone's benefit.
- Schools and educators should work with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students and their families to develop culturally responsive behaviour management strategies grounded in a foundation of relational trust.

Professional Learning

- All professional learning (PL) should highlight the importance of staff beginning with a deep commitment to social justice.
- All PL with respect to Aboriginal peoples should foreground that colonisation has inflicted immense damage on First peoples, and that schools are implicated in ongoing colonial harms, but can be sites of healing and reciprocal re-learning.

- Professional learning communities develop a shared language and common vision for educational success that centralises First Nations cultures.
- When everyone in the learning community shares in the key learning goal of improving schooling for First Nations students, when time and space is created for ongoing professional dialogue and reflection that supports this goal, and when both internal and external relationships are established that align the learning goals of the school or centre with those of the community, then one-off PL focused upon Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education will be absorbed into a receptive learning culture.

Curriculum

- A 'just' curriculum is one in which the most marginalised are recognised and representatively empowered (Brennan & Zipin, 2018).
- To 'brown the curriculum' (Fricker, 2017) is to make it less White and in so doing redress racism as curricula exclusion – this is part of a decolonising agenda.
- A 'just' approach includes working within and against the grain of standardisation in education.
- An Indigenised curriculum that leverages the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander CCP or approved learning frameworks for Early Years and School Age Care helps all students to develop intercultural understanding and normalises the presence of First Nations content.
- Incorporating First Nations perspectives is good for all learners.
- When all educational staff gradually develop understanding of First Nations histories and experiences of coloniality, "recognition of the ethical importance of finding authentic ways to teach Indigenous knowledges" is nurtured (Lowe & Galstaun, 2020, p. 94).
- The idea is not to replace Western knowledge but to bring Indigenous and Western knowledge systems into dialogue such that worldviews are expanded, relationships are forged, and power imbalances are redressed.
- Educators can build 'knowledge solidarity' by making genuine space for and valuing Indigenous knowledges while appreciating that despite the Western impulse to claim Truth, there are multiple valid ways of knowing the world.
- Cultural immersion programmes through workshops, camps or retreats can be particularly useful starting points for educators for the purpose of decolonising the mind to Indigenise curriculum.
- Country-centred learning led by local Aboriginal community members can awaken teachers' critical awareness and assist them to develop holistic approaches to integrating First Nations perspectives (Burgess et al., 2022).
- Whole-of-school/centre incorporation of First Nations perspectives can and has resulted in quantifiable improvements across various elements of schooling (i.e. with respect to suspension rates as well as literacy and numeracy testing outcomes).
- Relationships can be developed with First Nations' families and local community/Elders with a view to negotiating elements of curriculum and learning to appreciate Country as curriculum – 'Country' is wherever you are.
- Appreciating Country as curriculum is appreciating that knowledge is not static or decontextualised but dynamic and co-produced in situ.
- Shared commitments to embedding the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander CCP or approved learning frameworks for Early Years and School Age Care, interpreting the APST focus areas 1.4 and 2.4 critically, and auditing curriculum to scrutinise whose voices, perspectives, and knowledges are privileged, serve as important momentum-building practices for schools and centres to slowly decolonise from the ground up.

- Historically, curriculum changes mostly occur 'from below', meaning that even when they are small, patterns of dedicated practice are important – they generate their own hopeful momentum, and the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander CCP/Early Years and School Age learning frameworks provide important resources in achieving broader-scale decolonising change across systems.

Pedagogy

- Pedagogy is not a one-way street but is relational – it is about learning *through* developing respectful relationships between teachers and students, students and students, and students, teachers and knowledge which is co-produced (including with Country/community).
- CRP starts with dispositional change on the part of non-Indigenous educators; "culturally responsive pedagogies do improve outcomes for Indigenous students, but only when those pedagogies also focus on changing non-Indigenous teachers' attitudes" (Moodie, Vass, Lowe, 2021a, p. 11).
- CRP involves developing cognisance of racism in its varied forms (including curricula exclusion), acting against it, and appreciating that there are many valid ways of knowing the world.
- CRP principles include:
    - building meaningful pedagogical relationships
    - offering high educational challenge (including intellectual, social, affective, creative, and embodied modes of learning)
    - having high expectations of learners
    - strongly connecting to students' lifeworlds
    - viewing cultural difference as a learning asset
    - fostering a critically conscious/activist orientation – where taking 'action' may include, for instance, caring for a waterway, educating the school-community on matters of shared concern, etc.
    - promoting sharing of learning beyond the classroom
    - and enabling students to learn – and to express their learning – multimodally
- CRP is good for all learners. First steps can include creating genuine spaces for educational *encounter, relationship building* and *dialogue,* regardless of who is present.
- First steps also include creating shared conceptualisations of 'success' and expanded understandings of literacy and numeracy.
- The ethos of Catholic Education explicitly attends to holistic learning for all students, which resonates well with CRP.
- Overarching pedagogies that support First Nations and *all* learners, include (but are not limited to): Object Based Learning (OBL), Creative Body-Based Learning (CBL), Storytelling Pedagogies, and Rap/Hip Hop. These pedagogies form part of a rich CRP repertoire.

Relationships and Wellbeing

- It is crucial that schools and centres recognise the intertwined nature of 'relationships' *for* 'wellbeing'.
- Wellbeing can be understood in terms *connections*: to Country, culture, family, community, spirituality, place, and identity.
- All educational staff can move from decontextualised understandings of wellbeing as located *within* 'the individual', to awareness that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander wellbeing means the social, emotional, and cultural wellbeing of the whole community.

- Aboriginal wellbeing is contingent on non-Indigenous peoples' understanding that being Aboriginal within the context of settler-colonial Australia gives rise to ongoing, intergenerational trauma.
- Trauma-informed PL works to ensure that non-Indigenous staff are not sources of ongoing trauma for Aboriginal peoples; for instance, through unintentionally reproducing covert racism or pathologising Aboriginality.
- A crucial part of trauma-informed schooling includes partnering with the wisdom of First Nations communities.
- Schools and centres can become spaces that enable strengthened connections to culture for First Nations' wellbeing, which expands to support everyone's enhanced wellbeing.
- This can include (but is not limited to): connecting Aboriginal youth with one another (including across sites); creating dedicated Aboriginal spaces; connecting with Elders; creating opportunities for Aboriginal youth to engage in in/formal cultural learning activities; connecting with family, community, and Country; developing a strong First Nations formal education for everyone; and understanding the reality of emotional labour for Aboriginal young people, which means that sometimes, Aboriginal youth may opt not to participate in dedicated cultural events or learning opportunities.
- Relationships between schools/centres and communities/Elders take time to nurture; thus, in their absence, or when starting out, it is important that teachers and schools/centres do not allow a fear of tokenism or lack of established relational structures to serve as reasons for doing nothing. Small steps count.[8]

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[8] Note: whilst this review is entitled 'Improving schooling and outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students in South Australian Catholic Schools *and Centres'*, the reader will observe that predominant emphasis is on schooling. The Early Years Learning and School Age Care Nationally Approved Frameworks version 2.0 were approved following completion of the review and research consultancy – this should be taken into consideration with future iterations of this work. Note also that the Early Learning sector in Australia, particularly centres and educators who draw meaningfully from Reggio Emilia principles, tend to lead the way with respect to centring First Nations voices and cultures. For further, see for example Rigney, Sisson, Hattam and Morrison (2020). For changes to the nationally approved learning frameworks *Belonging, Being and Becoming: The Early Years Learning Framework for Australia,* and *My Time, Our Place: Framework for School Age Care in Australia:* https://www.acecqa.gov.au/latest-news/education-ministers-approve-updates-national-approved-learning-frameworks.

About the authors

Dr Samantha Schulz is project lead for the research consultancy. She is a first generation Australian of British and German heritage and senior sociologist of education at The University of Adelaide. Dr Schulz has research and teaching experience across a diversity of social contexts, including the Anangu Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara Lands, rural Kenya, China, and India. She is co-chief investigator on the Australian Research Council (ARC) Discovery Project *Culturally Responsive Schooling* (DP220100651, 2022-24), which explores how the affective environments of schools attend to the diverse cultural, academic and emotional needs of their communities. Dr Schulz's broader research includes race critical theorising, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander education, gender equity, violent extremism, and decoloniality. As a core project, she explored cultural reproductions of race in remote Aboriginal schools using white governmentality as a conceptual lens and extended this work to explore decoloniality in university-led study abroad programmes in India. Dr Schulz co-coordinated Critical Indigenous Pedagogies courses for many years with Dr Faye Rosas Blanch at Flinders University before moving to The University of Adelaide.

Dr Anne Morrison is a white Australian of Anglo lineage with a Bachelor of Arts majoring in Linguistics, followed by Honours and a PhD in the discipline of Professional Writing and Communication. She has worked extensively as a research assistant across several Australian universities, with specific expertise in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education. Anne was research assistant on the ARC Discovery Project, *Toward an Australian Culturally Responsive Pedagogy,* as well as the project *Children Learning to Live Together in a Diverse Community: Culturally Responsive Pedagogy in Reggio Emilia Inspired Early Learning Settings* (Funded by the SA Department for Education). Anne currently assists on the projects, *Culturally Responsive Pedagogies Action Research: Anangu Lands Partnership Schools,* and *APY Lands Bilingual Education Pilot*, both led by UniSA. Anne has several co-authored publications within the broad fields of culturally diverse and First Nations education, including leading the major literature review, *Toward an Australian Culturally Responsive Pedagogy: A Narrative Review of the Literature.*

Dr Faye Rosas Blanch is a Murri woman from the Atherton Tablelands of Yidniji/Mbarbarm descent. She has worked on Kaurna Land in Yunggorendi First Nations Centre for many years, and is presently Senior Lecturer in the College of Humanities, Arts and Social Sciences, Flinders University, where she leads decolonial, arts-based and Indigenous education courses. Dr Rosas Blanch has worked as an Aboriginal Education Worker, a secondary teacher and a tertiary lecturer. She has published with respect to Indigenous students, community and schooling, and presented at conferences regarding Indigenous ways of being. Dr Rosas Blanch plays a major role in curriculum development in the tertiary sector and is a member of the *Unbound Collective*; a four-women performance group that engages with research and a praxis of decolonisation. Dr Rosas Blanch recently completed her doctoral thesis which utilises arts-based approaches to narrate the relationship between the colonised bodies of Indigenous Australians and the settler colonial state. She is the recipient of teaching excellence awards, and a recent recipient of an Australian Research Council (ARC) Discovery Indigenous Grant (2022-2024) for a project that will develop an Indigenous Creative Arts Framework to transform the Humanities across Australian Universities.

Dr Joanne Buckskin is a tertiary educator of Narrungga, Wirangu Wotjobalok heritage. Her key teaching and research fields include Reconciliation and Education, which she brings together in her work as a teacher educator. Dr Buckskin's PhD explored the experiences of non-Aboriginal pre-service teachers undertaking a year-long Enhanced Teacher Training Programme (Indigenous Education) at the University of Wollongong. Dr Buckskin's publications focus on Aboriginal community capacity building, the entanglements of Aboriginality, gender, and work, and Aboriginal youth leadership. Dr Buckskin has worked extensively in community-based projects, including in the areas of national constitutional recognition, reconciliation action planning, restorative justice for Aboriginal communities, working with Aboriginal Elders, and embedding Indigenous knowledges within local government. Dr Buckskin currently works as a lecturer in the College of Humanities, Arts and Social Sciences, Flinders University, prior to which she worked as a researcher at University of Technology Sydney, and as an Aboriginal Education Lecturer, University of Wollongong.

Dr Steve Corrie is a non-Indigenous education lecturer based at the Flinders University of South Australia where he currently oversees all secondary education degree programmes. He has worked in education for more than 25 years, holding senior leadership and teaching positions across primary, secondary and tertiary contexts. Dr Corrie has extensive experience as a school principal in remote Aboriginal communities in the Northern Territory and his doctoral research titled 'Culturally responsive possibilities: Leaders' voices in remote Indigenous schools' explores the concept and application of Culturally Responsive School Leadership (CRSL) in remote contexts. Dr Corrie's publications centre on educational practice that connects school learning to student lifeworlds.

Contents

Introduction

Catholic Education South Australia (CESA) is one of the State's largest education providers with more than 8,400 staff and 48,900 students across 103 schools.[9] CESA's footprint stretches from Bunganditj/Boandic Country in the southeast of South Australia (Mt Gambier), Kokatha Country in the far mid north (Roxby Downs), Barngarla Country in the west (Port Lincoln), and Naralte Country in the east (Renmark). CESA has committed to Reconciliation, "not [as] an act of charity on the part of non-Indigenous people, rather, [as] an orientation to a world founded in justice, human dignity and love/compassion" (CESA Reconciliation Action Plan, 2021-2022, p. 2). This literature review and associated research-consultancy have been commissioned by CESA as part of this larger Reconciliation process, and as a step in the development of their Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Strategy.

This literature review also emerges at a historic time in Australian cultural relations. A change of Federal government in May 2022 saw immediate promises to advance the Uluru Statement from the Heart (First Nations National Constitutional Convention, 2017), including a Makarrata Commission to advance truth-telling about Australia's shared history and a referendum on constitutional change: Voice, Truth, and Treaty. These commitments offer a vital space for Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians to re-establish relations based on reciprocity, genuine equity, and justice. These developments also align with the Alice Springs (Mparntwe) Declaration's commitment,

> to ensuring that all students learn about the diversity of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures, and to seeing all young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples thrive in their education and all facets of life. (Education Council, 2019, p. 3)

Moreover, these commitments align with CESA's 2021-2022 Reconciliation Action Plan, which recognises that:

> Reconciliation implies 'making right' or healing. Truth-telling is an important aspect of healing. [...] For truth-telling to be effective we need to practice 'Truth listening', giving opportunity for Aboriginal voices to speak, being open to sitting with discomfort and also hearing the call to action – responding with compassion rather than responding to discomfort. (p. 2)

This literature review thus prioritises Aboriginal voices, as laid out in the following pages.

Historical Overview

With the landing of the First Fleet in 1788, Christianity – including Catholicism – arrived on the shores of the continent that the British called Australia. Under the banner of Christianity, the invaders claimed the land as their own and declared it Terra Nullius. Yet Australia was already home to sovereign nations of First Peoples who had inhabited the continent for at least 65,000 years (Clarkson et al., 2017). Over that time, these diverse nations had successfully educated their young people in sophisticated epistemologies, ontologies, cosmologies and axiologies (Bishop, 2021). The British invasion disrupted this process despite often fierce resistance. Using a suite of tactics tried at other

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[9] See https://www.cesa.catholic.edu.au/.

sites of colonisation, the invaders attempted first to erase Aboriginal peoples and ways of being, and eventually attempted to replace organic Indigenous Education systems with the Western construct of schooling.

Prior to invasion "Aboriginal people all over Australia maintained complex social, political, and cultural kinships systems that incorporated a diversity of customary laws, lore, and learning that were underpinned by their Dreaming, kinship systems, and connection to land" (Burridge & Chodkiewicz, 2012, p. 11). Aboriginal societies were based on egalitarian systems that were holistic and emphasised belonging, spirituality, and relatedness (Tynan & Bishop, 2022). Learning was a comprehensive process "where education was centred on the land and children learned alongside adults" (Sinclair, 2019, p. 37). In post-invasion Australia, the first school for Indigenous students was established in Sydney in 1814 and was "the first of repeated attempts to 'civilise' the Aboriginal population away from their tribal customs (and land) by inculcating Christian habits and the wider values of Europeans" (Beresford, 2012, p. 3). The brutal practice of forced removal of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children from their families started during this era – initially by Christian missionaries, and later by government representatives – and was to continue until the mid-1970s. Thus began "the longstanding suspicion and hostility of many Indigenous parents towards schools as instruments of white oppression" (Beresford, 2012, p. 86).

In 1834, the Colony of South Australia was established by an act of British Parliament. The first Catholic priest arrived in Adelaide in 1841, and the first Catholic religious community was founded by Jesuits at Sevenhill in the Clare Valley around 1850. A Catholic education system was built 'from the ground up' by Julian Tennison Woods who was ordained in Adelaide in 1857 (Cresp & Tranter, 2018, p. 294), and initially appointed to the parish of Penola in south-east South Australia, home of the Bunganditj (or Booandik) and Binjali People. In a letter to the Adelaide Observer newspaper, Woods (1866) described the conditions of the local Aboriginal peoples:

> Your correspondent has called attention to the sad state of the natives in this district. Well, I say most conscientiously that a more hideous crying evil does not exist among Christians. These poor savages, after being degraded and diseased by the vices of – shall we call it civilization – are left to die in our midst of starvation … Now, I am well aware that the blacks will be degraded no matter what we do, because they are savages. I know, too, that their mode of life was one which entailed much suffering and misery before we came near them at all. But I say that if they were degraded before, we have degraded them more. If they were miserable at first, they are now more miserable than ever; and I do assert most vehemently that we are bound to do something for them, if only to smooth their path to the grave. (p. 1)

The colonial belief that Australian Indigenous peoples were a 'dying race' shaped early government policies and led to the so-called 'Protectionist' era (Hollinsworth, 1992). Although there was some legislative variation between each jurisdiction, 'protection' policies were ostensibly designed to safeguard the remaining Aboriginal populations until they 'died out' (Hollinsworth, Raciti & Carter, 2021). Designated 'Protectors' controlled almost all aspects of Aboriginal peoples' lives. So-called 'full-blood' Aboriginal people were isolated on reserves, while those considered less than 'full-blood' were targeted for assimilation into White society. According to Welch (1988),

Many early educational efforts were by missionaries, and a conventional curriculum embraced far more than reading, writing and counting, much of which was often based on the Bible anyway. Hymn-singing, prayer recital, and the learning of catechism were common features of the curriculum, and white attitudes towards cleanliness, time and work were also instilled. (p. 209)

Dunstan, Hewitt and Nakata (2020) explain, "[t]his protectionist era produced a racialized conceptualisation of Indigenous peoples and their family life as inherently deficient; unsuitable for raising children who could form part of the future white Australian nation" (p. 327). By the 1950s, Protectionist policies had morphed into policies of 'Assimilation', culminating in a formal commitment by State and Commonwealth ministers to the effect that:

all Aborigines [sic] and part-Aborigines are expected to attain the same manner of living as other Australians and to live as members of a single Australian community, enjoying the same rights and privileges, accepting the same customs and influenced by the same beliefs as other Australians. (Commonwealth and State Ministers, 1961, p. 1)

Throughout the protectionist and assimilation eras, the general policy of State governments was to provide minimal schooling for Aboriginal children in the racialised belief that they were cognitively inferior to Anglo-Europeans and were consequently destined for 'the lowest rungs of white society' (Beresford, 2012, p. 87). Large numbers of Aboriginal children were excluded from State schools; some attended reserve schools which were often substandard (Valencia, 2019, p. 124), and many received no schooling whatsoever (Beresford, 2012, p. 95). Welch (1988) explains, "The myth of the ineducability of Australian Aborigines [sic] has been a most pervasive one which, in defiance of evidence, has continually licenced second rate education or none at all" (p. 210). Moreover, the second-rate education of Indigenous young people was largely accepted by those in power and by mainstream society at large (O'Brien, 2021, p. 104).

During the 1930s through 1940s, post-war Australia required non-British migrants to meet its reconstruction needs (Hage, 2000, p, 82); moreover, Australia's profile in world affairs started to attract attention for its ill-treatment of Indigenous people. Consequently, white authorities realised the need for an education system that was inclusive to both culturally diverse migrant and Aboriginal children, thus repositioning the Indigenous child within dominant discourses of schooling as an object of sentiment to be saved (Partington, 1998, p. 44). Beresford notes, "the poor state of Aboriginal education slowly came to be recognised as a major social and educational problem" (2012, p. 105). These developments gave rise to the cultural deprivation and assimilation phases of Indigenous Education, which came to fruition during the 1960s and early 1970s as the White Australia Policy slowly declined. In wider Australia, assimilation required non-British migrants to adopt Anglo-Celtic language, culture and values whilst relinquishing "the distinct cultural practices and attitudes of their home countries" (Hage, 2000, p. 82). Aboriginal children's inclusion in schooling was similarly characterised by the belief that mainstream education should assist them to abandon their cultural heritage (Palmer, 1971). Thus, although inclusion in schooling was viewed by the dominant culture as a compassionate form of population management that would help offset 'the worst' of Aboriginal culture (Partington, 2002, p. 3), in reality schooling was coterminous with epistemicide.

In 1973, the Whitlam Labor government introduced a series of Indigenous policy changes that were, collectively, to usher in an era of 'self-determination'. "A wave of anti-discrimination legislation and emerging recognition of human rights and land rights helped to consolidate formal civil and political rights of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders" (Dunstan, Hewitt & Nakata, 2020, p. 330). Policies during the self-determination era recognised "the fundamental right of Aboriginals [sic] to retain their racial identity and traditional lifestyle or, where desired, to adopt wholly or partially a European lifestyle" (Viner as cited in Patrick & Moodie 2016, p. 168). By the second half of the 1970s, efforts were made nationally to empower and support Indigenous groups, and this triggered the rise of 'cultural empowerment' in Indigenous Education (1970s-80s). Up to this point, non-Indigenous academics and policymakers had typically 'gazed upon' Indigenous learners through a deficit lens that 'blames the victim' (Buckskin, 2008; Hewitt, 2000). But when assimilation was officially abandoned in favour of policies of self-determination and multiculturalism, a new era emerged that went some way towards challenging deficit assumptions and encouraging a modicum of white reflexivity.

Researchers began to explore the complexities of Indigenous 'failure' within schools from a critical standpoint. They acknowledged that denial of Western education for several generations of Indigenous students had created patterns of intergenerational disadvantage and that Indigenous peoples' lives had been affected by a range of intersecting issues, including:

> […] poverty, ill health, remote rural living and historical and contemporary experiences of oppression, prejudice, and racism […] creating, in Bordieuan terms, the 'embodied capital' of Indigenous students that has little currency in white schools. (Connelly, 2002, pp. 37-38)

Discourses of self-determination intersected with discourses of multiculturalism, manifesting in celebrations of diversity as well as prescriptions for social change. Multiculturalist discourses were well-intentioned. However, they were also problematic in the sense that they tended to remain framed by policies which implied that "access to power and self-determination comes only through acquiring the skills of mainstream culture" (Kalantzis, Cope & Hughes, 1985, p. 201). Within prevailing expressions of multiculturalism, white culture therefore remained naturalised (and naturally privileged) in contrast to a variety of observable 'ethnic' and 'cultured' Others (Larbalestier, 1999). Moreover, multiculturalist endeavours in mainstream Australia often failed to recognise that, unlike non-white migrants, First Nations peoples occupied the unique position of being sovereign subjects.

Periods of multiculturalism and cultural empowerment coincided with a self-determination thrust, which nonetheless saw Indigenous Education recast in terms of Indigenous rights. Within education, self-determination manifested in Indigenous peoples participating in the design and setting of policy, including the creation of a national 'Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Policy', a Higher Education Policy, initiatives to boost tertiary participation amongst Indigenous peoples and, in 1985, the creation of a House of Representatives committee on Indigenous Education which produced an extensive review. These developments emphasised that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people desired, above all, skills in mainstream Australian literacy and numeracy for their children, alongside fostering and celebrating Indigenous cultures. 'Self-determination' in education could be conceptualised in different ways – for instance, conservative standpoints saw self-determination in terms of what Aboriginal peoples needed to do to become 'self-determining' whilst reflexive orientations focused on what white society must do to make space for a state of decolonisation. Nevertheless, throughout the 1970s to early 1990s, calls for Indigenous 'cultural inclusion', 'self-

determination' and 'empowerment' collectively created a shift in widespread thinking that, for the first time, repositioned Indigenous peoples within the context of the dominant cultural imagination as powerful agents in their own right.

More appropriate education of white teachers was consequently stressed (Craven, 1999, pp. 7, 21) and it was accepted that social justice for Indigenous Australians was contingent, not only upon education which equips Indigenous students to find employment and appreciate their cultural inheritance, but on preparing white teachers to teach Indigenous Australian Studies as means of countering racism and developing widespread understanding of Australia's Indigenous cultural heritage (p. 16). This placed deliberate onus on White Australia to redress historical inequalities brought about by invasion and, importantly, repositioned white teachers as potential agents of resistance to the reproduction of colonial harms. However, as these moves unfolded, conservative sectors of the White community began to express staunch concern surrounding 'lack of achievement' of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, particularly in remote regions (Johns, 2006; Partington, 2002). This occurred during a shift to a conservative government in the mid-1990s when both the quest for reconciliation and the idea of multiculturalism were abandoned at the federal level (Hamilton & Madison, 2007). The end of the self-determination era is also linked to this time, and hence to the four consecutive Howard-led Coalition governments (1996-2007) with their enthusiastic embrace of neoliberalism (Rademaker & Rowse, 2020, p. 4).

Although Australian neoliberalism began in the 1970s under the Whitlam Labor government with structural reforms that opened trade borders and lowered tariff barriers (Stratton, 2011), a different form of neoliberalism was initiated by the Howard governments, "a time when government funding was progressively retracted from a broad range of social services, including public education" (Brabazon & Schulz, 2020, p. 876). This consolidated a shift in thinking whereby education as a public good was reconfigured in the dominant imagination as a commodity – i.e. something to be paid for by those positioned to exercise 'choice' (Connell, 2013). Neoliberalism in education has manifested in competitive and individualistic orientations to schooling, diminishment of the public sector in respect to a flourishing private sector, internal accountability mechanisms tethered to external imposed measures of 'excellence', the marketisation of schooling and enforced competition between schools, the promotion of discourses and mechanisms of parental 'choice', and the public league tabling of student results on standardised tests tethered to the assumption that such 'transparency' will boost quality in the educational market (Fraser & Taylor, 2016).

Underpinning these transformations is a philosophy of individualism that rescales structural disadvantages relating to poverty or racism, for example, to the micro level of the individual (Thornton, 2013). Entrenched inequalities experienced by Indigenous peoples could thus be conceptualised under neoliberalism as 'individual failings' attached to notions of deviance, deficit, lifestyle choice or welfare abuse (Stanford & Taylor, 2013, p. 477). As noted by Aileen Moreton-Robinson (2009) – Geonpul woman from Minjerribah (Stradbroke Island), Quandamooka First Nation (Moreton Bay) in Queensland – neoliberalism has facilitated the pathologisation of Indigenous peoples, with their socio-economic disadvantage being attributed to cultural dysfunction, rather than to the strategies of the settler-colonial state.

Neoliberal developments throughout the 1990s and early 2000s also enabled a discourse of 'new' racism in the dominant imagination whereby middle-class white Australians were perceived to be the new disadvantaged – i.e. let down by Aboriginal people whom they had generously endeavoured to

'help' (Anderson, 2002). A 'mutual obligation' approach was embraced within education wherein focus was shifted from what White society must do to redress racism and enhance inclusion, to Indigenous peoples, their attitudes, and allegedly poor behaviours. As an expression of neoliberalism, mutual obligation saw the setting of specific nation-wide educational standards and far greater emphasis on monitoring Indigenous students and communities to ensure compliance with the dominant order and greater scholastic returns (Hamilton & Madison, 2007). As several writers state, neoliberal policies therefore work in the service of structural racism by, among other means, fixing attention on individual choice boosted by the presumption that the only obstacle to social or scholastic success in life is lack of self-help or proper self-regulation (see, for example, Giroux, 2018; Goldberg, 2009; Lentin, 2020).

Under neoliberalism, the national Closing the Gap on Indigenous Disadvantage policy (COAG, 2009a), formulated in 2008 with bipartisan support, has focused on achieving "statistical parity between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and non-Indigenous Australians" (Dawson et al., 2021, p. 527) across a suite of socio-economic targets, four of which relate to education. Collectively, these targets are based on "neoliberal understandings of what constitutes the good life" (Dawson et al., 2021, p. 527). Thus, under Closing the Gap policy:

> 'Success' is defined by the extent to which Indigenous Australians conform to a set of pre-determined, measurable characteristics of the non-Indigenous ideal, while 'failure' is any outcome that falls below, or manifests outside the scope of these ideal indicators. The measurement of progress in Closing the Gap relies on comparable data; there is little use for indicators unique to Indigenous Australians without a comparative dataset from the non-Indigenous population. This means that anything that may be uniquely positive about being an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander person is of little relevance to the 'evidence base'. (Pholi, Black & Richards, 2009, p. 10)

Howard-Wagner (2018) argues that "the epistemic practices underpinning the Indigenous policy processes of the paternalistic neoliberal state represent a deeply invasive and insidious racial project and a form of contemporary colonialism" (p. 1346) – hence why mutual obligation policies in education are sometimes called 'neo-colonialism' (Carter & Hollinsworth, 2017). Under current policy approaches, Indigenous peoples are rendered as "statistical units containing a range of indicators of deficit, which are to be measured, monitored and rectified" (Pholi, Black & Richards, 2009, p. 11). And "in seeking to improve Aboriginal students' educational outcomes, the majority of these policies and programmes have been directed at Aboriginal students, parents and caregivers … rather than education systems" (Parkinson & Jones, 2019, p. 76).

One of the most conspicuous hallmarks of neoliberalism in education has been an increased focus on standardised competitive testing (Connell, 2013), comparison, benchmarking and metrics, with Indigenous culture frequently characterised as contributing to measurable 'achievement gaps' (Anderson, Yip & Diamond, 2022, p. 1). Given that standardised tests are calibrated according to the language and culture of power, Spillman (2017) notes:

> In real and significant ways, the standardization discourse and approach to education implemented in Australian schools over the past decade, assigns Indigenous children and families to a never-ending game of 'catch-up' with little regard for their strengths,

perspectives and aspirations. In doing so it replicates the unequal power relations of the colonial agenda. (p. 140)

Referring to Closing the Gap policies collectively, Pholi, Black and Richards (2009) argue,

If we, as a nation, feel a need to measure our performance in closing a gap, perhaps we should be attempting to measure and monitor progress in the delivery of power and control over the Indigenous affairs agenda into the hands of Indigenous Australians. (p. 11)

Although in 2020, Closing the Gap policy was refreshed[10] – and whilst the new targets promise greater Aboriginal involvement in implementation and measurement, strengthened internal accountability mechanisms for government, and new commitments to redress structural racism in mainstream government organisations – the focus remains squarely on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, and not necessarily on the work that needs to be done to re-educate and transform White society. It is also worth noting that in 2007 the United Nations General Assembly adopted the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) (UN General Assembly, 2007). The declaration contains 46 articles which outline Indigenous peoples' rights and the obligations of nations towards Indigenous peoples. UNDRIP is not, however, legally binding and cannot override domestic law. Australia, under the Howard Coalition government, was one of the four countries that refused to endorse UNDRIP, a stance that was later reversed by the Rudd Labor Government in 2009.

For the purposes of this review, it is significant that Article 14 of UNDRIP explicitly articulates the rights of Indigenous Peoples in relation to education:

1. Indigenous peoples have the right to establish and control their educational systems and institutions providing education in their own languages, in a manner appropriate to their cultural methods of teaching and learning.

2. Indigenous individuals, particularly children, have the right to all levels and forms of education of the State without discrimination.

3. States shall, in conjunction with Indigenous peoples, take effective measures, in order for Indigenous individuals, particularly children, including those living outside their communities, to have access, when possible, to an education in their own culture and provided in their own language. (UN General Assembly, 2007, p. 7)

In the years since Australia endorsed UNDRIP, and despite the stated commitment to take action, successive Federal governments have failed to comply with their UNDRIP obligations (Australian Human Rights Commission, 2021). As Shay and Lampert (2022) have recently emphasised, "There is an established international rights framework developed by the United Nations, yet Australia continues to develop policies that are at odds with these rights frameworks" (p. 59).

Present-day Paradox

As this brief historical overview demonstrates, education for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students in Australia has shifted from patent exclusion to mediated inclusion, periods of self-

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[10] See https://www.closingthegap.gov.au/.

determination and empowerment and, more recently, the arguable marginalisation of Indigenous rights under the language and policies of neoliberalism. Simultaneously, APST asks that teachers cater equitably for cultural diversity. This includes: demonstrating broad knowledge and understanding of the impact of culture, cultural identity and linguistic background on the education of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students (AITSL, focus area 1.4); understanding and respecting First Nations cultures and histories to promote reconciliation (focus area 2.4); and Indigenising curriculum by utlising the Australian Curriculum and Reporting Authority (ACARA) 'Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Histories and Cultures' Cross-Curriculum Priority (CCP) and 'Intercultural Understanding' General Capability (ACARA, 2022b).

Teachers and schools across all sectors are thus faced with a paradox: to cater equitably for cultural diversity and respect Aboriginality whilst simultaneously satisfying standardised education regimes which, by privileging the language and culture of the Anglo mainstream, fundamentally undermine Aboriginality. As indicated in the preface to this review, whilst standardisation in education is not wholly repressive – for instance, standardised tests may be utilised diagnostically to determine where efforts to equip all learners with the language and culture of power are failing – when tethered to competitive mechanisms such as league tables[11] or overly simplistic conceptions of what constitutes educational 'success', standards in education obscure and exacerbate the racialised inequalities inherent to the tests themselves.

Neoliberalism in education is of course contested and as mutual obligation discourses came to fruition in the late 1990s/early 2000s so too did a 'resistance' approach that, in many parts of Australia, returned emphasis to Indigenous empowerment and the critical re-education of white people. Rigney, Rigney and Tur (2003) describe developments that took place in South Australian teacher education courses, which continue to play out nationally (albeit inconsistently). From this standpoint, deficit conceptualisations of Aboriginality are actively resisted and refused through a process of valuing Aboriginal perspectives, adopting whole-school approaches, subscribing to high expectations of all learners, and valuing Indigenous staff and community (see for example Sarra, 2003; Sarra, 2011). Many Australian teacher education courses are designed to enable pre-service teachers to critically "analyse and reflect on their practice in schools and their relationship to the Indigenous child and their communities" (Rigney et al., 2003, p. 136). Rather than focus on Indigenous students' (in)proficiencies, unique needs or (in)abilities, within discourses of resistance and refusal the gaze is redirected to the way in which historical representations of Aboriginality "exist as images and reflections of a non-Indigenous society" (Vass & Hogarth, 2022, p. 1). White pre-service teachers' consciousness is raised by highlighting how hegemonic European assumptions and stereotypes about Aboriginal peoples still permeate the teaching fraternity – a fraternity that is still overwhelmingly white (Vass, 2014; MacGill,

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[11] As multiple scholars note (see for example Mockler, 2013; Niesche, 2015; Redden & Low, 2012; Ragusa & Bousfield, 2017; Connell, 2013), when data drawn from Australia's MySchool website (MySchool.edu.au) is published in newspaper-generated league tables, especially within the context of tabloid news sites, the supposed 'transparency' offered to parents who can afford to choose educational alternatives for their child is highly misleading. Test scores on a single test do not reveal all that is needed to know about student achievement or school quality. When the tests at the heart of competitive school league tables are standardised on the language and culture of the urban-dwelling Anglo mainstream, results realistically say more about where a child is located in social relations and the consequent degrees of privilege or disadvantage that this affords them, than they do about school quality or scholastic achievement.

2022). Moreover, resistance in this sense is not merely about opposition, but about agitating for equitable social change by exposing and destabilising covert racism.

Despite these good intentions, educational disparities in Australia are widening along race lines and myriad scholars expose the inequalities that characterise contemporary Australian education. Owing to competitive pressures, teachers and schools describe having *insufficient time* to incorporate Aboriginal perspectives (Williams & Morris, 2022), being *reluctant/fearful* of getting Aboriginal Education wrong (Riley et al, 2019; O'Keefe et al., 2019), *lacking knowledge*, confidence, or know-how (Harrison & Greenfield, 2011; Thorpe et al., 2021) and being *bereft of adequate support* structures to do this work well (White et al., 2022). Added to this, Pirbhai-Illich, Pete and Martin (2017) argue:

> There is nothing in westernized education systems that does not create violence, from the assumptions about what counts as education and whose knowledge counts in the curriculum to the teacher-learner relationships and the methods of instruction that are used. (p. 12)

Throughout settler-colonial interactions in Australia and internationally, Western constructs of education have been wielded as colonising tools (Rudolph, 2019). Given the historical and current experiences of Australian Indigenous peoples in their encounters with Western schooling, it is hardly surprising that educational institutions are so often experienced as sites of harm (Bishop, 2022; Bishop, Vass & Thompson, 2021; Lowe, Skrebneva, et al., 2021). Mainstream educational sites have produced what Andersen and Ma Rhea (2018) refer to as 'intergenerational educative trauma' that includes "experiences of alienation [and] negative self-concept" (Bishop, 2021, p. 422) within a context of pervasive racism: from intrapersonal micro-aggressions right through to the systems level (Bodkin-Andrews & Carlson, 2016; Bodkin-Andrews et al., 2021; Moodie, Maxwell & Rudolph, 2019). Indeed, in naming racism Brown (2019) refers to 'the indirect violence' of the school curriculum and policy which locate disadvantage as an inherent and "self-evident part of Aboriginality" (p. 65). So extensive is the harm caused by schooling that Indigenous scholars reiterate the urgent need for genuine self-determination in education (Bishop, 2022; Morgan, 2018), with Bishop, Vass and Thompson (2021) stating, "[t]he intergenerational consequences of harmful schooling practices must be halted and overturned" (p. 208).

Whilst as Ford (2013) comments, "It is hard to imagine an education system that has failed a cohort of students so badly" (p. 98), Rudolph (2019) reminds us of the dual possibilities of education: "to destroy and alienate [… or] empower and liberate" (p. 2). For very good reason, many Indigenous peoples are sceptical of the potential for schooling to act as an agent of empowerment and liberation. Bishop (2021) comments wryly, "Through my critical Aboriginal lens, I do not view schools as 'broken', but, rather, operating perfectly, as they were intended: as part of an imperial agenda" (p. 421). What needs to change to turn this around?

> How do we change an education system that has been and continues to be a linchpin of settler colonial dispossession, to benefit Indigenous people? (Brown, 2019, p. 65)

The literature considered in this review challenges the notion that Indigenous peoples and their cultures are 'problems' to be fixed and instead problematises schooling systems that fail to serve Indigenous communities in ways that empower, liberate and honour Indigenous sovereignty. We thus consider schooling approaches that support Indigenous (and non-Indigenous) peoples in the ongoing project of decolonisation.

Methodology

In recent years, there has been a groundswell of educational research conducted by Indigenous scholars, and this literature review intentionally privileges their knowledges. Here, the plural 'knowledges' is used deliberately to emphasise the diversity of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. As Phillips and Luke (2017) articulate, there is no 'singular, homogeneous entity' that constitutes 'the Indigenous Community' (p. 960), and nor should we expect there to be.

Methodologically, there is currently a strong academic focus on systematic literature reviews in relation to Indigenous Education (see, for example, the series of systematic literature reviews generated through the Aboriginal Voices project, summarised in Moodie, Vass & Lowe 2021b). Consideration was given to the systematic review approach, which has specific strengths as well as limitations (for discussion of strengths see Moodie, Vass & Lowe, 2021b and for potential limitations, see Lowe, Tennent, et al. 2019 and Moodie, Maxwell & Rudolph 2019). We opted for a narrative approach in keeping with Greenhalgh et al.'s (2018) observation that conventional systematic reviews tend to address narrowly focused questions in an endeavour to summarise the field. In contrast, "narrative reviews provide interpretation and critique; their key contribution is deepening understanding" (p. 2). We also adhere to Rigney's (1999) Indigenist principle of centring Indigenous voices in scholarship about Indigenous peoples – a principle that can be undermined by systematic methods that are ill-equipped to identify First Nations scholars or which overlook research that falls outside of search parameters, despite it privileging First Nations knowledges.[12] Smith (2012) says, "scientific measures of rigor are well recognized by Indigenous scholars to impose paradigms that refuse to recognize Indigenous epistemologies and ontologies as valid forms of knowledges" (as cited in Shay & Sarra 2021, p. 168). Moreover, the forms of objectivity and validity to which the systematic method lays claim are at odds with scholarship grounded in a relational worldview, which fundamentally contests myths of ontological separability – i.e. the idea that we can 'stand on the outside looking in' in a detached or objective way rather than knowing through *being* and *relating*, and through listening to Aboriginal voices (Tynan & Bishop, 2022).[13]

Given that we come to this project as Indigenous (Blanch and Buckskin) and non-Indigenous (Schulz, Corrie and Morrison) educators and qualitative researchers in 'post-racial', postcolonising times (Moreton-Robinson, 2013; Kamaloni, 2019), we must utilise research tools that challenge myths of ontological separability or race neutrality. We represent both the dominant group that 'controls' educational systems and knowledge production practices while benefiting from Indigenous dispossession, as well as sovereign subjects whose wisdom, perspectives, practices, and knowledges often remain silenced, denied, or invisible within and beyond Western research and educational institutions. We cannot be 'objective and neutral' in our selection and analysis of literature, at least not in an objectivist sense; we are cultural beings shaped by our differential locations in race relations.

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[12] It is important to note that in the *Aboriginal Voices* project by Lowe et al., efforts were made to incorporate an Indigenised systematic review method however, this does not necessarily reflect the norm in systemic literature review methodology.

[13] We caution against deference to Aboriginal voices as a method of unintentionally abrogating responsibility. Forming genuine educational coalitions requires critical dialogue – see Lentin (2020) on the dangers of slipping into uncritical performances of deference that fragment collectivity, and Olúfẹ́mi Táíwò (2020) on privilege and deference.

In adopting a narrative approach, we argue that technical measures for achieving rigour will achieve little unless they are embedded in a broader understanding of the rationale and assumptions behind qualitative, race critical research (Barbour 2001). In our selection of literature and analysis of the field, we consequently draw on 'race' and whiteness as reflexive tools that are central to our approach. We understand 'race' as a social construction, regime of power, repeated practice, and political project that is both local in character and global in reach (Bargallie & Lentin, 2021). We understand whiteness as a socially constructed category that is "normalised within systems that privilege Whites" (Zembylas, 2018, p. 86). Race and whiteness also function akin to social power: reaching into every detail of life, shaping our ways of being and our sense of our identities, circumscribing what we do and do not 'see', and oftentimes, determining what constitutes 'valid' educational research. Understanding how discourses of race/whiteness contribute to our worlds and identities increases the possibilities of us going beyond the limits that they impose, including as researcher/educators.

Using a race critical lens as our starting point, the literature base for this review was rigorously developed through an iterative process of reference harvesting coupled with extensive keyword searches using Google Scholar, Scopus and education databases. The search primarily included peer-reviewed academic publications, complemented by State and National policy documents, but we have also consciously at times included materials that fall well outside of formal search parameters; for instance, in the section of the review entitled Learners we incorporate excerpts from the Imagination Declaration, which foregrounds young First Nations' voices. We agree with Tynan and Bishop (2022) when they affirm that what 'counts' as literature in the context of formal academic literature reviews, is a Western construct. When seeking to learn from and value Indigenous Knowings, this "means that literature (or knowledge of this topic) primarily exists outside academia (print-based mediums) with Indigenous People. The acknowledgment that 'literature' exists beyond academic prescription is fundamental" (Tynan & Bishop, 2022, p. 5).

Added to this collection we also include documents produced by Catholic Education bodies in Australia, where these were publicly accessible. Surprisingly few academic publications were identified relating the schooling of Australian Indigenous students in Catholic institutions specifically, with some exceptions being two doctoral theses (Cresp, 1994; Jones, 2018) and a very recent literature review on improving Indigenous student outcomes compiled for Catholic Education Tasmania (Auld et al., 2021). There is also a series of key research reports conducted by academics in partnership with Catholic Education, Townsville (Boon & Lewthwaite, 2016; Lewthwaite, Boon, Webber & Laffin, 2016; Lewthwaite, Boon, Webber & Laffin, 2017; Lewthwaite, Osborne, et al., 2015; Lewthwaite, Webber, et al., 2015; Llewellyn, Boon & Lewthwaite, 2018; Lloyd, Lewthwaite, Osborne & Boon, 2015). Although the initial searches encompassed both international and Australian literature, the review primarily focuses on recent Australian literature, with priority given to First Nations scholarship.

Finally, when developing the project's ethics application, we applied the AIATSIS Code of Ethics, the NHMRC 'Ethical conduct in research with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples and communities: Guidelines for researchers and stakeholders', and the Universities Australia updated 'National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research'. The ethics application was submitted for full review and approved by both Catholic Education of South Australia and The University of Adelaide Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC number H-2022-085) under the guidance of a First Nations reviewer.

Outline of the review

Given that deficit discourses underpin 'Closing the Gap' (Brown, 2019; Fforde et al., 2013), it is hardly surprising that the initiative has produced a plethora of policy and analysis that frames Indigenous peoples as 'lacking' when measured against their non-Indigenous counterparts (see for example Fahey, 2021; Productivity Commission, 2016a, b). Educational policy makers are keen to identify the 'silver bullet' (cf. Rose 2012, p. 74) that will rectify these perceived deficits, and technical solutions to educational 'problems' are sought often with little interrogation of the education system itself, or simply by 'blaming teachers' (Connell, 2013). Anderson, Yip and Diamond (2022) reverse the analytic gaze from Indigenous peoples to school systems by asking, 'How ready is the education system to educate Indigenous students to their full potential'? As Vass and colleagues (2019) note, schooling has failed too many Australian Indigenous students for too long. Therefore, in this review we focus on the 'accumulated deficits' (Hardy, 2016) of schooling and frame these deficits as the 'education debt' (Ladson-Billings, 2006) owed to Australian Indigenous young people, their families, Countries, and communities. In doing so, we aim to illuminate both the persistent, endemic problems that marginalise and undermine Indigenous peoples through schooling, as well as exploring hopeful alternatives.

This review considers several key themes that consistently arise in the critical literature on Australian Indigenous schooling and education. These themes are:

- Cultural Responsivity
- Racial Literacy
- Leaders, Educators, and Learners
- Professional Learning
- Curriculum
- Pedagogy
- Relationships and Wellbeing

We do not claim that these themes cover all dimensions of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education in Australia. For example, we do not include a specific focus on remote schooling, not because this isn't a conspicuous theme in the literature, but because the Catholic education system in South Australia does not currently have a presence in very remote regions (although, at times, students from these regions attend Catholic schools via boarding arrangements).

This literature review intentionally uses a narrative approach to tell a 'story' of Indigenous schooling in Australia; one that counters majoritarian stories that permeate education policy discourses of Indigenous deficit or failure. Referring to knowledge exchange in Indigenous societies, Bodkin-Andrews and colleagues (2017) comment that "storytelling becomes an ongoing process of mutual learning that was not frozen into one time point, or one 'research paper' or 'literature review'" (p. 242). This review therefore provides a partial snapshot of recent and current literature. As external circumstances and priorities change – socially, economically, and politically – for the Australian education system generally and for Catholic Education specifically, and as Indigenous and non-Indigenous scholars grapple with existing and emerging issues, it will be imperative to revisit the literature on a cyclical basis.

Cultural Responsivity

In response to the problematic ways – outlined in the Introduction – that mainstream Australian schooling has variously failed, excluded, undervalued, underestimated, or underserved Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as well as depriving all Australians of a culturally enriched mainstream education that draws on over 60,000 years of Indigenous wisdom, the notion of 'cultural responsivity' has surfaced as a hopeful way forward. Cultural responsivity is an approach for working within and against the codes of the 'dominant' society, not by replacing but by augmenting them (Brayboy & Castagno, 2009) – in other words, by learning to use the dominant culture counter-hegemonically and, importantly, by understanding that scholastic engagement and 'success' comes only through valuing students' diverse cultural assets. Whilst we explore the notion of cultural responsivity with more depth in upcoming sections, it is important to establish that such an approach does not negate the many and varied orientations to Aboriginal Education that remain valuable, even if at times contested. For instance:

- 8 ways
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Mathematics Alliance (ATSIMA)
- Australians Together
- Both-ways/Two-ways schooling
- Creative and Body-Based Learning (CBL)
- Critical Place Based Learning
- Ethics of Care
- Flexi schooling
- Funds of Knowledge
- Koori Curriculum
- Learning from Country
- Narragunnawali: Reconciliation in Education
- Object Based Learning (OBL)
- Rap/Hip Hop
- Reconciliation Pedagogies
- Red Dirt Curriculum
- Respect, Relationships, Reconciliation
- Storytelling Pedagogies/Counter storytelling
- Stronger Smarter
- The Final Quarter – Education Suite
- The Resistance Model
- What Works
- Woven Curriculum[14]
- Yes, I Can! Community Literacy
- Your Story, Our Journey

We consider some of these approaches in forthcoming sections; however, here we start with cultural responsivity as an overarching philosophy. As a broad and evolving set of practices and critical philosophical stance, culturally responsive schooling contests the fundamental misconception that there is a discrete or singular orientation to Aboriginal education based on the erroneous assumption of a discrete or singular 'Aboriginal culture'. Such misconceptions – sometimes associated with

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[14] See King (forthcoming).

methods such as Aboriginal Learning Styles Theory (Nicholls, Crowley & Watt, 1996) – are problematically rooted in an essentialist ontology of race. In contrast, key assertions of culturally responsive education include that culture is neither completely fluid nor fixed, that First Nations cultures are not homogenous, that culture is not a 'thing' existing within racially or ethnically marked 'Others', and that White Australia is not cultureless. Starting with an understanding of culture is useful for becoming culturally responsive.

Castagno and Brayboy (2008, p. 943) offer the metaphor of an anchor. From here, culture is both stable (i.e. rooted to an 'ocean floor' such as the lands where groups and their ancestors have lived) as well as evolving (i.e. ebbing and flowing with the tides or with the lives, contexts, and situations of people that change over time). Culture is collective in the sense of signalling the belief systems, customs, histories, stories, norms, values, and quotidian practices that bind people together – like an invisible 'map' for navigating day-to-day life and interacting with people and the world – as well as unique in terms of filtering through individuals such that culture is performed, resisted, and adjusted in myriad, dynamic ways. Castagno and Brayboy (2008) go further in delineating three core elements whereby culture is simultaneously:

1. Dynamic and settled, thus offering room for stability as well as growth
2. Unchanging when rooted in resistance against oppressive or dominating forces
3. Political when vested in shared beliefs that strategically distinguish one group from others

As Blanch (2009, p. 61) says with respect to the culture of young Nunga males in the context of mainstream South Australian schooling, "culture [is] the thing that connects them to past and future and Country – dynamic but secure, in which there are certainties." Culture thus affirms Nunga sovereignty. Drawing on the words of Professor Irene Watson, Nunga lawyer, writer, and activist – speaking of Kaurna people of the Adelaide Plains, their creator Tjilbruke the fire eater, and Kaurna understandings of identity through connection to land, culture, and people – Blanch elaborates:

> Nungas coexisted in the law; we were not waiting to be 'discovered' or waiting to be granted the right to be self-determining, for we were already the truth of who we were as Nungas. The colonial state cannot 'grant' us who we are, for it was never theirs to give. (Watson as cited in Blanch, 2009, p. 62)

Culture is both central to Aboriginal sovereignty and central to schooling, even though dominant orientations to schooling have denied or disavowed First Nations cultures through imposing White cultural norms and practices. Young Aboriginal people are thus subject to complex cultural pressures within the context of mainstream Australian schooling. Culture influences every aspect of how we think, interact, and communicate as well as how curriculum, pedagogy, and assessment are conceptualised and implemented (Gay as cited in Vass, 2017). It therefore follows that if culture is fundamental, yet not wholly fixed, then culturally responsive schooling is fundamental, but not necessarily static or prescriptive. In other words, culturally responsive schooling is not reducible to a checklist model that freezes culture in time. Rather, it is about relationships. It is dynamically responsive to, respectful of, and adaptable to the cultural assets of students and communities, especially those whose assets have been habitually ignored or denied. Such an approach is hence culture-centred (Morrison et al., 2019) and, rather than including 'different' groups into an unreconstructed centre that entrenches the privileges of the dominant group (Yosso, 2005), culturally responsive schooling is counter-hegemonic. In Australia, to be counter-hegemonic means

acknowledging Indigenous sovereignty (as well as its ongoing denial) as the starting point for the ways in which 'all Australians come into relationship' (Nicoll, 2004).

Rather than reproduce a whitewashed or hegemonic model of schooling that achieves inclusion by compensating for perceived student/community deficits (Gay as cited in Vass, 2017), culturally responsive schooling is equity-oriented (Maher, 2022). It starts by valuing the cultural assets of learners through education that is genuinely caring, relational, socio-politically informed, and dialogic (Sleeter, 2011) – it is about bringing people together in meaningful encounters, engaging in dialogue, and building relationships. Moreover, given that all people are cultural beings, and all people are culture producing, culturally responsive schooling extends beyond a detached focus on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander learners to centre our relations *with* one another. Culturally responsive education is thus 'good' education for everyone, for as Banks says, cultural responsivity should be focused on "empowering *all* students to become knowledgeable, caring, and active citizens" (as cited in Vass, 2017, p. 453) who learn to live together respectfully in increasingly complex times.

The genesis of culturally responsive education can be traced to the civil rights movement in the USA (Pirbhai-Illich, Pete & Martin, 2017, p. 4). The subsequent work of African American scholars Gloria Ladson-Billings (1995a, b) and Geneva Gay (2002, 2010) was foundational in challenging the educational marginalisation of African American and Latinx students. Castagno and Brayboy (2008) advanced the concept of cultural responsivity in the context of schooling for Native American young people. Since then, culturally responsive schooling has been explored in other settler-colonial contexts where minoritised groups have experienced educational disadvantage, including New Zealand (e.g. Bishop, Berryman, Cavanagh & Teddy, 2007), Africa (e.g. Anohah & Suhonen, 2016; Biraimah, 2016; Paris & Alim, 2017), Canada (e.g. Lewthwaite et al., 2014; Parhar & Sensoy, 2011) and South America (e.g. Ortiz, 2009). In South Australia specifically, the work of Professor Lester-Irabinna Rigney (descendant of the Narungga, Kaurna and Ngarrindjeri peoples) and Professor Robert Hattam is vital,[15] as is the work of Associate Professor Kevin Lowe (Gubbi Gubbi man from southeast Queensland) in Australia more broadly (see Lowe, Skrebneva et al., 2021). Across this literature, some of the key tenets of culturally responsive education include:

1. Working with cultural diversity as a learning asset

2. Whole school commitments to embracing learners' funds of knowledge

3. Ensuring that learners experience academic success that leads to legitimate post-school pathways

4. Providing high support for learning school-based literacies (i.e. sufficient support for accessing the language and culture of power)

5. Eradicating deficit assumptions of culturally diverse learners by maintaining high expectations teamed with high support

6. Ensuring that learning at school helps develop/maintain a positive sense of cultural identity for all learners

7. Providing opportunities for everyone to engage with the cultural resources that learners bring

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[15] See https://culturallyresponsivepedagogy.com.au/.

8. Ensuring that school is a safe, harmonious, peaceful space where everyone feels included

9. Developing and sustaining productive and respectful educative relationships between learners, educators, and leaders

10. Sustaining a 'strong' version of learner voice – i.e. opportunities for students to experience, perform and learn about active citizenship locally and globally through immersion in power-sharing experiences

(Adapted from Hattam, 2018, pp. 270-71)

For these aspirations to be realised, especially points 5 and 8, requires acknowledging how 'racialised norms' function in schools to impede genuine cultural inclusion. This necessitates recognising how the transmission of dominant cultural knowledge and norms occurs far more frequently in Australian schools than the transmission and normalisation of First Nations (as well as other marginalised) cultures, which is an element of institutional racism. Understanding and transforming institutional racism begins with racial literacy.

Racial Literacy

If literacy broadly defines our capacities to read, communicate and inter/act in the world, then racial literacy expresses the capacity to read a racialised world and act from an anti-racist standpoint. Deriving from the work of Guinier (2004) and Twine (2004), racial literacy includes a broad set of linguistic, analytic, and affective or emotional tools for identifying and talking about racism while generating collective drive for anti-racist action (Laughter et al., 2022). Researchers accentuate 'literacy' to mark a reading practice that can be learned (Twine & Steinbugler, 2006), as well as cataloguing a broad range of associated skills, including (but not limited to):

- The capacity to temper emotional reactions, ask questions, seek clarity, and uncover power dynamics. (Flynn et al., 2018)

- Interrogate the intersections between race, class, geography, gender, and other social indicators to investigate the ways that race influences people's life chances, choices, and outcomes. (Oto et al., 2022; Flynn et al., 2018)

- Develop an ability to read and interpret materials, including curriculum materials, for their racialised construction, inclusions, exclusions, and implications. (Brown et al., 2022)

- Learn to listen deeply to real-life examples and stories of racial minorities to not only develop empathy but understand our interconnectedness. (Bargallie & Lentin, 2020)

- Learn how to 'listen' rather than know. (Guinier, 2004)

- Learn to talk in an informed and thoughtful way about race and racism, using appropriate vocabulary. (Oto et al, 2022; Diversity Council Australia, 2022)

- Learn to move beyond 'talking about race', to interrogating and countering racism. (Brown et al., 2021)

Flynn et al. (2018) explicitly emphasise 'literacy' because this concept:

> … involves having the ability to read and interpret materials and curricula as well as having the ability to ask questions and think carefully – embodying a stance as well as skills. In addition, there is not an 'endpoint' for literacy; it is *a continual process*, which is helpful for teaching and *learning about race*. (p. 241 emphasis added)

This definition highlights that learning about race is foundational to learning about racism, and that both are ongoing processes – we do not become racially literate overnight but develop understanding gradually. In part, this is because race is not a static entity that is simple to pin down. In Jhally and Hall's (2002) terms, race is motile – it is a floating signifier that is produced through language and repeatedly spoken/performed into existence. A good example of the changeability of race in the Australian context is the observation that Irish Catholic convicts were originally considered to be 'not fully white'. The 'whitening of the Irish' – their inclusion into the White centre – did not occur until the early nineteenth century (Stratton, 2011). This highlights that white too is a raced location despite white people rarely talking about themselves in terms of race; race is relegated to 'Others'. This is one of the normative effects of racial logics whereby white people typically considered themselves to be 'just human' (Dyer, 1997). As a sign, race thus signifies a dynamic underlying concept and as Hall (in Lentin, 2020, p. 5) further explains, race is a master concept that operates locally and globally to form

a worldwide classificatory system that actively produces differences in the maintenance of racial hierarchy.

The idea of 'race' as biological or genetic fact did not emerge until eighteenth and nineteenth century racial science (Stepan, 1982). Given that 'race' as biological fact has since been thoroughly discredited (see Lentin, 2012), it is often presumed that racism – or practices that legitimate the domination of one group over others – emerged in the nineteenth century as the upshot of erroneous science. However, contemporary race theorists invert this logic to argue that racism comes *first*, race comes *second.* Put differently, race as a legitimating concept that is eventually attached to 'scientific discoveries' and comes to work in the service of racism. Lentin (2020) says that this distinction is important because viewing racism in terms of 'moral wrongs' that follow bad science limits our understandings of racism to individual behaviours and obscures racism's lengthier history. Robinson (2021) traces its origins to the colonial experiments of feudal Europe (between roughly the fifth and fifteenth centuries) and argues that capitalism and racism emerged simultaneously given that capitalist social systems require social hierarchy. Racialisation processes – sorting people into categories – thus worked seamlessly in the service of proletarianisation: i.e. the making of workers or surplus groups who either facilitated the market or were locked out altogether. Capitalist societies thus benefit from race, and racism is less an accident of science than repeated social actions that sustain a racial/capitalist order.

By the late 1700s when Australia was 'discovered', these racial ideas were thoroughly developed and informed a taxonomy of primitivism that rendered Aboriginal peoples closer to primates than human being (Finzsch, 2005). Such ideas were fundamental to the British invasion of Australia insofar as British sovereignty was claimed on the basis of speculations that the land was barely inhabited and that the small number of 'native' people wandering the coast were biologically inferior and presumed incapable of legitimate proprietorship (Reynolds, 2021). These assumptions were enshrined in the legal fiction of *Terra Nullius*, which then precluded the establishment of official treaties. When the first waves of European settlement rolled out and it was obvious that there were Aboriginal groups living throughout the region with complex laws, customs and claims to distinct lands, white sovereignty had to be repeatedly and often violently reasserted (Tatz, 2013). Race was vital here in the sense that it could be used to justify "oppressive and discriminatory practices" (Lentin, 2020, p. 7). Moreover, as a political project and technology of rule (Bargallie & Lentin, 2020), race was fundamental to the ongoing creation of an explicitly White Australia whose legal, cultural, educational, linguistic, economic, religious and all other social systems would come naturally to privilege whiteness.

Racial literacy in contemporary Australia thus requires understanding that whiteness informs our 'default worldview' (Diversity Council Australia, 2022). Whiteness is a comprehensive social system that remains linked to colonisation and creates the conditions for myriad forms of racism through naturalising racial hierarchy. For white people to appreciate whiteness as a system of imposed normality, we concur with Auld and colleagues (2021) who cite a striking thought experiment articulated by Melissa Lucashenko, acclaimed First Nations writer of Goorie and European heritage. In *I'm not racist, but*, Lucashenko invites readers to imagine waking up in a world,

> … where only one in ten Australians are white. The Constitution and all the other laws are written in Bundjalung. The teachers of your children, the shopkeepers, the cops, the bankers, your neighbours, are all black people, who speak English (their second language) poorly if at all. It's a world where most white people are unemployed, there

are white ghettos, and where white people who die in custody had it coming. Where 'White Studies' is a fringe subject at university, not like the serious studies of History (Indigenous history, that is) and Aboriginal Science. Where whites who succeed are held up as an example to their people, and those who don't are simply confirming the low expectations that the majority hold for your lot. Where you see faces unlike your own all day every day in positions of power, and you know the jails are full of white criminals and misfits. Where you see what is done daily to white people, and you protest, but where all too often you hear the standard, ingrained, meaningless reply, "I'm not prejudiced against white people, but." (as cited in Auld et al., 2021, pp. 27-8)

Given that whiteness 'normalises' race (or the sorting of people into categories), and that race functions to justify racism (or the actions that emerge from and are vindicated by this racial sorting), racism remains a serious and growing social issue in Australia today. Recently, there has been a dramatic rise in racism specifically towards Asian-Australians following the outbreak of COVID-19 (Markus, 2021), as well as a worldwide rise in white supremacism following an upsurge in far-right populist movements across Europe, the USA and elsewhere (Zembylas, 2021). Racism in its contemporary forms is thus varied and reactive to socio-political imperatives, yet to be racially literate requires remembering that all forms of contemporary Australian racism remain rooted in colonisation and the foundational denial of Indigenous sovereignty (Brown et al., 2021) – foregrounding the latter is important for acknowledging "the uniqueness of Aboriginal experiences of racism" (Lowe & Weuffen, 2022, p. 5). Racial literacy therefore requires appreciation of the roots of racial formation in Australia as well as racism in its dynamic, emergent forms.

The Diversity Council of Australia (2022, p. 18) offer the following framework as a starting point for identifying racism:

1. Interpersonal racism: whereby racist beliefs, attitudes or behaviours manifest and are expressed at the individual level in ways that directly or indirectly discriminate, exclude, or disadvantage people from racially marginalised groups.

2. Systemic racism: whereby racist beliefs, attitudes or behaviours manifest at organisational or institutional levels in ways that directly or indirectly discriminate, exclude, or disadvantage people from racially marginalised groups.

Hinson, Healey and Weinsenberg (2011, p. 15) offer an expanded framework that includes:

3. Internalised racism: where members of stigmatised groups, who are bombarded with negative messages about their abilities and intrinsic worth, may internalise those negative messages, which holds people back from achieving their fullest potential while obscuring the structural and systemic nature of racial oppression and reinforces those systems.
4. Institutional racism: Where assumptions about race are structured into the social and economic institutions in society. Institutional racism occurs when organisations, businesses, or institutions like schools and police departments discriminate, either deliberately or indirectly, against certain groups of people to limit their rights. This type of racism reflects the cultural assumptions of the dominant group.
5. Structural/Cultural racism: This refers to the accumulation over centuries of the effects of a racialised society, which become normalised.

Cultural racism informs the dominant group's everyday acceptance of a racialised status quo, which is perhaps the most prevalent form of racism in Australia today. Cultural racism has been fuelled by discourses of 'post-racism', which peaked with the 2009 election of US President Barack Obama. The

belief was, if a black person could rise to power, then racial equality had been achieved, racism had been overstated if not fabricated in the first place, and all Western individuals were free to flourish (McAllen, 2011). In Australia, post-racism has seen overt racist incidents repeatedly passed off as the 'one bad apple' or 'famed Australian humour' (Kamaloni, 2019, p. 4), whereby 'sanitising statements' – *slips of the tongue, jokes* – are used to deflect, deny, or distance those who use racist expressions from claims of racism (Lentin, 2020). Post-racial beliefs are often nowadays at the basis of what Tobias and Joseph (2020) call 'psychological gaslighting'; when the targets of racism who dare speak out are met with backlash that undermines the speaker's credibility or even character. A clear expression in the Australian context relates to the recent experiences of Adnyamathanha/Narungga man Adam Goodes – dual Brownlow Medallist, dual premiership winner, 2014 Australian of the Year for his sporting achievements and anti-racist activism, and elite athlete in the Australian Football League (AFL).

Goodes spoke out when a racist slur was aimed at him during the 2013 AFL Indigenous round – a round designed to celebrate Aboriginal players and cultures. The slur was delivered by a white, 13-year-old spectator who called Goodes an 'ape'. Despite repeatedly clarifying that it was not the 13-year-old at fault but a culture that naturalises racism, in the wake of the incident Goodes was relentlessly chastised by vast sectors of the AFL media, football fans, and members of Australia's powerful conservative commentariat who variously claimed that he had 'attacked an innocent child', 'demonised a child', 'endeavoured to divide the nation', 'offended the nation', 'let down the nation', and/or 'fabricated racism', with the backlash manifesting in scores of spectators booing Goodes whenever he was on field (see Schulz et al., 2022). Multiple public figures, mostly white, staunchly claimed that the booing was not racist, with many spectators and commentators utilising the 'football defense' – the argument that Goodes concocted racism to divert attention from his supposed cheating. Despite the latter claim being thoroughly debunked, those adopting 'the defense' could use it to continue booing whilst distancing themselves from claims of 'racist' booing (Schulz et al., 2023). Practices of distancing and deflection were thus widely deployed over the two-year course of Goodes' highly publicised racial vilification, with the effect that racism continued under guises of innocence, confusion, ritualised spectatorship, or denial. As Lentin (2020) says, deflection, distancing and denial are characteristic of 'not racism': the belief that racism does not exist or must be intentional to be racist, which takes the power define racism "away from those most affected by it" (p. 14). 'Not racism' is a particularly insidious form of contemporary Australian racism which gains power from environments in which post-truth and post-racial discourses are tolerated or even endorsed.

These dynamics are not confined to the realm of Australian sport. Brown and colleagues (2021) explain that "the current social and political environment in Australia revolves around debates charged with racial tension, such as the constant questioning of whether racism is real [and] whether 'Australia' is racist" (p. 83). As a clear illustration, speaking recently in Federal parliament, one senator expressed: "I might live in a bubble perhaps, but I find it very difficult to find any but very rare cases of racism in Australia" (Senator Ian Macdonald).[16] **Race blindness** of this nature does not necessarily denote wilful ignorance but relates, also, to a speaker's positionality. As race theorist Ruth Frankenberg (1993) notes, the relations of race tend to remain invisible to those who benefit most from them; racial privilege bestows blinkers. When rescaled to the classroom, unintentional or covert forms of racism most frequently manifest in **colour blindness** – the idea that racial inequality does not exist or is best resolved through avoiding discussions of race or treating 'everyone the same'; colour blindness is

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[16] https://www.abc.net.au/news/2018-05-24/racism-in-australia-is-isolated-says-lnp-senator-ian-macdonald/9795220

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often associated with the claim 'I don't see colour'. Although colour blind racism is generally well-intentioned, its consequences are dire. Aboriginal sociologists Maggie Walter and Kathy Butler (2013) explain:

> Professing colour-blindness exculpates those who are racially privileged from responsibility for the unequal status and disadvantage of those who are not and, critically, from overtly recognising their own race privilege. Disavowing the racial dividend embeds the status quo. (p. 401)

Colour blind racism is closely associated with the term coined by DiAngelo (2019) **white fragility**:

> A state in which even a minimum amount of racial stress becomes intolerable, triggering a range of defensive moves. These moves include the outward display of emotions such as anger, fear, and guilt, and behaviours such as argumentation, silence, and leaving the stress-inducing situation. These behaviours, in turn, function to reinstate white racial equilibrium. (p. 54)

Other unintentional but consequential forms of racism in education include **curricula exclusion** – the repeated failure to include First Nations voices, stories or perspectives, which hence constitutes what Professor Marcia Langton AO, descendent of the Iman People, describes as racism via representation: 'the act of making the Other invisible' (1993, p. 24). **Deficit thinking** is an equally widespread manifestation of covert racism, which Morrison et al. (2019) say occurs when educators or other school/centre personnel view Aboriginal students or their families as 'a problem' to be fixed or as incapable of rigorous learning. Deficit thinking typically results in low expectations of Aboriginal learners, watered-down learning experiences, poor or no educator relationships with parents/caregivers, suspension, or even expulsion (Llewellyn, Lewthwaite & Boon, 2016). Flynn, Worden and Rolón-Dow (2018, p. 241) suggest that racial literacy amongst educators is thus an important corrective for the reproduction of these covert racisms, and involves the development of at least five key insights:

1. Understanding that racism is a contemporary problem, not just something in the past
2. Understanding that race is socially constructed but has a profound effect on educational experiences and outcomes (in other words, manifests materially)
3. Recognising ways in which racism is institutionalised in systems like education
4. Gaining comfort/practice in reading, reflecting on, and addressing racially stressful encounters
5. Applying our racial literacy stance and skills to our understanding of our role as educators.

Vass (2014) adds specificity to this framework with his exploration of Australia's racialised educational landscape. Drawing on the work of Harris (1993) as well as Ladson-Billings and Tate (2006), Vass (2014) suggests that racism as whiteness (i.e. as imposed norm) manifests in Australian educational institutions in the form of 'White property' that functions by enabling: (1) the rights of disposition; (2) rights to use and enjoyment; (3) reputation and status property; and (4) the absolute right to exclude. He explains:

1. The rights of disposition: Dominant cultural knowledge is naturalised in education systems as the norm against which 'all others' are judged. These dynamics are exacerbated by national, standardised assessment mechanisms, namely the National Assessment Programme – Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN), which centres White knowledge and capitals, making it a culturally unfair mechanism. The pressure to teach learners the White cultural capital required

to do well on such tests leads to a situation where learners are rewarded for performing whiteness. Amidst these dynamics, the statistically poor outcomes of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander learners on the NAPLAN becomes a focus of concern that is problematised, rather than problematising and reforming the socio-historical structures that have created inequality in the first place. Consequently, "the NAPLAN appears to protect Whiteness as property by remaining hostile to Indigenous epistemologies and indifferent to the foundations of ongoing inequities" (Vass, 2014, p. 179).

2. <u>Rights to use and enjoyment</u>: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander poor attendance and/or achievement within Western schooling over time indicates that schools are unsafe and ineffective spaces for First Nations learners. The cultural unsafety of schools is exacerbated both by the statistical lack of First Nations teachers as well as the low racial literacy/cultural responsiveness amongst Australia's majority white teaching force. Formal curriculum tends to reinforce the centralisation and domination of whiteness, as does the geographical patterning of schools whereby Aboriginal students must typically travel 'in' to White centres to receive schooling. This applies geographically (for remote/regional learners) and in terms of low socio-economic status (for urban learners), with urban schools that have a high percentage of Aboriginal students commonly being associated with poorer resourcing and reputation. For schools with a low percentage of Aboriginal students, the likelihood of those in attendance feeling excluded is enhanced, and the risk of them experiencing covert or overt forms of racism from peers or staff within White institutional contexts is heightened. "Clearly, the appeal of school may not be there for many and hence, schools represent an investment in White property that negatively impacts on many Indigenous students' rights to access, enjoy and accrue the benefits from participating" (Vass, 2014, p. 179).

3. <u>Reputation and status property</u>: The NAPLAN tests are linked to the MySchool federal website, which is designed to assist parents/caregivers (with sufficient real and symbolic capital) to choose between schools for their child(ren). Schools are also given an Index of Community Socio-Educational Advantage (ICSEA) rating to enable 'fair comparison' between like schools. Given that Aboriginality is the most heavily weighted *negative* indicator on the ICSEA, and that schools are under pressure to do well on standardised tests, schools are indirectly coerced to protect themselves from reputational damage by using Aboriginality as a reason for poor outcomes. These dynamics contribute towards the entrenchment of deficit views of Aboriginality and of schools with a high Aboriginal student enrolment, whilst simultaneously boosting the status of elite White schools with typically low to zero Aboriginal student enrolments.

4. <u>The absolute right to exclude</u>: Whilst First Nations students were once formally excluded from mainstream Australian schooling, informal modes of exclusion continued to be practiced after the 1967 Referendum, which ended formal exclusion. With the neoliberal restructuring of Australian education, which from the mid-1990s has seen a push for privatising education, large numbers of middle-class white students have left public education to attend private facilities. The same degree of mobility has not been afforded to many Indigenous students owing to low socio-economic status, geographic distance or, to a lesser degree, the selection mechanisms exercised by private schools to filter enrolments. "The coupling of NAPLAN with the MySchool website is [thus] creating conditions that may potentially exacerbate informal

segregation. It enables 'white flight,' as those with sufficient access to White cultural capital have the mobility to ensure access to schooling that is protected from 'contamination' with exposure to 'blackness'" (Vass, 2014, p. 180).

Taken together, Australia's racialised educational landscape, combined with lack of racial literacy being taught across all levels of Australian education, has meant that formal education is often unsafe for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students and their families. These same relations can result in a lack of collective will or understanding on the part of the dominant culture to effectively challenge the institutional and covert forms of racism that make schooling unsafe. In the following sections we explore what culturally responsive approaches to schooling, informed by racial literacy, may look like when filtered through the work of schools and centres. We suggest that these approaches are foundational to an education that advances the interests of and cares about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, by critically re-educating everyone.

Leaders, Educators, and Learners

The following sections – educational staff and learners, curriculum, pedagogy, and relationships and wellbeing – are fundamentally intertwined. We tease them out to examine their significance for improving schooling for First Nations students. We start with the core idea that developing an equity-oriented disposition informed by awareness of past and ongoing colonial harms is a crucial starting point for all educational staff (entitled 'dispositions of educators'). As Moodie, Vass and Lowe (2021a, p. 12) argue, when professional learning starts with shifting the attitudes of educators and leaders, "deficit imaginings shift in favour of supporting Indigenous success." We then consider the demographic terrain and policy contexts in which educators work (entitled 'frameworks'), and the conditions for learning that are created by deficit discourses.

Dispositions of educators

Some theorists articulate an equity-oriented disposition in terms of starting with a strong commitment to *social justice* (see for example, Pantic & Florian, 2015; Vass, 2017), developing *sociocultural awareness* (Salazar, 2013; Esteban-Guitart & Moll, 2014), enhancing *cultural and racial awareness* (Vass et al., 2019), and/or developing a *sociological imagination* (Twine & Steinbugler, 2006). These concepts express an awareness that we are all located in a particular historical moment, we all operate in larger social structures (which locate and impact upon us differentially), we are all implicated in elements of settler colonialism as a system that benefits some groups over others, and we all have some capacity to work towards educational and social equity. Without a strong commitment to social justice, practices designed to improve schooling for First Nations students risk being piecemeal, superficial, or entangled in deficit discourses of Aboriginality. In addition to building awareness of covert racisms that frequently go unchallenged in schools – i.e. colour and race blindness, curricula exclusion, white fragility, and deficit thinking – an equity-orientation acknowledges the extent of racial denial in schooling and its effects, which contributes towards a 'deficit' educational culture.

For example, in a recent study of Aboriginal high school students' experiences of racism, Bodkin-Andrews, Clark and Foster (2019) found that 78% of participating students had experienced at least one form of racism in the preceding year, with many of these experiences occurring within the context of school. Such incidents included racist slurs, stereotyping, erasure (of history, Indigenous standpoints and/or identity), physical abuse, and racist behaviours of teachers (such as ignoring Indigenous students or failing to intervene in racist incidents). Without attempting to draw an overly simplistic correlation, it is fair to say that these findings are supported by a 2022 report into the experiences of African students in Australian schools, with 91% of participants disclosing that they frequently experience or witness racism in school.[17] Experiences of racism leave an indelible mark on young Indigenous people and can underpin "lower academic achievement, school withdrawal, deidentifying as Indigenous, emotional distress and negative perception of their intelligence and academic performance" (Anderson, Yip & Diamond, 2022, p. 14). In their systematic review that asked, 'How is racism understood to influence schooling experiences of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander

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[17] The Ubuntu Project, see https://www.abc.net.au/news/2022-10-19/african-australian-students-subjected-n-word-racism-schools/101549674.

students?', Moodie, Maxwell and Rudolph (2019) highlight that the negative impacts of racism are lifelong and affect "academic achievement, attitudes to language, emotional wellbeing, physical health, self-concept, school attendance and post-school pathways [… thus] it should not need to be stated, but racism is profoundly harmful" (Moodie, Maxwell & Rudolph, 2019, p. 292).

The pervasiveness of deficit discourses of Aboriginality in schooling and the damage that these discourses cause are well documented, even if overlooked by those who can afford not to see them (Aitken & Wareham, 2017; Dandy, Durkin, Barber, & Houghton 2015; Griffin & Trudgett, 2018; Hogarth, 2017; Riley & Pidgeon, 2019; Rudolph, 2019; Parkinson & Jones, 2019). Indeed, as Forrest et al. (2016) note, "[non-Indigenous] teachers' acknowledgement of racism [tends to be] much lower than that of the communities surrounding their schools, and has a distinct influence upon teacher opinions about multicultural education and diversity more broadly" (as cited in Vass, 2017, p. 452). A study by Dandy, Durkin, Barber and Houghton (2015) suggests that racialised expectations of Indigenous students' academic performance are formed by non-Indigenous pre-service teachers before they set foot in the classroom (see also Moodie, Maxwell & Rudolph, 2019, p. 289). These deficit beliefs can be internalised by minoritised students (Moodie, Maxwell & Rudolph, 2019; Peacock et al., 2021; Prehn, Peacock & Guerzoni, 2021) leading to a 'self-fulfilling prophesy' of school 'failure'. Meanwhile, teachers may "attribute problems at school to home life and diminish the impact of their own assumptions about Indigenous ability" (Moodie, Maxwell & Rudolph, 2019, p. 273). If schooling is to be improved for Indigenous young people it is therefore imperative that non-Indigenous staff confront these realities and reflexively work on dispositional awareness, especially in light of the demographic profile of most Australian educators, who are white (MacGill, 2022).

Frameworks

In terms of demographics, the number of Indigenous teachers in Australia is disproportionately low. Data from the 2016 Australian census indicates that, while 5.58% of students identified as Indigenous, only 2.02% of teachers identified as such (ACDE, 2018). This disproportionate representation was, at least in 2013, worse for school leaders (McKenzie et al., 2014, p. 28). Indigenous students progressing through compulsory schooling are therefore unlikely to be taught by an Indigenous teacher or to encounter an Indigenous person in a school leadership role. This is problematic in terms of the role models Indigenous young people see within the schooling community (Anderson, Yip & Diamond, 2022). Meanwhile, it is a stark reality that relatively few non-Indigenous teachers have had meaningful interactions with Indigenous peoples outside of their teaching careers (Bishop, 2022; Craven, Yeung & Han, 2014), which, along with the realities of widespread racism, is a factor that is generally overlooked in Australia's major educational policies.

In their analysis of Closing the Gap policy, Dawson and colleagues (2021) note that "one of the most significant absences from the listed targets is the need to address racism and discrimination experienced by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians" (p. 529). Guenther, Ober, Osborne and Williamson-Kefu (2021) found that the term 'racism' appears only five times in the Australian Curriculum, and only once in relation to Indigenous peoples (p. 616). In a comprehensive review concerning pre-service teacher preparation, Moreton-Robinson and colleagues (2012) raised concern that the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers (APST) "do not recognise that race and racism are variables that impact on education outcomes" (p. 12) – an observation that remains salient. At a

local level, the terms 'racism' and 'discrimination' are not mentioned in the South Australian Department for Education's *Aboriginal Education Strategy 2019 to 2029* (2018b). As argued by Buckskin (2013) and Vass (2014), racism and its manifestations in the form of deficit discourses is thus the 'elephant' in the room of Australian schooling, which is compounded both by the demographic profile of Australian teachers and leaders as well as major policy frameworks that contribute towards a racialised educational landscape (Vass, 2014).

Realistically, the policies – or frameworks – that shape the work of schools/centres offer both hope and hindrance when it comes to improving schooling for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students. Over the last 15 or so years, there have been several major changes to national policy that have impacted significantly on the expectations placed on teachers, school leadership and teacher education. In 2008, the State and Territory education ministers agreed to the Melbourne Declaration on Educational Goals for Young Australians (MCEETYA, 2008). Also in 2008, NAPLAN was introduced under the Gillard Labor government, followed by the launch of the MySchool website in 2010. The APST (AITSL, 2011) were introduced in early 2011, and the first iteration of the national Australian Curriculum (AC) was launched in 2011 – we turn to the AC in upcoming sections. The Literacy and Numeracy Test for Initial Teacher Education Students (LANTITE) came into effect across Australia in July 2016. And, finally, the Alice Springs (Mparntwe) Education Declaration was announced in late 2019, superseding and largely replicating the Melbourne Declaration, albeit with some rephrasing.

Elements of the APST, the AC, and the Mparntwe Declaration are useful for moving beyond the motivations of individual teachers or schools in mandating the considered inclusion of and care for First Nations students and perspectives in Australian education. Nonetheless, the neoliberal turn in Australia has also sidelined equity agendas by placing significant emphasis on schooling by metrics, which can have the effect of devaluing consideration of Aboriginality. Along with the NAPLAN tests and MySchool website, schooling performance is measured in Australia against international benchmarks through the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) and Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS). Collectively, these mechanisms lock schools "into a system of remote control, operated by funding mechanisms, testing systems, certification, audit and surveillance mechanisms" (Connell, 2013, pp. 107-108). This places pressure on leaders and educators to orient their work and time towards testing and accountability mechanisms to shore up reputation and, in some cases, to meet parental expectations, which typically limits the focus around inclusion of Aboriginal perspectives or care for Aboriginal students to narrow assessments of achievement or attendance.

In particular, the notion that attendance at schools is a prerequisite for improving Indigenous lives permeates Australian Education policy. According to Hancock, Shepherd, Lawrence and Zubrick (2013, p. 13), "survey data from Western Australia identified that poor attendance at school is one of the major factors driving Aboriginal disadvantage" (p. 13). Guenther (2013) teases out the logic underpinning a preoccupation with school attendance:

> Attendance is a fundamental of schooling. Therefore, if children do not attend school
> how can they be taught, and how can they learn? And if they do not learn, how can
> they achieve educational outcomes? On the surface, this sounds like a reasonable
> argument … Attendance is of course easy to measure, but it is not a proxy for student
> learning. (p. 160)

Analysing NAPLAN data from very remote schools, Guenther (2013) casts doubt on a simplistic relationship between Indigenous student attendance and educational outcomes, a finding supported by Baxter and Meyers (2019) in an urban Victorian setting. Using MySchool data from several schools across the nation, Ladwig and Luke (2014) conclude that "reforms and policies around attendance have not and are unlikely to generate patterns of improved achievement" (p. 171). They explain:

> … it is quite common to speak to students who have chosen not to attend *for good reason*. That is, many of these students (and, perhaps, their parents) decide that what the student can experience and gain outside of school is more beneficial (or less detrimental) than what they experience (or expect to experience) in school. (Ladwig & Luke, 2014, p. 191, emphasis in original)

Referring to disparities between Indigenous and non-Indigenous academic achievement, Fogarty, Riddle, Lovell and Wilson (2017) echo this theme when saying:

> Here, we see the 'rendering technical' of extremely complex issues. In this case, nonattendance is attributed as being the cause of one third of the 'gap' in educational attainment. The solution therefore becomes to simply get the kids to school. Of course, such simplistic constructions ignore a multiplicity of factors that are involved, most notably the potential that it is the learning itself that students may be resisting. (p. 189)

Leaders

Educational leadership characterised by deep understanding of these complexities is clearly important. However, the same policy imperatives that negatively impact upon Aboriginal learners place significant pressure on school leaders to lead by metrics. School leaders enact their work at sites of significant complexity as they are required on one hand to be "cutting-edge, ground-breaking, ahead of their time, and visionary" (Eacott, 2018, p. 101) while simultaneously needing to adhere to highly prescriptive neoliberal imperatives and political rationalities (Ball, 2016; Eacott, 2018; Lingard, 2018). Added to this is the fact that the current educational landscape across Australia is superdiverse (Morrison et al., 2019), yet the demographic profile of most Australian school leaders in principal positions, irrespective of schooling sector, is predominantly white and middle-class (Corrie, 2021, p. 10). Combined with a lack of Indigenous representation in school executive roles (Hogarth, 2019a), the existing educational environment is one where unintentional cultural blind spots are likely to impact the leadership practice of those who are deemed to be 'in charge'.

In a 2013 survey of staff in Australian schools, only around 1% of school leaders identified as Indigenous (McKenzie et al., 2014). Griffin and Trudgett (2018) note the important role that school leaders nonetheless play in establishing a schooling environment that supports Indigenous students:

> Although teachers have a very important role to play, their effectiveness in successful Indigenous student outcomes will be diminished if they are not supported by the whole school and the wider community. Quality school leadership underpins the creation of a positive, effective learning environment. (p. 12)

Much of the literature relating to school leadership in Indigenous Education has a focus on regional or remote schools and communities (for example, Cornelius & Mackey-Smith, 2022; Corrie 2021; Guenther & Osborne 2020; Kelly, Clarke & Wildy, 2019). But regardless of setting, school leaders play a key role in promoting equity and diversity (Trimmer, Dixon & Guenther, 2021) and counteracting deficit discourses that may infiltrate school culture (Griffin & Trudgett, 2018). Summarising their study of leadership practices across 31 schools serving Indigenous students, Davies and Halsey (2019) found that:

> Educational leadership that authentically values the culture, agency and beliefs of Indigenous people; that places Indigenous students' physical, mental, cultural and spiritual wellbeing at the centre of the school's activities; that actively develops collaborative relationships and networks based on reciprocity, trust, cooperation and civility; that is guided and sustained by humanistic endeavour, makes a significant contribution towards the participation and achievements of Indigenous students. (p. 101)

Moodie, Vass and Lowe (2021a, p. 7) draw on a wide scope of Aboriginal voices in their research to distil the following simple but profound message for non-Indigenous school leaders and educators:

> Teach our complete history, see your place in that history, employ Indigenous people,
> talk to community.

Notwithstanding that schools are increasingly expected to operate as businesses with the role of the principal "rapidly changing from that of a leading educator, to that of a business manager or CEO" (Savage, 2017, p. 154), Khalifa, Gooden and Davis (2016), Sleeter (2011), Trimmer et al. (2021) and Khalifa (2020) offer characteristics of culturally responsive school leadership, which are useful for leaders wishing to improve schooling, not only for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students but *all* learners within increasingly culturally diverse settings – noting, too, that Aboriginal cultures are themselves highly diverse. They highlight the importance of:

- Reflexive self-awareness: a starting point for leaders, which aligns with the notion of developing a strong commitment to social justice, is juxtaposing their identity with that of the learning community to highlight biases which may affect their professional practices. Practices which assist in this process include, engaging with racial autobiographies (or First Nations counter stories), participating in cross-cultural interviews, developing school/centre diversity panels, and purposefully engaging in relationship building with students' home lives and communities.

- Power sharing: where possible, implementing 'both ways' leadership styles (see Trimmer et al., 2021) that includes Aboriginal community involvement in decision-making and curriculum implementation and, especially in high needs schools, committing to a leadership post for a minimum of five years, "so that relationships, curriculum, and other initiatives can be sustained […]. New models of professional development that include intercultural awareness and identified leadership models are also required for new leadership patterns to become established and sustainable systemically" (Trimmer, Dixon & Guenther, 2021, p. 31).

- Building inclusive cultures: one in which all staff are permitted, encouraged, and supported to have courageous conversations about issues such as racism and to engage in whole

school/centre ongoing professional development that supports growth in this area (see also the section of this review on Professional Learning). Inclusive educational cultures are those in which low expectations and deficit discourses are actively identified and challenged, acknowledging that they reproduce a cycle of impoverished schooling for minority groups, and will include a comprehensive anti-racism strategy. Challenging deficit cultures includes auditing the 'discipline gap' – the extent to which racially marginalised young people are overrepresented in school disciplinary referrals, suspensions or expulsions, indicating the need to rethink disciplinary systems and the beliefs which uphold them – this point resonating strongly with the final section of this review, Relationships and Wellbeing. Inclusive and responsive school cultures not only diminish deficit discourses and practices but identify and institutionalise culturally affirming practices that celebrate Aboriginal cultures and align school/centre contexts and curriculum with students' lifeworlds.[18]

- Resourcing: responsive school/centre leadership also involves allocating resources to support activities that centralise the needs and interests of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander learners and their communities. This may include targeted hiring or promotion of Aboriginal staff, in-service professional learning for all staff that increases their racial literacy and socio-cultural awareness, and granting time allocations to educators that allow them to engage in targeted PL or to visit homes or community-based locations of First Nations knowledge holders. The latter speaks to the need for reinvesting in the professional autonomy of educators and, when taken further, understanding the need to reposition teacher-student relationships such that it is acknowledged that students 'know best' what works for them – a point to which we return in the section on Learners.

The underpinning tenets of culturally responsive school leadership all seek to better connect learning to students' lives. To do this, school leaders must mobilise more heterarchical approaches that allow power to be shared equitably through collaboration that is both cross-cultural and inter-cultural in nature (see Corrie, 2021). In doing this, school personnel and members of the local Indigenous communit(ies) can collectively take each other to deeper levels of understanding, providing scope for culture to be centred, influencing what is taught, how it is delivered in the classroom and how educational success is determined.

Non-Indigenous Educators

As with leaders, most Australian teachers are white (MacGill, 2022). Furthermore, consensus across the literature is not only that educators can and do make a difference in the lives of First Nations learners and their communities (Lowe, Skrebneva, et al., 2021, p. 475), but that an equity-oriented disposition which includes awareness of Australia's past and ongoing colonial harms is crucial for all educators, especially those who are white (Maher, 2022). Ideally, this starts with a rigorous teacher education. The preparation of pre-service teachers to teach Indigenous students and enhance racial equity in Australia has nonetheless been the subject of ongoing concern. Despite the introduction of the Professional Standards, pre-service teachers often receive little preparation to address areas specifically relating to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples (Anderson, Yip & Diamond, 2022,

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[18] On lifeworlds, see concept 2: https://culturallyresponsivepedagogy.com.au/key-concepts/key-concept-2/

p. 10) or to embed Indigenous curriculum content (Lowe & Galstaun, 2020). In the APST, the two (of 37) focus areas specifically relating to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education include:

Standard 1: Know students and how they learn.

Focus Area: 1.4: Strategies for teaching Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students: Demonstrate broad knowledge and understanding of the impact of culture, cultural identity, and linguistic background on the education of students from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander backgrounds.

Standard 2: Know the content and how to teach it.

Focus Area 2.4: Understand and respect Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to promote reconciliation between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians: Demonstrate broad knowledge, understanding, and respect for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories, cultures and languages.

Evidencing the lack of concerted or consistent focus on these areas across teacher education in Australia, Lowe and colleagues report that "many graduating education students enter their workplaces with insufficient knowledge, understanding or skills to effectively teach Aboriginal students" (Lowe, Skrebneva, et al., 2021, p. 475). These sentiments are shared across the literature (see for example, Riley & Pidgeon, 2019; Riley, Monk & Vanlssum, 2019) and moreover, theorists express particular concern about the ways in which the focus areas can be measured or (mis)interpreted (Moodie & Patrick, 2017; Bodkin-Andrews et al., 2021; Buxton, 2017; Jackson-Barrett & Lee-Hammond, 2018) – a point to which we return.

In a study by Rowan, Kline and Mayer (2017), Australian early career teachers felt that they had not received sufficient preparation to 'understand and respect' Indigenous students. Some teacher preparation programmes may also fail to grapple with the complex issues of colonialism, race, whiteness, and Indigenous sovereignty. A decade ago, Moreton-Robertson and colleagues (2012) undertook a desktop audit across all Australian universities on the theme of 'Pre-Service Teacher Preparation for Teaching Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Students' and found that "the range of subjects on offer are [sic] designed to transfer knowledge and awareness of Indigenous history and culture absolving the role that race plays in structuring disadvantage and privilege" (p. 1). They argued:

The salience of 'race' must therefore be acknowledged in pre-service education, and teachers [must be] equipped with an anti-racist pedagogy to mitigate the effect of 'race' and racism upon Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander educational attainment. (Moreton-Robinson et al., 2012, p. 157)

The audit identified the need to better utilise the UN Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples in pre-service and in-service teacher development, the need to improve training to enable teachers to constructively engage and consult with Indigenous families and communities, and the need for an Indigenous pedagogy that captures "Indigenous ways of knowing whilst avoiding the reification of 'deficit' understandings of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander education" (Moreton-Robinson et al., 2012, p. 180). These insights speak to the need for ongoing support for educators, for anti-racism strategies across schools that are incorporated into curriculum and pedagogy, and for comprehensive induction for new staff in schools or centres such that whole school approaches are sustained. But these findings also perhaps point towards the reality that even the most rigorous university course on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education (sometimes termed Critical Indigenous Pedagogies)

will never be complete or wholly sufficient; moreover, relegating issues of 'race' and/or 'Aboriginality' to a single course only "entrenches the covertly racist belief that such issues can be ignored elsewhere" (Schulz & Fane, 2015, p. 137). Hammerness et al. (2005) add that "the knowledge, skills and attitudes needed for optimal teaching are not something that can be fully developed in pre-service education programmes" (as cited in Vass, Lowe, Burgess, Harrison & Moodie, 2019, p. 343), an observation that is supported by Rogers (2018), who says:

> It is impossible for one or two university courses to teach the teachers entirely about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures, peoples and histories, as well as reconciliation actions, teaching methods for urban, rural and remote Indigenous students, Indigenous languages and so on. What we can do is help students examine themselves, their worldviews, and support them to grow their body of knowledge, access professional learning and reading, and assist them in connecting with local Indigenous community members. (p. 35)

For all educators, the development of an equity-oriented, proactive and agentic disposition is thus a fundamental starting point that must be carried beyond teacher education to ongoing in-service professional learning. In addition to our prior discussions of racial literacy and cultural responsivity, education of this kind should equip educators with a fundamental appreciation that they can:

- Start with appropriate terminology and seek advice if they are unsure which language is appropriate
- Use their scope of influence to refuse reproducing hegemonic discourses of schooling
- Gradually build their own and others' racial literacy
- Make proactive pedagogical and curriculum choices that centre First Nations voices
- Learn to listen respectfully to First Nations perspectives and stories
- Make connections with Aboriginal parents/caregivers/communities, including by reaching out informally
- Seek out new information rather than waiting for it to come to them
- Know that some aspects of learning may be discomforting or trigger feelings of vulnerability, anger, guilt, or confusion, especially when learning incorporates truth-telling about Australia's past and ongoing racialised harms
- Utilise pedagogies of discomfort to enhance and deepen their own and others' learning
- Choose from the discourses available to them to move beyond limited 'deficit' assumptions of First Nations learners and perspectives to genuinely value learners' lifeworlds, and bring learner lifeworlds to the centre of their pedagogy

With respect to moving beyond deficit assumptions, it is instructive to consider the work of Bishop, Berryman, Cavanagh and Teddy (2007) in the New Zealand context. In a study funded by the NZ Ministry of Education and conducted by the University of Waikato and partners, these researchers aimed to develop ways of improving schooling and outcomes for Māori students in mainstream Pākehā (white) classrooms, using the classroom as their key site of intervention. Although culturally responsive transformations must occur at multiple levels, these scholars demonstrate the importance of educators and classrooms. Bishop and colleagues undertook three sets of interviews, with: 1) teachers, 2) students, and 3) parents/extended family in order to understand what was occurring in mainstream schools for Māori learners. Paralleling the Australian context, most teachers in New Zealand are Pākehā Interview data clearly illustrated that, in terms of conceptualising 'problems'

relating to Māori student schooling, participants in the study drew on starkly different frames of reference – or discourses – which resulted in different outcomes and potential solutions. The common discourses on which participants drew to perceive 'the problem' included:

Discourse	Perceived problems/understanding of the situation	Potential solution
Discourse of the child/home	Student absenteeism, transience Students' lack of access to resources Students' home life/SES status Problems brought to school by Māori students Students' poor nutrition, lack of parental support, lack of positive role models Students' low motivation, lack of discipline, poor organisation Students' risk-taking behaviours with drugs, alcohol Negative peer influences Students' unwillingness to stand out from the crowd (perceived as cultural problem)	Change the child/their home
Discourse of structure/system	Lack of teacher professional development Lack of school funding Rigid policies Insufficient leadership/support Governance structures	Change the school/system structures
Discourse of relationships within the classroom	Need for more relationship building in the classroom Need for power sharing in the classroom Need for enhanced pedagogical repertoires	Change pedagogical approach and enhance relationships within the classroom

Most teachers in the study drew on the first frame of reference to make sense of Māori students' schooling experiences – *Discourse of the Child/Home* – or the second frame – *Discourse of the Structure/System*. Importantly, when drawing on these frames of reference to make sense of the situation, teachers unwittingly reproduced deficit assumptions of Māori learners, viewing them or their home lives as 'problems' to be fixed or impossible to fix. Any perceived solutions were thus presumed to be external to the teachers, rendering them powerless to enact fruitful change. However, for those who drew on a *Discourse of Relationships within the Classroom*, solutions were located within the teacher's sphere of influence, leading to an agentic disposition, improved relationships, and a sense of hope and purpose concerning their role as educators. Most importantly, the far majority of students who were interviewed noted that 'positive classroom relationships' were crucial from their viewpoint.

The key findings from the study included:

- It is possible for educators to shift to an agentic/empowered pedagogical location
- The stories that educators tell about their teaching 'matter' in terms of limiting or enabling educators' opportunities, confidence, and sense of purpose
- Student interviews revealed 'positive classroom relationships' to be crucial

What worked pedagogically in the study included:

- Relational classrooms where power is shared

- Immersing students in power sharing relationships (with peers, teachers)
- Dialogic, interactive, creative learning experiences
- Replacing deficit assumptions with respect and high expectations
- Developing a 'common vision' for what counts as success
- Developing an extensive toolkit of pedagogical strategies and habitually trialling new ideas
- Centring relationality in the classroom and negotiating relationships as a matter of course

Applying this 'agential' lens to the Australian context, an example of how the APST focus areas might be conceptualised or 're-read' by educators is worth considering:

Focus area 1.4: Demonstrate broad knowledge and understanding of the *impact of culture*, cultural identity and linguistic background on the education of students from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander backgrounds. (Emphasis added)

Deficit reading: All Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students learn the same way and require a special set of practices to meet their needs.

Agentic reading: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students are as diverse as any group. To suggest that they learn the same way owing to culture or biology is at best a misreading of culture, at worst, a covert form of racism rooted in biological determinism. Given the diversity of Aboriginal cultures, it is imperative for educators/schools to connect to students as culturally located individuals, and to value their lifeworlds.

Deficit reading: Aboriginal *culture* has negative impacts on learning.

Agentic reading: When White culture is naturalised as the 'norm' or 'centre' of schooling, it harmfully impacts Aboriginal peoples. An enriched education for all learners is one that embraces Aboriginal cultures, wisdom, stories, voices, and perspectives, not as a sideline to a normative White curriculum but as a reconstructed curriculum that is central to everyone's learning.

2.4: Demonstrate broad knowledge, understanding, and respect for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories, cultures and languages.

Deficit reading**:** History is in the distant past and disconnected from current lived realities. There is a single Indigenous experience of history, disconnected from non-Indigenous history whilst (commonly) subject to doubt.

Agentic reading**:** There are countless Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander readings of history that stretch into the present. Engaging with multiple Indigenous perspectives informs mutually beneficial learning. Moreover, engaging with First Nations cultural history should not preclude engagement with contemporary First Nations cultures. Culture is not fixed in the past.

Indigenous Educators

In contrast to Australia's non-Indigenous (predominantly white) teaching fraternity, Indigenous peoples are under-represented in the Australian teaching workforce to such an extent that many Indigenous students will not encounter an Indigenous teacher or school leader throughout their schooling years. In the early 1980s, Hughes and Willmot (1982) called for 'A thousand Aboriginal

teachers by 1990' as a strategy to reverse this situation. Since then, numerous national and state policy documents have called for more Indigenous teachers in the Australian education workforce (see, for example, COAG, 2009b; DEET, 1989; Department for Education, 2018a; Education Council, 2019; MCEETYA 2008). Various initiatives have been implemented, including the national More Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Teachers Initiative (MATSITI) (Buckskin, 2016; Patton et al., 2012), Queensland's Remote Area Teacher Education Programme (RATEP) (Queensland Government, 2020), South Australia's Anangu Tertiary Education Programme (AnTEP) (Osborne & Underwood, 2010), and the Growing Our Own (Van Gelderen, 2017) and Remote Indigenous Teacher Education (Nutton et al., 2012) programmes in the Northern Territory. Some of these initiatives were, or are, specifically focussed on growing a workforce of Indigenous teachers to teach in remote communities, including Growing Our Own, which is designed to build Indigenous teacher capacity in Catholic Schools in remote Northern Territory communities (Elliott & Keenan, 2019, p. 8). These programmes have contributed to a small but welcome rise in Indigenous teachers from around 1% of the teacher workforce in 2011 (Patton et al., 2012) to around 2% in 2016.

Unfortunately, and especially given the focus of these programmes on supporting remote Indigenous educators whose proficiencies in First Nations languages and forms of Aboriginal English are often central to their work in remote/regional schools, this fragile growth could be hindered by the 2016 introduction of LANTITE, which requires all pre-service educators to pass a literacy and numeracy test in order to graduate from their teacher education degree. Many Indigenous peoples speak Standard Australian English (SAE) as a second or subsequent language or dialect, meaning that LANTITE – which assumes fluency in SAE – may act as a deterrent to enrolment in teacher education courses, and/or a significant barrier to successful graduation (Barnes, van Gelderen & Rampmeyer, 2019; Hall & Zmood, 2019).

For Indigenous Education graduates who do enter the teaching workforce, there may be challenges in establishing a professional identity that is not racialised. In a qualitative study of Indigenous early career teachers in Sydney, NSW, Burgess (2017) identified a number of racialised discourses in operation. These include over-determination of Aboriginality (i.e. positioning the teacher as Aboriginal rather than teacher); essentialised assumptions and stereotypes about Aboriginal teachers and cultures, and the positioning of Aboriginal teachers as 'Other'. There is an expectation that Aboriginal teachers can and should solve perceived Aboriginal 'problems', both within the school and between the school and community, yet this work is paradoxically viewed within the school as easy and peripheral to the school's core business (pp. 746-747). Non-Indigenous colleagues may even question the qualifications of Indigenous teachers (Burgess, 2017; Santoro, Reid, Crawford & Simpson, 2011), which is an expression of covert racism.

In practice, many Indigenous staff in schools are employed in paraprofessional roles, the titles and duties of which vary across the states and territories. For example, in their study, Price, Jackson-Barrett, Gower and Herrington (2019) identified a range of titles including Aboriginal Educational Workers, Indigenous Educational Workers, Aboriginal/Indigenous Teacher Aides (or Assistants), Aboriginal Cultural Workers and Koori Educators. Where school-community liaison is the primary role, titles include South Australia's ACEOs (Aboriginal Community Education Officers – in primary schools) and ACETOs (Aboriginal Secondary Education Transition Officer – in secondary schools). Depending on the exact role, duties may include providing support to the class teacher (either in the classroom or during lesson preparation), bringing Indigenous culture into the classroom, supporting student

behaviour and attendance, liaising with families and communities, and mentoring non-Indigenous teachers in cultural issues (Peacock & Prehn, 2021). Despite the vital role that Indigenous paraprofessionals play, they may be poorly remunerated (Rose, 2012), lack power (Armour, Warren & Miller, 2016), and often lack status in the school hierarchy (Blanch & MacGill, 2013; MacGill, 2008). This low status may be directly reflected in classroom and administrative practices, for instance: "ITAs [Indigenous Teacher Assistants] are often left to tend to behaviour management of students and sundry tasks such as cleaning and photocopying" (Armour, Warren & Miller, 2016, p. 424).

In reality, Aboriginal educators and paraprofessionals are "in a unique position in that they can be the link between the two cultures and two knowledges" (Armour, Warren & Miller, 2016, p. 423). In her study of young Aboriginal (Nunga) boys in South Australian mainstream schooling, Blanch (2009) highlights the crucial role of Aboriginal teachers and support workers in creating safe spaces and a sense of 'home' for Nunga boys. Blanch draws on the powerful imaginaries of bell hooks when describing the relational environments created by Aboriginal teachers/paraprofessionals in their everyday work with Aboriginal learners, who refuse to view Black bodies through a lens that interpellates them in highly racialised ways:

> in order to create a learning environment within the classroom one must diffuse hierarchy and create a sense of community where the classroom can be a place that is life sustaining and mind expanding, a place where student and teacher can work in partnership. (hooks as cited in Blanch, 2009, p. 60)

Put differently, Aboriginal educators at various levels "are aware of Indigenous knowledge and cultural issues that non-Indigenous staff are not privileged to know" (Armour, Warren & Miller, 2016, p. 423) and yet, they too often receive little support or additional training "in how to assist teachers in educating Indigenous students" (p. 424), despite this often being expected of the Aboriginal educator. Moreover, despite the embodied awareness of what it means to 'be' Indigenous within the context of White Australia and White schooling systems, as Kamilaroi woman Associate Professor Melitta Hogarth reminds non-Indigenous educators, it should not be assumed "that the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff member knows about all things Indigenous" (Hogarth, 2019b, p. 54). Finally, it should be underscored that when the goal of an education system or sector is to generate a more culturally safe learning environment for everyone, while cultural safety and cultural responsivity PL is important for all staff, having a culturally diverse workforce is vital. A culturally diverse workforce is very important for the provision of high-quality, culturally safe, and inclusive education and education environments, thus sites and sectors can and should set goals, quotas and timelines to diversify their staffing profiles (see for example Gilde et al, 2022).

Learners

It is clearly noted in the literature (see for example Sarra & Shay, 2019), First Nations students' voices and experiences of schooling are often absent in research on, and policies made in relation to, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education. This leads to "institutional silence regarding Indigenous students' perceptions" (Balatti et al. as cited in Rogers, 2016, p. 35), despite the fact that centring student voice is a crucial ingredient for effective learning. Vass (2017) explains, "engagement improves when learning is contextualised in the lived experiences of students" (p. 453), and those experiences can only really be accessed through opening schooling to student voice. Smyth (2019)

adds that centring student voice – that is, making space to listen to and learn from students' experiences such that they have a genuine stake in their education – positions young people as active rather than passive agents in relationship to learning, hence acknowledging that "learning is highly dependent on relationships" (p. 1). Centring student voice is not only strategic in terms of developing the 'relational trust' (Smyth, 2019) that supports learning and can counter the profoundly negative experiences of schooling that have been intergenerationally carried by many Aboriginal families, it is also vested in Article 12 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989).

Drawing from the recent *Aboriginal Voices* project (see Burgess & Lowe, 2019; Moodie, Vass & Lowe, 2021a), Lowe and Weuffen (2022) provide an important response to this lacuna in their study of the experiences of 100 Aboriginal youth across six schools in NSW, Australia (across year levels 7-12). Participants were involved in yarning circles that explored the questions:

1. What is it like being an Aboriginal student?
2. Do you feel you belong at this school?
    a. What is it that makes you feel like you belong/or not belong?
3. What are your expectations from school?
    a. What do the teachers expect of you? How do you know?
    b. What does your family expect of you? How do you know?
    c. Does your family help you with your learning? How?
4. What do good teachers do?
5. How are you, your families, and community represented in what you learn?

(Lowe & Weuffen, 2022, p. 6)

While Lowe and Weuffen's research is particularised to the contexts and cultural locations of the young people involved – and not necessarily intended for generalisation to all Aboriginal youth – their work provides invaluable insights, which contribute towards theoretical generalisation concerning what it means to be a sovereign Aboriginal young person in the context of contemporary Australian schooling. Importantly, all First Nations young people enter contemporary schooling sites framed by a history of settler-colonial relations that may cause them to question "their legitimate presence in schools" (Lowe & Weuffen, 2022, p. 3). This is owing to the ways in which schooling so often "delegitimises First Nations identities […] ignores community knowledges […a nd] embeds negative discourses [of Aboriginality] within the 'everydayness' of schooling" (p. 3). These dynamics can elicit ongoing resistance to schooling on the part of First Nations youth, and thus it is vital that non-Indigenous teachers and staff learn to read Aboriginal student or family/community resistance to schooling within this broader context of past and ongoing harm.

Shay, Sarra and Woods (2021) explain that an element of this harm relates to the impact of coloniality on First Nations peoples' sustained connections to culture. "Some [First Nations] young people may have been raised within their cultural context with their Indigenous family members, and others may be impacted by their families' experiences of disruption through the inter-generational effects of colonisation on Indigenous people, or through the loss of culture or from being a member of the Stolen Generation" (p. 69). Likewise, Lowe and Weuffen's (2022) research establishes that while some Aboriginal young people are not connected to their Aboriginal cultural heritage – and may feel a sense of loss or shame about these intergenerational disconnections over which they have had little control – the opportunity to re-build connections was met by their participants with a deep sense of purpose and empowerment. Specifically, they:

- Desired to learn on, with and from Country as means of strengthening relationships and building a positive sense of Aboriginal identity.
- Derived much from legitimate school-based culture and language programmes.
- Were often frustrated with the 'selective deafness' of some educators – that is, while many staff would perform token rituals such as Acknowledgement of Country, "there was a general apathy about Indigeneity that is more representative of settler-colonial processes of erasure and disconnection" (Lowe & Weuffen, 2022, p. 10). In other words, Aboriginal youth felt frustration when teachers/school staff did not try to expand their curriculum and awareness.
- This exclusion, underappreciation, or misinterpretation of Aboriginality in curricula and pedagogy could be experienced by Aboriginal youth as 'everyday' or covert racist microaggressions.
- Students were nonetheless appreciative when educators/schools did make efforts to expand their learning repertoires and were hopeful that schools would move beyond lip service towards larger, genuine educational programmes that embrace, celebrate, and learn from Aboriginal ways of knowing and being.

Some students in Lowe and Weuffen's (2022) study who knew little about their cultural heritage feared being seen as a 'cultural fraud' (p. 10) and thus, when Indigenous perspectives were introduced within the context of school, they would initially 'remain mute'. This phenomenon speaks to broader discourses of 'authenticity' reflected in the work of distinguished Australian scholar of Torres Strait Islander descent, Professor Martin Nakata when he explains:

> The question that many Indigenous Australians ask in private is: How can others … make judgement of an individual's claim to an Indigenous identity in the light of diverse Aboriginal historical experiences, the inter-generational mixing of heritages, and the contemporary social and geographical mobility of younger generations? Who is in a position to judge the historical journeys of all those of Indigenous descent? … Indigenous ways of 'knowing each other' through older lines of knowledge and connectedness no longer work as well as they once did for many of us. Unless an individual possesses an acceptable historical narrative and/or works hard at building and maintaining an acceptable community profile, they stand to be assessed as inauthentic, accused of concocting a fraudulent act, and on both these counts, risk being rejected by the community. (Nakata, 2013, p. 128)

Questions of Aboriginal 'authenticity' are historically linked to the ways in which White imperialist impulses have constructed a dominant White Self through projections of an inferior Indigenous 'Other' who is locked in the past, 'authentic only if unchanging' (Mackinlay & Barney, 2008). These dialectical processes of identity formation are encapsulated in the concept of 'Aboriginalism', which signals:

> … the processes by which Indigenous Australians are constructed as 'Others' in relation to [the] privileged perspective of the colonial masters […] One of the central projects of Aboriginalism is the construction of normative and prescriptive statements of what it means to be a 'real Aborigine' [sic] or 'real Torres Strait Islander'. These constructions of Indigenous identity and subjectivity contain and limit the possibilities for Indigenous people to be self-determining and self-representing and allow the production of cultural stereotypes to remain deeply embedded in colonial structures. (McConaghy, 1997, p. 39)

The expectation that Aboriginal peoples must somehow be 'authentically' Aboriginal is thus complex and socio-historically layered – it is not located *within* the individual Aboriginal student, though it remains unsurprising that Aboriginal students may grapple with such concerns today given the long history underpinning these present-day issues. For example, participants in Murrup-Stewart et al.'s (2021) study of the influences on Aboriginal young people's experiences of social and emotional wellbeing reported that,

> for fair-skinned young people who felt they were not distinctly recognizable as Aboriginal, having another Aboriginal person reinforce their Aboriginality was powerful: "having somebody [from community] with you who can just validate who you are and say yes this person's okay, I think that's a big thing." (Murrup-Stewart et al., 2021, p. 1841)

Despite complexities of this kind, the students in Lowe and Weuffen's (2022) study articulated "a yearning to connect to knowledge [about their Aboriginality], a desire to relationally connect, and [to understand …] the responsibilities that [come] with Indigenous community membership" (p. 11). Such desires emerged powerfully in the research, and were crucial to Aboriginal student learning, identity, and wellbeing. In a research project in which Shay, Sarra and Woods (2021) were involved,[19] Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people's voices were privileged to determine, from their diverse perspectives, what Indigenous identity means to them and what is important about being Aboriginal. These writers explain, "We worked with a diverse group of Indigenous young people from urban, regional, and remote communities. Below are some examples of what Indigenous young people are articulating identity as being" (p. 69):

- understanding where you come from
- representing who you are
- how you see yourself
- being different
- you don't choose your identity
- skin colour – bloodline connection
- staying true to your culture
- respect for Elders
- family

(Shay, Sarra & Woods, 2021, p. 69)

Not dissimilarly, the students in Lowe and Weuffen's (2022) study articulated strong aspirations to connect to Country in order to feel a strong sense of cultural identity. As one student explained:

> Country links us to [our] ancestors … the ancestral ways and knowledge, the cultural ways of doing things like hunting and stuff. I don't really know this knowledge – but I want to [know] … you get to just feel your culture and stuff and you're doing it and you feel proud of yourself… to express to everyone and show them who you are. (Suburban #1 HS). (p. 12)

There was also an expressed desire to connect with other Aboriginal students, and to feel culturally nourished through learning programmes that connect schools with Elders, custodians, local

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[19] The 'Cultural Identity, Health and Wellbeing of Indigenous Young People in Schools' project was a three-year project funded by the Lowitja Institute. See Shay, Sarra and Woods (2021).

community, and family (Lowe & Weuffen, 2022, p. 12). Students identified and appreciated when schools endeavoured to make genuine connections with community, which in turn enabled "positive engagement with teachers and the school more broadly" (p. 15). Moreover, the researchers found that when strong school-community connections were absent, teachers and other staff sometimes did not understand the lived realities of Aboriginal students outside of school that impact on their schooling – for example, one respondent spoke of the need to look after younger siblings (p. 14). Importantly, students wanted nuanced understandings of Aboriginality to be acknowledged in their learning and were able to identify ill-considered teaching that either excludes or presents misrepresentations or disrespectful narratives of Aboriginality (p. 15). The students in Lowe and Weuffen's (2022) study essentially wanted their teachers and peers to 'learn more' about Aboriginality and to 'stop repeating stereotypes' (p. 15).

Similar sentiments are powerfully expressed by Aboriginal young people in the Imagination Declaration[20] – a statement produced by a group of young Indigenous and non-Indigenous students and presented at the 2019 Garma Festival, following release of the Uluru Statement from the Heart. The Declaration was intended for the Prime Minister and all Education Ministers across Australia, and clearly sets out its young authors' wishes:

> When you think of an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander kid, or in fact any kid, imagine what's possible. Don't define us through the lens of disadvantage […] Expect the best of us.

> With 60,000 years of genius and imagination in our hearts and minds, we can be one of the groups of people that transform the future of life on Earth, for the good of us all.

> We can design the solutions that lift islands up in the face of rising seas, we can work on creative agricultural solutions that are in sync with our natural habitat, we can re-engineer schooling, we can invent new jobs and technologies, and we can unite around kindness.

> We are not the problem; we are the solution.

> (Excerpt from the Imagination Declaration as cited in Shay, Woods & Sarra, 2019)[21]

In contrast to this powerful call to see Aboriginal young people as 'the solution', too often schools do the opposite. Blanch's (2009) research with young Nunga boys in South Australian schools makes clear; Aboriginal students, particularly Aboriginal boys, understand themselves as 'watched'. They have deep lived awareness of Black bodies 'under surveillance' (Blanch, 2009, p. 91), and these negative assumptions, embedded in the White disciplinary gaze, are reproduced by schooling systems that inflict harm by interpellating the Black body as automatically 'problematic' or 'dangerous'. Instead of reading Aboriginal bodies this way, Blanch invites educators and school staff to extend an ethic of care:

> 'Care pedagogy' can be seen as teachers being engrossed with their students; engrossed, in this context means being receptive to hearing, seeing, and feeling students' perspectives […]. When care, respect, and trust are established in the classroom then confidence in achieving successful learning outcomes is possible and the pedagogy of care can begin to cater to the needs of young Nunga males and their

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[20] See https://mailchi.mp/aimementoring/applications-are-open-1376029?e=223f267282.

[21] https://theconversation.com/the-imagination-declaration-young-indigenous-australians-want-to-be-heard-but-will-we-listen-121569.

re-engagement with school. [Moreover], teaching students to show care is a valid educational aim in itself. (Blanch, 2009, pp. 111-112)

To extend a pedagogy of care, it is important that all educators and school or centre staff thus remain mindful that:

- Not all First Nations learners are the same
- Not all Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander students learn the same way
- Such students may or may not be deeply connected to their Aboriginal cultural heritage
- It is inappropriate to automatically position Aboriginal students as 'experts' on Aboriginality – they may be learning too
- Teachers may not know if they have Aboriginal students in their presence
- Learning to listen to and learn from Aboriginal students can be a starting point for establishing an ethic of care that underpins successful learning and relational trust
- Successful learning for Aboriginal students must involve curriculum and pedagogy that respectfully represents Aboriginality as heterogenous, evolving, empowered, and dynamic
- Connecting learning to Country and community/family underpins a culturally nourishing education, which has benefits for all learners

We can add to this picture, particularly with respect to behaviour management approaches with First Nations students, "Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students are overrepresented in every negative indicator that is associated with student behaviour in Australian schools … such as student suspension, attendance, expulsion, retention and achievement" (Llewellyn, Lewthwaite & Boon, 2016, p. 6). In reality, however, "it is well known that teachers are not adequately prepared to manage behaviours that may be culturally different from their own" (Llewellyn, Lewthwaite & Boon, 2016, p. 2). Furthermore, Aboriginal boys are disproportionally suspended or expelled from schools in Australia (Graham et al., 2020), highlighting a limited yet dominant way of understanding violence or 'poor' behaviour as located 'in' certain bodies while structural and symbolic forms of violence, including institutional racism, are habitually overlooked.

Llewellyn, Boon and Lewthwaite (2018) undertook a major Australian study within two faith-based education systems, including within the Diocese of Catholic Education Townsville. Of central importance in this Diocese was "ensuring that its schools, especially students, teachers and administrators, challenge the prevailing view that disparity in educational outcomes of Indigenous students is 'normal' and that modest incremental gains are acceptable (Queensland Catholic Education Commission, 2012)" (Llewellyn, Lewthwaite & Boon, 2016, p. 6). Schools within the study sought to improve "equitable outcomes for its Indigenous students … [through committing to the belief that] Catholic schools can improve outcomes for Indigenous students by ensuring that teachers are equipped with an evidence-based repertoire of behaviour support and management skills that are effective in meeting their developmental and behaviour needs" (p. 6).

In their comprehensive review of the literature on culturally responsive 'behaviour management',[22] Llewellyn, Boon and Lewthwaite (2018) identified eight criteria, which have been demonstrated

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[22] Behaviour management is the term used within Llewellyn et al's (2018) study and is also used across much of the literature. We use the term here to reflect that reality, but also suggest that terms like 'relationship building', 'co-regulation' or 'relational trust' may better align with a strengths-based orientation.

internationally to be more effective and less damaging than punitive disciplinary models, by advancing a critical ethics of care. These criteria include:

1. Education staff must develop knowledge of Self and Other and power relations in the socio-historical political context without a deficit notion of difference. Put differently, Australian educators must develop awareness of Australian settler colonial relations and the historical construction of deficit assumptions of Aboriginality.
2. Knowing students and their cultures.
3. Developing particular teacher qualities, which include the high expectations of the "'warm demander' … a teacher stance that communicates both warmth and a non-negotiable demand for student effort and mutual respect" (Llewellyn, Boon & Lewthwaite, 2018, p. 6).
4. Building positive relationships.
5. Implementing culturally responsive pedagogy.
6. Building proactive behaviour management strategies.
7. Using culturally appropriate reactive behaviour management.
8. Building connections with family and community.

(Llewellyn, Boon & Lewthwaite, 2018)

With respect to the last point – building connections with family and community – it needs to be restated that there is no singular approach to 'managing behaviour' that is applicable to all First Nations learners. 'Behaviour' is a complex and emergent product and expression of individuality, culture, relational dynamics, and context. There is no singular First Nations culture, and Aboriginal learners are situated across a multitude of contexts. Llewellyn, Boon and Lewthwaite (2018) stress that when developing culturally responsive behaviour management strategies, schools and educators must therefore work with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students and their families to identify "behaviour management practices [of the home] that positively influence classroom interactions" (Llewellyn, Boon & Lewthwaite, 2018, p. 19), whilst ensuring that an ethics of care is the starting point for relationship building.

Professional Learning

Professional learning (PL) can and should support all educators in understanding these complexities. This is especially salient in light of the oft-cited reality that teachers can have a profound impact on students' engagement with schooling, and many Indigenous students leave school primarily because of their teachers (Lowe, Skrebneva, et al., 2021, p. 475). On the other hand, in-service teachers frequently report that they feel underprepared to teach Indigenous students (Buxton, 2017; Riley & Pidgeon, 2019). For example, teachers may report that they lack confidence, and are afraid of offending by inadvertently saying or doing something that may be perceived as 'wrong' (Andersen & Ma Rhea, 2018; Buxton, 2017; Maher, 2022).

In research conducted across five Catholic schools located in Sydney, New South Wales, Buxton's (2017) teacher participants noted that, at the time of the study, PL opportunities for the teaching of Indigenous students were "extremely limited, almost non-existent" (p. 207). A lack of PL, or ineffective PL is identified by Bishop (2022) and Anderson, Yip and Diamond (2022). Furthermore, there is a shortage of research into PL for teachers in relation to Indigenous schooling (Craven, Yeung & Han, 2014), and research that has been conducted tends to focus on the eastern states and regional/remote contexts (Vass et al., 2019, p. 352), though several important studies are currently redressing this gap.

One current focus for PL that is often recommended in policy documents is for teachers to work on their 'cultural competence' (AITSL, 2020; DEEWR, 2009; NCEC, 2020). The term 'cultural competence' is understood in various ways; in the context of Indigenous Education AITSL (2020) has provisionally defined it as "the ability to understand, communicate, and effectively and sensitively interact with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, families, communities, and staff" (p. 2). In a recent submission to AITSL, the National Catholic Education Commission (2020) outlined their vision of cultural competence:

- a commitment by all staff to build their own cultural knowledge and understanding, making it an ongoing and deliberate commitment

- staff members engaged with the appropriate teaching and learning communities, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people

- being part of a workforce where staff know how to build strong relationships/partnerships with students, families, community

- schools are visually welcoming and locally contextualise First Nations throughout the school grounds

- an environment in which all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students can see themselves and their culture reflected in their learning and development

- educators who are culturally competent, respect multiple cultural ways of knowing, seeing and living and celebrate the benefits of diversity

- an ability to understand and honour differences and encourage all learners to value their cultural heritage and that of others

- seek to recognise, promote and celebrate students' cultural competence to ensure fullness of life for all in Catholic education

- teachers who challenge their personal experiences and knowledge of Aboriginal culture and their own cultural bias

- embedding cross-curriculum priorities authentically throughout the curriculum

(NCEC, 2020)

Contemporary understandings of cultural competence have, however, sustained some critique. While no-one is advocating for cultural *in*-competence, several potential and actual unintended consequences of cultural competence initiatives have been identified. For instance, generic cultural competence training – especially when delivered as a 'one off' – "provides superficial support for educators and has not resulted in improvements in teacher confidence with Aboriginal content in the curriculum [… making] the attainment of professional standards in this regard highly unlikely and problematic" (Jackson-Barrett & Lee-Hammond, 2018, p. 99). When cultural competence or cultural awareness is misapprehended as the capacity to speak 'on behalf of' Aboriginal peoples, such an approach can unintentionally slip into cultural appropriation or 'white blindness' (Walter & Butler, 2013) – the impulse to help 'Others' and rescue a moral pretence without interrogating one's own positionality within race relations. As Bawaka Country et al. (2022) explain:

> Co-creating knowledge […] is a matter of knowing from, and speaking from, your place. It's not about going away from your culture, although sometimes it will require questioning or challenging it, and it is not about getting someone else's culture or knowing all about it. (Bawaka Country et al., 2022, p. 10)

This advice from Bawaka Country resonates strongly with the literature which invites educators, social workers, health practitioners, and other professionals whose work intersects with the lives of Aboriginal peoples to move from limited conceptions of cultural competence, sensitivity or awareness towards deeper, more robust and reflexive understandings of cultural safety (see for example Fredericks & Bargallie, 2020; Bennett & Gates, 2022). Tujague and Ryan (2021) explain, and it is worth quoting these writers at length:

> Colonisation has inflicted immense damage on the traditional diets, lore, land ownership and ways of living that kept First Nations peoples thriving for more than 50,000 years. The violent acts of colonisation, including genocide, have left a devastating legacy. Historical trauma, collective trauma and cultural trauma have broken down the fabric of a once rich and healthy culture. […] Cultural awareness is acknowledging that someone you are working with has a culture different to yours. Cultural sensitivity is taking steps to understand your own culture and life experiences, and how they impact others. Finally, cultural safety is said to be present when the recipient of your work considers you safe and not a threat to their culture being accepted. To be culturally safe is to understand one's own culture and the cultures of others without judgement. (p. 6412)

With respect to limited or non-reflexive understandings of cultural competence or awareness, there are also concerns that once pre-service educators become teachers, even if they have been exposed to an effective teacher education programme that has instilled cultural safety and responsivity, "they may be enveloped by the competing demands that mean it is unlikely that they will undertake the [ongoing] PL required" (Vass, Lowe, Burgess, Harrison & Moodie, 2019, p. 344) – thus the importance of schools and centres generating environments in which the practices and attitudes of cultural safety in relation to First Nations peoples have become the norm.

When it comes to initiating and fuelling whole school or centre change aimed at improving schooling for First Nations students and families, it is important to remember that "schools are public places, shared by many people, as well as places of unique personal experience and memory" (Hayes, Mills, Christie & Lingard, 2006, p. 171). For many First Nations communities, schools have been experienced and are collectively remembered as sites of harm (Burgess, Bishop & Lowe, 2022). Running in parallel, when institutional change initiatives and PL are done 'to' rather than 'with' leaders and teachers, this negates their professional expertise, existing relationships, and lived awareness of context. Hayes et al. (2006) offer a different tack when foregrounding the importance of professional learning communities. They note that "opportunities for professional development are a key aspect of teacher capacity building and […] both internal and external professional development bring significant effects for schools" (pp. 196-7). However, because most teachers work in isolation, creating the everyday conditions for collaborative dialogue and exchange and *sharing* the responsibility for improved student learning and cultural safety, is vital.

With respect to building professional learning communities that best support and affirm Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students and their communities, the kinds of professional dialogue that Shay, Sarra and Woods (2021) suggest can be engaged in amongst teachers and leaders – even in the immediate absence of appropriate external PL opportunities – include, for example:

1. How has Australia's colonial history shaped your identity?

2. How has Australia's colonial history shaped your understanding of Indigenous identities?

3. In what ways has the media impacted on your understanding and perceptions about Indigenous identities?

4. In what ways has the media impacted on your understanding of your own identity?

5. What are some ideas for identity-affirming practices relevant to the young people in your class?

(Shay, Sarra & Woods, 2021, p. 74)

Bishop and Durksen note, in their work with teachers and schools as professional learning communities, "there is an alarming absence of teachers' acknowledgement (or understanding) of their own cultural being and how this impacts on their teaching practice" (2020, p. 186). Thus, openly and collaboratively discussing the kinds of questions listed above becomes foundational to developing learning communities that are aligned to First Nations safety, sovereignty, and survivance. Put differently, "a professional learning environment needs to be established that enables change in teachers' understandings, beliefs and values in relation to Indigenous education" (Bishop & Vass, 2021, p. 345). Shay, Sarra and Woods (2021) add that, in terms of shared professional dialogue that paves the way for improved schooling for First Nations students, teachers and leaders can also engage in discussion concerning the extent to which they are: :

> Challenging their beliefs and assumptions of Indigenous students that can impact on how they teach.

> Thinking critically about what assets Indigenous students bring to the classroom rather than what they don't bring.

Ensuring that rigour and quality are applied to classroom practices and curriculum for all students in their classrooms.

Getting to know their students, their strengths, abilities, and interests.

(Adapted from Shay, Sarra & Woods, 2021, p. 70)

Along with establishing *learning* as the shared and primary goal of any school or centre (Hayes et al., 2006, p. 195), such professional learning conversations are about developing a 'shared language' (Hayes et al., 2006, p. 197) and common vision which is foundational to then connecting with First Nations communities as partners in the learning community. Shay, Sarra and Woods (2021, pp. 71-2) underscore that "Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities are experts in their communities" thus, to work productively with this knowledge and expertise, schools/centres, leaders and teachers "will need to build relationships and collaborate with the local community." Before doing so, however, and as part of their collaborative PL, leaders and teachers can:

- Do some research before meeting with community – know who the local traditional owners are, know what country you are on, find out what the relationship between community and the school has been in the past

- Connect with Indigenous staff at the school, ensure that Indigenous and non-Indigenous staff within the school/centre know one another, ask for advice and offer support. Strong internal relationships must be reciprocal

- Understand there are local protocols for each community, find out as much as possible about the community. Ask positive and informed questions

- Meet people in the community, don't expect community to always come to the school/centre

- If there are community events on, attend these events and introduce yourselves informally

- If you invite local people in to work with the school/centre, make sure there are funds to pay them for their time and expertise.

(Shay, Sarra & Woods, 2021, p. 70)

The point that these writers collectively make is that groundwork and relationship-building can occur which help to establish professional learning communities capable of connecting with and supporting First Nations' students and communities from a standpoint of cultural safety. Aligning the professional learning and vision of the school or centre with the local community's goals and expertise then becomes part and parcel of effective PL, which necessarily implicates school leaders:

Leadership faces the challenge of positioning schools locally within the framework of state policies and establishing collaborative relationships with their local communities. An important task is to filter competing and often contradictory demands from outside the school, and to work towards coherence in the school's relationship to its community as well as central education departments. This entails developing more permeable boundaries and establishing external relationships, while keeping learning as a central focus. (Hayes et al., 2006, p. 202)

When everyone in the learning community shares in the key goal of improving schooling for First Nations students, when time and space is created for ongoing professional dialogue and reflection that supports this goal, and when both internal and external relationships are established that align the learning goals of the school or centre with those of the community, only then will one-off PL focused upon Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education be absorbed into a receptive learning culture capable of extending one-off events.

Curriculum

Part of this learning culture extends to include curriculum. As Brennan and Zipin (2018) assert, a 'just' curriculum is one in which the "most marginalised are recognised and representatively empowered, diverse traditions of knowledge and action are valued, and spaces are opened for meaningful local and global content" (p. 186). These are important aims with respect to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, who continue to be the most disadvantaged students in the Australian education system despite their sovereign status. As proud descendant of the Dja Dja Wurrung people of central Victoria, Dr Aleryk Fricker (2017) says; to genuinely 'brown the curriculum' – that is, to make it less White and in so doing redress racism as curricula exclusion – is central to a decolonising agenda. Morrison et al. (2019) agree that "decolonisation can only advance when Indigenous knowledges and knowledge practices are acknowledged and validated by a nation's cultural institutions, such as schools and universities" (p. 23). In this way, an Indigenised curriculum that leverages the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander CCP "helps all students develop intercultural understanding and normalises the presence of First Nations content and concepts" (Hradsky, 2022, p. 152).

Incorporating First Nations perspectives is indeed good for all learners, especially so in light of the skills and dispositions needed to address the urgencies of current times, including "accelerating ecosystem degradations" (Brennan, 2022, p. 86). Such exigencies require concerted engagement with knowledge systems and ways of being that prioritise "Indigenous conceptions of the learner who never walks alone, and who is indeed accountable to the world around her [sic] including the environment" (Sefa Dei, 2011, p. 9). Baynes (2015) adds,

> Non-Indigenous students benefit from learning Indigenous knowledges, through experiencing different perspectives on the natural world, which enhances their creative problem-solving capabilities [… making them] more well-rounded and reflective scientists, engineers, resource managers, or health professionals. (p. 81)

The benefits for all Australians of learning from and with First Nations peoples, knowledge systems, Country, and ways of being cannot be underestimated; however, incorporating this 'living' knowledge into or alongside a national framework which essentialises a "static view of knowledge, around which students and teachers are positioned as consumers or implementers rather than as active knowledge workers" (Brennan, 2022, p. 85), is complex.

The Australian Curriculum (AC) was implemented (in part) in 2011[23] by the federal government with the intent to "standardise, direct, and control what is taught in local schools across the country, replacing the previous system of state-based syllabus development and implementation" (Burgess et al., 2022, p. 160). Encouragingly, the AC is under continuous review and development to modify its relevance for a changing world, with version 9.0 released in 2022. Reid and Price (2018) argue that quality curriculum should always be in a 'state of becoming'. To respond dynamically to the complex policy debates and power relations out of which it emerges, the AC thus constitutes a 'matrix structure' including learning areas, general capabilities, and cross-curriculum priorities to integrate "some of the different ways of thinking about what school curriculum should represent, and what

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[23] Although parts of the AC were due for implementation from 2011, the process was graduated, and some sources state full implementation did not occur until 2014. See for example: https://ministers.dese.gov.au/gillard/delivering-australias-first-national-curriculum-0.

elements are important today" (Yates as cited in Price, 2022, p. 181). Version 9.0 is purported to represent, "a more stripped-back and teachable curriculum that identifies the essential content" that all young Australians should learn (ACARA, 2022a). It also aims to deepen:

> … students' understanding of First Nations Australian histories and cultures, the impact on – and perspectives of – First Nations Australians of the arrival of British settlers as well as their contribution to the building of modern Australia. (ACARA, 2022a)

Importantly, in the latest version, the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander CCP

> … is composed of three interconnected aspects of Country/Place, Culture and People (ACARA, 2022). The stated intentions of the aspect of County/Place include recognising connections to Country, positioning First Nations Australians as Traditional Owners and acknowledging the impact of colonisation. The Culture aspect includes examining First Nations cultural diversity, recognising First Nations cultures as the world's oldest and as continuous, and clarifying that Indigenous cultures are internationally enshrined. The People aspect includes acknowledging over 60,000 years of occupation, highlighting a diversity of First Nations peoples, and examining the sophisticated social systems, kinship structures, protocols and contributions of First Nations peoples. (Maher, 2022, p. 4)

These are welcome developments. However, it must be remembered that curriculum construction is a power-laden and political act (Apple, 2013). In many ways, the AC continues a selective tradition of establishing whose knowledge is important, how it should be learned and organised, and whether it is sufficiently important to be formally assessed. Ongoing criticisms include "the lack of clarity around what to embed, where to embed and how to embed the [Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander] CCP (Anderson et al., 2022; Henderson, 2020) and a claim that [First Nations] content tends to be reduced and trivialised (Anderson et al., 2022; Parkinson & Jones, 2019)" (Maher, 2022, p. 4). The fact that the AC remains tethered to national performativity and accountability mechanisms that prioritise White knowledge, while Indigenous knowledges remain, in principle, optional (Salter & Maxwell, 2016), is a matter of overarching concern. As Burgess and colleagues (2022) explain, if Indigenous knowledges are not officially prioritised, for example in the way that the NAPLAN or PISA testing is, then they are less likely to be viewed as important by teachers and principals who are increasingly at 'breaking point' (Windle et al., 2022). Furthermore, whilst demonstrating concern for First Nations perspectives, the current version of the AC builds on and reproduces Anglo-Centric traditions (Hradsky, 2022; Maher, 2022).

Realistically, Indigenous knowledges have never been centralised in Australian mainstream school curriculum (Lowe & Yunkaporta, 2013). Typically, such knowledges are disaggregated, compartmentalised, ignored, tokenised, or positioned as sidelines to the main event (Burgess, Bishop & Lowe, 2022; Guenther et al., 2021; Bullen & Flavell, 2022). Despite the educational goals for all young Australians set out by the Mparntwe Declaration (Education Council, 2019) – i.e. to ensure that all students learn about First Nations peoples and knowledges and that all First Nations students thrive – the Australian Government Department of Education and Training (2021) states that the foremost purpose of Australian schooling is to ensure "Australia's future prosperity and to remain competitive internationally" (as cited in Wilson & Spillman, 2021, p. 57). This establishes a hierarchy in which the

holistic, relational, and interconnected nature of Aboriginal knowledge systems, which are not 'officially tested' (Burgess et al., 2022, p. 161), are positioned as secondary to the individualistic and competitive elements of the AC, which are tested. The dominance of individualistic, competitive, oftentimes decontextualised, static, Anglo-Centric orientations to education thus form part of a deeply entrenched history of assimilatory practices in schooling that, along with the complex legacies of racism explored earlier (see also Bodkin-Andrews & Carlson, 2016; Bodkin-Andrews et al., 2021), underpin the continued marginalisation of Indigenous epistemologies and ontologies (Buxton as cited in Burgess et al., 2022, p. 158).

Adding to this picture is the aforementioned lack of uniform teacher education across Australia that centralises Indigenous knowledges, as well as a scarcity of high-quality in-service PL and support for teachers and leaders (MacGill, 2022; Lowe & Galstaun, 2020) – this is despite a growing body of literature and research aimed at redressing this lacuna.[24] This combination of factors underpins persistent teacher apprehension to embrace First Nations perspectives (Maher, 2022), which is exacerbated by political debates that position Indigenous content as unimportant, controversial or optional (Salter & Maxwell, 2016). The 2014 AC review,[25] for example, concluded that the history curriculum should better 'recognise and celebrate Western civilisation' (Sriprakash, Rudolph & Gerard, 2022) – the implication being that First Nations and Western knowledge systems exist in a zero-sum relationship, with the former being a threat to the latter. Political backlash during the more recent 2021 review included similar concerns with (now former) Federal Education Minister Alan Tudge suggesting that the proposed changes to the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander CCP – which called for more honesty in confronting the histories and experiences of First Nations Australians – would risk 'dishonouring our Western heritage' (Riddle, 2021)[26] seeding a 'hatred of country' in students that may dilute their willingness to eventually 'protect the nation through military service' (Hurst, 2021). Rhetoric of this kind codes Indigenous perspectives as dangerous and problematic and weakens the open 'truth-telling' required for reconciliation (Hradsky, 2022). Burgess and colleagues (2022) argue that, in the light of such ongoing political resistance, "the purpose of curriculum [in Australia] is to reinforce western dominance, leaving little room for diverse perspectives, worldviews, and interpretations of reality" (pp. 160-61).

Whilst the task of decolonising curriculum is therefore complex and contested, there is still much that can be done. When all educational staff gradually develop understanding of First Nations histories and experiences of coloniality, "recognition of the ethical importance of finding authentic ways to teach Indigenous knowledges" is nurtured (Lowe & Galstaun, 2020, p. 94). The idea is not to replace Western knowledge but to bring Indigenous and Western knowledge systems into dialogue such that worldviews are expanded, relationships are forged, and power imbalances redressed (Andreotti, 2011; Fregoso Bailón & De Lissovoy, 2019; Rigney & Kelly, 2021). Boaventura de Sousa Santos (2018) distinguishes between hegemonic and decolonial knowledge processes: in the hegemonic form of knowledge, we know by creating order; decolonial thinking asks us to know by creating solidarity. Educators can build 'knowledge solidarity' by making genuine space for and valuing Indigenous

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[24] Of note is the current Australian Research Council (ARC) project in South Australia, *Culturally Responsive Schooling* (DP220100651, 2022-24), led by Distinguished Professor Lester-Irabinna Rigney from the Narungga, Kaurna and Ngarrindjeri nations, and the *Culturally Nourishing Schooling* project across NSW and Queensland led by proud Gubbi Gubbi man Associate Professor Kevin Lowe.

[25] Co-led by well-known conservative education advocates Kenneth Wiltshire and Kevin Donnelly (2014).

[26] https://www.aare.edu.au/blog/?p=9311.

knowledges while appreciating that despite the Western impulse to claim a stronghold on Truth, there are multiple ways of knowing the world. Morrison and colleagues (2019) describe this in terms of developing cultural humility: the appreciation that no-one knows it all. There is value in opening to a diversity of worldviews and ways of being, especially with respect to cultures that connect people, Country, place, and more-than-human beings during a time when 'cultural sustainability' of such knowledges intersects so crucially with the environmental sustainability on which we all depend (Acton et al., 2017). This process, however, starts with knowing oneself (Rose, 2013; Morrison et al., 2019; Vass, 2017; Maher, 2022), for as de Sousa Santos further explicates,

> [T]he world is organized in such a way that, in order to function well, the structures [of domination] need the complicity of those who internalize them (Bourdieu 2003). Thus, any struggle [towards social, cultural and educational equity] must begin with the struggle against oneself. (de Sousa Santos, 2018, p. 64)

MacGill (2022) and Lowe and Galstaun (2020) suggest that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural immersion programmes such as workshops, camps or retreats can be particularly useful starting points for the dual purpose of decolonising the mind and to Indigenise curriculum. When carefully facilitated, immersion programmes can give educators time to absorb new pedagogical practices and shift people's worldviews through face-to-face encounters with First Nations peoples. MacGill (2022) adds that "agentic possibilities emerge from epistemological shifts where teachers are given time, space, and support to reread the curriculum anew and find intersectional points to integrate rather than bolt on the [Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander] CCP" (MacGill, 2022, p. 186). Harrison and Skrebneva (2020) agree that immersion 'in' Country[27] has multiple benefits, including strengthening connections between people, places, histories, and imagined futures. They say, "Country is positioned in the curriculum as a priority concept because it has the power to promote a sense of belonging, particularly among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students" (p. 17). Likewise, Burgess et al. (2022) argue that Country-centred learning led by local Aboriginal community members – an approach and programme that they call Learning from Country – can awaken teachers' critical consciousness, challenge power relations that silence Aboriginal peoples, and assist teachers to develop holistic rather than piecemeal approaches to integrating First Nations perspectives by, importantly, moving from 'representational' to 'relational' orientations to curriculum.

Relationality emphasises that knowledge is not merely a 'static' entity learned through detached consumption inside "concrete structures where Western knowledge […] is privileged and presented via decontextualised and homogenised texts" (Lowe & Weuffen, 2022, p. 3). As Trawlwulwuy woman from Tebrakunna country in northeast Tasmania Lauren Tynan (2021) explains, "Country sits at the heart of coming to know and understand relationality as it is the web that connects humans to a system of Lore/Law and knowledge that can never be human-centric. […] Relationality belongs with and is learnt from Country" (pp. 1-2). Brennan (2022, p. 85) adds that knowledge is 'living' and is produced relationally through being *with* one another, connecting to place, and thus by appreciating curriculum as an active project and 'verb'. Brennan (2022) suggests that, where possible, building curriculum around inquiry processes in which teachers and students learn together thus offers vital means of disrupting 'curriculum-as-usual', positioning students as knowledge workers who are open

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[27] Lowe, Skrebneva, Burgess, Harrison and Vass (2021) suggest that when Country is understood as curriculum and pedagogy, this enables "a deeper, ontological and political learning" via which students are located "*in* Country rather than on and controlling land" (p. 472).

to place-based learning, positioning knowledge as co-created and alive, and positioning teachers, not as experts who must 'know it all', but as co-learners and co-inquirers (Maher, 2022).

In Burgess et al.'s (2022) Learning from Country (LFC) programme, a critical step involved "building relationships with Aboriginal community-based educators to develop skills to engage with local Aboriginal families and communities" (2022, p. 163). In this formulation, LFC requires building relationships beyond the school gates and remunerating Aboriginal community-based educators appropriately (Bishop, Vass & Thompson, 2021). However, LFC does not require that learning be moved beyond the space where schools are already situated. Burgess et al. (2022) explain:

> Learning from Country (LFC) means learning from Aboriginal peoples, cultures, histories, sites, and all that Country entails including the interdependent ecologies of the land, waterways, and seas. The urban context is significant as most non-Aboriginal people do not perceive urban places as Aboriginal places, as Porter (2018) notes, 'this urban country is also urban *Country*' (p. 239, emphasis in original). This notion confronts stereotypes that position 'real' Aboriginal people as living in the 'outback' or 'bush', and therefore one must travel to remote Australia to experience an 'authentic' Aboriginal culture. (Burgess et al., 2022, pp. 162-63)

Burgess and colleagues' (2022) project thus had the benefit of opening pre-service teachers' eyes "to another reality that's all around them" (Aboriginal community-based educator Uncle Ken, as cited in Burgess et al., 2022, p. 165). This resonates with Hamm's (2015) place-based approach to curriculum entitled 'place-thought-walk'. She says, place-thought-walk is "a starting point for thinking about the places around [us] in a different way, placing Aboriginal knowledges in the centre and privileging this knowledge as the way to think about place" (p. 58). Indeed, as Maher (2022) affirms, First Nations knowledges are all around us. In her work as a non-Indigenous educator working primarily with non-Indigenous pre-service teachers, Maher exercises a sense of responsibility to honour First Peoples and to address the ongoing impacts of colonisation, by bringing First Nations knowledges to the centre of curriculum and unlocking opportunities for pre-service teachers to rethink the land in which they are already immersed:

> We consider the significance of relations with Aboriginal Knowledges and the peoples and places that hold these knowledges. A non-Indigenous student's regard for the river as a Belonging Place is brought into relation with consideration of the river as Aboriginal land (and waters). We consider how 'settlement' has impacted upon the river, and what our shared responsibility to the waterways [and lands] we live with might be. (Maher, 2022, p. 6)

Likewise, for Hamm (2015), appreciating Country as curriculum is important for multiple reasons, including that doing so disrupts persistent stereotypes of Aboriginality as homogenous:

> This disruption acknowledges that Aboriginal Australia is diverse and that each group has its own stories of place, belonging, and ceremony […]. Acknowledging Australia's Aboriginal history, culture, and ways of knowing as central to understanding the land around us requires thinking about place in a different way [… by exposing] the layers of colonial inscription in the landscape, creating space for the land to be reclaimed and reinscribed with Aboriginal knowledges as the central frame. (Hamm, 2015, p. 58)

Moreover, careful whole-of-school incorporation of First Nations perspectives can and has resulted in quantifiable improvements, the likes of which schools will typically value. Harrison and Greenfield (2011) examined how 12 schools in New South Wales, Australia incorporated Indigenous perspectives. Reflecting on the project, Harrison and Skrebneva (2020) explain:

> Teachers worked together with parents to weave Aboriginal knowledge into the fabric of the curriculum through careful negotiations with Aboriginal Elders and the community (for example, Aboriginal shelters, foods, bush gardens, Aboriginal art and dancing). The teachers at one of the schools reported that their approach to doing business with parents has changed dramatically since 2006, which is evidenced in their statistics on suspensions. In 2006, there were 386 suspensions at the school, in 2007 there were 170 suspensions and in 2008 there were 17 suspensions. Another school constructed an outdoor learning space where Elders worked with students to reconnect them to local places and history. […] The school reported increased student engagement and improved outcomes in the NAPLAN results to the point where all students were achieving minimum standards in reading and writing. (p. 22)

Powerful starting points for understanding Country as curriculum and for appreciating curriculum as a site for negotiation and decolonisation therefore include immersion programmes and LFC frameworks, which benefit from collaborative, ideally, 'whole-school' approaches (Burgess & Lowe, 2019; Lowe, Skrebneva, Burgess, Harrison & Vass, 2021). In such approaches, relationships between schools, First Nations' families and local community/Elders are developed (Fricker, Moodie & Burgess, 2022). These relationships take time to nurture, thus, in their absence or when starting out, it is important that teachers and schools do not allow a fear of tokenism or lack of established relational structures to serve as reason for doing nothing. Neagle (2019) says:

> I encourage teachers to get rid of the word 'tokenism' […] At its best, it dismisses an act or gesture before one even has a chance to analyse its value (or lack thereof). At its worst, the word allows many thousands of teachers to continue to teach the Anglo-Australian content with which they are most comfortable and continue to exclude Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives. (p. 22)

Shared commitments to embedding the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander CCP, interpreting the APST focus areas 1.4 and 2.4 critically, and auditing curriculum to scrutinise whose voices, perspectives, and knowledges are privileged (Madsen et al., 2021), can therefore serve as important momentum-building practices for schools and centres to slowly decolonise from the ground up.

Although, in many ways, Australia's mainstream schooling system has a long way to go in "allowing all students to engage in reconciliation, respect and recognition of the world's oldest continuous living cultures" (ACARA, 2022b, n.p.), and although many challenges exist in terms of how this work can be done both comprehensively and effectively, as Brennan (2022) says, "new discourses about curriculum […] can and do gain traction. […] Teachers, individually, in groups or in projects across sites, already engage in curriculum inquiry" that is culturally responsive, decolonising, and anti-racist, and even "small-scale, local inquiries can thus link up" (p. 88). Brennan adds that curriculum changes mostly occur 'from below', meaning that even when they are small, patterns of dedicated practice are important – they generate their own hopeful momentum, and the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander CCP provides an important resource in effecting broader-scale decolonising change. While, as Maher

(2022) states, "addressing the [Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander] CCP requires structural and school change beyond the efforts of individual teachers, pedagogy is critical" (p. 5). Teachers have agency to make important decisions both about what is included in curriculum and how that knowledge is taught. We thus turn to the importance of pedagogy as a key theme across the literature now.

Pedagogy

Pedagogy is not a one-way street whereby teachers, as experts, administer objective, static knowledge – or what Freire (1998) referred to as the banking model. Rather, pedagogy is relational and encompasses "relationships between educators, learners, content, and knowledge generated (Lusted, 1986). From this perspective, pedagogy is significant to the production of learner [and teacher] subjectivities (Cummins, 2006)" (Wrench & Garrett, 2018, pp. 749-50), and culturally nourishing and responsive pedagogies can help to affirm Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander subjectivities. Previous sections of this review have recognised Culturally Responsive Pedagogy (CRP) as an overarching philosophy which, at its core, recognises that "as educators, we have a responsibility to see and hear all class members as valued keepers and holders of knowledge" (Maher, 2022, p. 6). Indeed, as noted earlier, effective learning can only flourish when learners' existing skills and knowledges are recognised, valued, and brought to the centre of learning (Osborne et al., 2020; Lowe, Skrebneva, Burgess, Harrison & Vass, 2021). In addition to consciously centring First Nations knowledges across curriculum, teachers' "theoretical, relational and pedagogical approaches are [thus] key" (Guenther et al., 2021, p. 616).

CRP

As noted in the section entitled 'Dispositions', CRP begins with a critical mindset that moves beyond deficit or stereotypical views of Aboriginality by understanding Australia's past and ongoing colonial history from First Nations' standpoints – a shift that requires non-Indigenous educators to develop awareness of their own cultural identities and their connections to Indigenous marginalisation while developing budding awareness of the systems and structures which keep these relations in place (Nicoll, 2004; Maher, 2022). As Moodie and colleagues explain, "culturally responsive pedagogies do improve outcomes for Indigenous students, but only when those pedagogies also focus on changing non-Indigenous teachers' attitudes" (Moodie, Vass, Lowe, 2021a, p. 11) They add:

> … when professional learning focuses on changing teacher attitudes about Indigenous knowledge, aspirations and communities, these deficit imaginings shift in favour of supporting Indigenous success. (p. 12)

CRP involves developing cognisance of racism in its varied forms (i.e. what we have referred to as racial literacy), and appreciation that there are many valid ways of knowing the world. This knowing is transformed into action when educators seek to destabilise knowledge hierarchies by making genuine space for First Nations and other culturally marginalised perspectives. This includes making space for "multiple ways of knowing and bring[ing] them into conversation with one another" (Zuroski as cited in Maher, 2022, p. 6). Maher (2022) says, "As we listen to each other, it becomes apparent how important family, friends and place are in where students 'know from' [… including] the significance of knowing from the land, from the river, and from local communities" (p. 6). Valuing the knowledges and skills that learners bring to formal educational sites is hence a core element of CRP.

CRP is emerging in Australia as one orientation to strengths-based approaches for Indigenous schooling. Here, we use the term CRP to encompass a range of interrelated pedagogies that each have their own lineages and nuances, but which collectively use "the cultural characteristics, experiences, and perspectives of ethnically diverse students as conduits for teaching them more effectively" (Gay 2002, p. 106). Morrison, Rigney, Hattam and Diplock (2019) define CRP as "pedagogies that value, and

mobilise as resources, the cultural repertoires and intelligences that students bring to the learning relationship" (pp. 1-2). CRP seeks to redress the power imbalances that can characterise contemporary classrooms in which cultural diversity is subsumed through assimilatory processes and the normalisation of whiteness. In this way, CRP is appropriate for *all* students, not only Indigenous students and minoritised young people because it builds socio-cultural awareness. Drawing on Morrison, Rigney, Hattam and Diplock (2019), Osborne et al. (2020) articulate several principles that underpin an Australian construct of CRP. These principles include:

- building meaningful pedagogical relationships
- offering high educational challenge (including intellectual, social, affective, creative, and embodied modes of learning)
- having high expectations of learners
- strongly connecting to students' lifeworlds
- viewing cultural difference as an asset
- fostering a critically conscious/activist orientation – where taking 'action' may include, for instance, caring for a waterway, educating the school-community on matters of shared concern, etc.
- promoting sharing of learning beyond the classroom
- and enabling students to learn – and to express their learning – multimodally.

(Adapted from Osborne et al., 2020, p. 3)

Extending on the notion of culturally responsive schooling, and focusing on Australian Indigenous educational experiences, Lowe and colleagues (2021) argue for an Australian culturally nourishing model which is characterised by:

- rich, multilayered understandings of Country
- Indigenous cultural and linguistic heritage in connection with student and community identity
- epistemic mentoring of educators
- genuine and sustainable teacher professional change

(Adapted from Lowe, Skrebneva, et al., 2021, p. 468)

Given that CRP, as mentioned, is for *all* students and also given that First Nations cultures are myriad and educators may not even know if they have First Nations students in their care, realistic first steps can include focusing on creating genuine spaces for educational *encounter, relationship building* and *dialogue,* regardless of who is in the room*.* Encounter can refer to opening spaces in curriculum for learners and educators to meet multiple, particularly Indigenous and minoritised voices, knowledges and ways of being. Relationship Building means valuing the centrality of relationships for learning, including relationships between students and teachers but, more comprehensively, relationships with community, Country, and with diverse knowledge systems. Dialogue is the central vehicle by which educators make genuine space for student voice (see for example Price, Green, Memon & Chown, 2020; Chown, 2021; Howard & Price, 2023). Building relational classrooms may seem like a small or arbitrary step, but dialogical, relational learning which is sustained, and not merely limited to icebreaker activities, opens the door to learner lifeworlds and elevates the collective experience. As one Catholic school educator who participated in a culturally responsive schooling research project recently reflected, "You don't expect it," that relationship building will improve learning:

> You think that you can see where [students are] at from whatever assessments or quizzes or formative work that you're doing, *but if you don't actually know them as human beings first*, […] you just don't get the same understanding of their work. […]

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we got on well before [the culturally responsive project] but afterwards, it was literally like the power had shifted, like we were all part of a team. […] Who would've thought that actually talking about things [that might seem] off topic […] that you're learning a lot about [students] and supporting learning. (As cited in Schulz, Diplock & King, forthcoming, emphasis in transcript)

One of the critiques of CRP is that there is a lack of robust empirical evidence that it is 'successful' (Sleeter, 2012). Of course, this again raises the question of how 'success' is defined and measured, and by whom. Where success is measured in terms of higher student achievement, there are in fact some empirical studies that correlate culturally responsive pedagogies with higher academic achievement. For example, analysing school assessment data from 2009, Ladwig (2012) showed that schools participating in New Zealand's Te Kotahitanga (Bishop, Berryman, Cavanagh & Teddy, 2007) model of schooling – which is based on a culturally responsive pedagogy of relations – achieved substantially higher in mathematics than the national averages, "with moderate to strong effects for the majority of students" (Ladwig, 2012, p. 4). Other studies that demonstrate a relationship between CRP and academic achievement include Byrd (2016), López (2016), Clark (2017) and Cherfas, Casciano and Wiggins (2021). In addition, there is substantial qualitative research that demonstrates the positive outcomes of CRP in relation to other dimensions of the schooling experience, such as self-esteem, engagement, wellbeing, student-teacher relationships, and student-student relationships (see for example Cholewa, Goodman, West-Olatunji & Amatea, 2014; Hubert, 2014; Lewthwaite & McMillan, 2010; Papp, 2016).

Literacy, Numeracy, and 'Success'

Making space for broader conceptualisations of educational 'success' and valuing the cultural assets that students bring with them into the learning environment necessitates that schools and educators look beyond narrow conceptions of literacy or numeracy if they are to practice CRP. Frameworks like the NAPLAN tend to conceptualise literacy and numeracy in decontextualised, competitive, individualistic, and technical or static terms – as though disconnected from learner lifeworlds. Ironically, the same frameworks privilege the literacies and numeracies of the dominant white culture (Redden & Lowe, 2012; Cornelius & Mackey-Smith, 2022), negating presumptions of their neutrality. NAPLAN is constructed on White performance benchmarks (Lowe, Moodie & Weuffen, 2021, p. 75). The test rewards "those capable of demonstrating suitable quantities of white cultural capital" (Lingard, Creagh & Vass, 2012, p. 329) and "requires a sufficient grasp of SAE [Standard Australian English], and knowledges that can be conceptually, culturally and linguistically foreign to Indigenous students" (Fraser, Kyle & Francis, 2018). In their discussion of current monolingual assessment practices, including NAPLAN, Steele, Dovchin and Oliver (2022), observe,

Aboriginal students are continuously being assessed based on Standard Australian English language norms, led by predominantly white cultural values. Such ways of assessment neglect the cultural backgrounds, knowledge, traditions, and living contexts of those students, as they are asked to perform on something that is different from their reality. (p. 12)

According to Stehlik (2018), NAPLAN is a 'blunt instrument' that measures literacy and numeracy, but overlooks "other important considerations like student wellbeing, the health of the school community, or successes in other not-so-academic areas (arts, music, sports, and so on)" (p. 95).

Under one-size-fits-all testing methods, Indigenous literacies are "not recognised as valuable" (Rogers, 2018, p. 33) and conformity to mainstream benchmarks "determines the degree to which Indigenous people are seen as successful" (Moodie, 2017, p. 35). Teachers, meanwhile, focus their energies on teaching to the test, undermining their capacity to develop curriculum which is appropriate for their actual students (Connell, 2013, p. 107). Curriculum and pedagogies that are valued by Indigenous communities, such as Indigenous languages and knowledges (Trimmer, Dixon & Guenther, 2021), are further marginalised and viewed by schools as a distraction from 'more important' business (Lowe, Tennent, et al. 2021, p. 85). Since its inception, the centrality of the NAPLAN in Australian schooling has thus had significant impacts on pedagogy. Fogarty, Riddle, Lovell, and Wilson (2018) argue:

> … standardised testing has led to generic pedagogic approaches, the politicisation of literacy learning for Indigenous students and an over-reliance on metrics to compare literacy learning outcomes of Indigenous students with non-Indigenous students. They also emphasise the danger of relying on these metrics for widely implemented literacy programmes, and the deficit discourses they encourage. (cited in Gutierrez et al., 2021, p. 38)

In the field of Indigenous Education, numerous Indigenous and non-Indigenous scholars have highlighted the pernicious role that metrics play in overshadowing issues that are fundamental for Indigenous peoples, such as self-determination, social justice, and educational sovereignty. Lowe, Moodie and Weuffen (2021) note that "Indigenous success has been separated from the pursuit of a social justice and rights-based agenda to, instead, being linked to individual achievement, attendance, and participation metrics" (p. 82). When schools place inordinate priority on metrics, they tend to view social justice, self-determination, and equity initiatives as instruments to achieve more favourable data, rather than being worthwhile in their own right. For example, Vass and Chalmers (2015) report that when Queensland introduced the Embedding Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Perspectives in Schooling (EATSIPS) programme in 2004 as a classroom decolonisation and reconciliation initiative, it was appropriated as a strategy to help improve NAPLAN outcomes. There are multiple dangers in this approach; one of which is that if the desired improvement in NAPLAN outcomes is not immediately forthcoming, the social justice initiative is jettisoned as 'not working', irrespective of whether there are other positive but less measurable outcomes.

Rather than focussing myopically on metrics and framing Indigenous student success solely in relation to attendance, achievement, and retention benchmarks, it is imperative to consider how Indigenous families and communities define educational success (Guenther, 2013), while bearing in mind that there will be a diversity of perspectives across communities and locations. For educational policymakers, who are themselves embedded in neoliberal systems, success at school is largely inseparable from participation in the economy as a future employee (Moodie, Vass & Lowe, 2021a). However, as Lowe, Moodie and Weuffen (2021) stress, "Indigenous success must be on Indigenous terms, not those of the settler-colonial state" (p. 83). This is not to say that academic achievement is not valued; rather "Indigenous communities have different criteria for what counts as 'success' beyond and in addition to test scores and other conventional measures" (Phillips & Luke, 2017, p. 991).

Certainly, metrics have a role to play in Indigenous schooling. Referring to schooling in remote communities, Guenther (2013) comments, "there is no doubt about the need for a tool that assesses student learning. But that tool ought to reflect the student and learning context – it must be culturally fair" (p. 159). Furthermore, the collection of NAPLAN data is invaluable in showing the extent to which the current education system is failing many Indigenous students (Vass & Chalmers, 2015, p. 140).

However, a system that measures success so narrowly discourages teachers from addressing the wider needs and aspirations of students and their families. In their survey of staff conducted in five Catholic schools in Queensland, Lewthwhaite and colleagues noted that "Teachers communicated a commitment to serving Indigenous students developmentally through attention to students' broad learning needs, not just academically, but also socially, spiritually and, on occasion, culturally," adding "this is not surprising because, the ethos of Catholic Education explicitly attends to holistic learning for all students" (Lewthwaite, Boon, Webber & Laffin, 2017, p. 89).

The ethos of Catholic Education is, therefore, potentially well-placed to navigate the heavy government expenditure and focus on 'improving' First Nations students' outcomes on standardised literacy and numeracy tests, in ways that do not devalue students' cultural assets or reinforce deficit understandings of Aboriginality (see for example Gable & Lingard, 2016; Heffernan, 2018; Keddie, 2013; Macqueen et al., 2019; Vass, 2013). Much of the current literature on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education indeed attempts to illuminate ways of 'both' supporting First Nations students' outcomes on standardised literacy and numeracy tests 'and' incorporating critical, multi, contextualised and culturally responsive orientations to literacy and numeracy. For example, Gutierrez, Lowe and Guenther (2021) recently undertook a comprehensive, systematic review of literacy programmes in Australia to explore:

- what literacy specific programmes have been identified as being successful with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students?
- what literacy specific programmes have been identified as not successful?
- under what conditions is success evident?
- and how is success being measured?

They highlight that literacy has long been a site of heated debate in Australia with oftentimes strong political desires to return to nostalgic traditional approaches, whilst value-laden, ideological binaries are constructed which fuel the 'literacy wars'. For example, binaries are established between "reading for pleasure and moral development as opposed to critical literacy; reading/ deconstruction, truth/ scepticism, excitement/ boredom, traditional/ postmodern, worthy/ unworthy, profound/ relativistic, canonical/ radical (Howie, 2006, p. 226), and particularly relevant to this paper, phonics and traditional grammar versus whole language (Snyder, 2018)" (Gutierrez et al., 2021, p. 44). A key point made by these researchers is that these dichotomies are not helpful and do not consider, "balanced literacy models that take" the multiplicity and socially situated nature of literacy "into consideration" (p. 44). Of the models that they investigated, those that were most useful in supporting, not only First Nations students but all students in ways that valued their cultural identity and contexts, shared in the following criteria:

- Implemented as early as possible (i.e., the early years)
- Combined both technical, code-breaking (mechanical/structural) orientations to literacy as well as contextual, cultural elements that capture what it means to be literate-in-context
- Done 'with' rather than 'to' Aboriginal students, and work from a strengths-based perspective in partnership with parents/caregivers and community
- Are connected to students' lived realities and include intellectually stimulating content which encourages critical thinking
- Are supported by school-community partnerships which illuminate the multifaceted complexity of literacy learning such that students' backgrounds can be linked into the school and classroom (for example, by way of bilingual community stories that are published for use in the classroom)

- Constitute balanced place-based literacy programmes and the implementation of meaningful teacher/ school/ community-led research projects to inform whole school literacy planning
- Include ongoing targeted professional development for educators and leaders so that they develop the "agency to become professional decision makers who can build effective local partnerships and programmes"

<div align="right">(Gutierrez et al., 2021, p. 56)</div>

Overall, these writers argue for a broadened interpretation of literacy that is socially and culturally contextualised. Elements of such an approach would include:

> … a rounded approach to literacy including an interweaving focus on codebreaking (which incorporates close language study and practice such as phonics and language awareness); cultural influences on understanding texts and increasing the kinds of texts students are familiar with; improving students' understanding of textual features and genres; as well as developing a critical awareness of the ways texts work and the reader's position in interpreting/acting on texts and the world. An important emphasis of these models is that all aspects should be covered in a literacy programme and that they are not hierarchical skills. (Gutierrez et al., 2021, pp. 44-45)

Broadened interpretations of numeracy which, likewise, can help to build meaningful pedagogical relationships, offer high intellectual challenge, strongly connect to learners' lifeworlds, view cultural difference as a learning asset, promote the multimodal sharing of learning, and foster a socially conscious mindset through collaborative rather than competitive and individualistic ways of learning, include criteria such as the following:

- Develop shared definitions of what it means to be 'mathematical' and what 'success' in numeracy might therefore mean
- Link 'successful outcomes' to 'effort'
- Develop self-assessment rubrics that focus on elements like team-work, communication, and effort over outcome
- Emphasise how failure and trying over is part of the mathematical cycle
- Capitalise on group work activities – build a community of learners throughout the entire process
- Develop and celebrate a cache of 'everyday maths stories'
- Make space for embodied mathematics
- Explore mathematics in the environment, in Country (with explicit reference to the important work of Noonuccal man Professor Chris Matthews)[28]
- Create opportunities for students to investigate their worlds and share their inquiries (i.e., everyday mathematics at home/in the community; mathematics in sports/music/dance, on Country etc.)
- Encourage projects wherein students bring 'hidden mathematics' to life: i.e. the hidden mathematics of cooking, of rainfall and its impacts, of managing a household, of the school yard …

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[28] See for example: https://www.griffith.edu.au/advancement/notable-alumni/2021-alumni-award-winners/professor-chris-matthews. And: https://www.teachermagazine.com/au_en/articles/indigenous-perspectives-in-mathematics-education?lang=en.

(See for example Garrett, Dawson, Meiners & Wrench, 2018; Harding-DeKam, 2014; O'Keefe, Paige & Osborne, 2019; Rigney, Garrett, Curry & MacGill, 2019; Matthews, 2012; Mathews et al., 2005; Sarra & Ewing, 2021)

With respect to culturally responsive mathematics, Sparrow and Hurst (2012, p. 3) add that teachers can:

- Use materials to support understanding in mathematics learning
- Develop mathematical understanding beyond the use of materials
- Instigate small group work so that students can explore and discuss mathematical ideas
- Model general ways to work mathematically using 'think aloud' protocols
- Use students' talk, explanations, and teacher questioning to develop a shared mathematics literacy
- Plan collaboratively with Aboriginal Educators to include innovative and appropriate teaching strategies
- Place an emphasis on verbal as well as written instructions
- Use appropriate game playing to introduce and consolidate learning
- Use open learning tasks
- Have high expectations
- Be responsive to the particular social and cultural contexts of students
- Explicitly demonstrate and explain relationships in mathematical learning
- Work towards conceptual development and not concentrate on mathematical procedures
- Build learning on what students already know
- Design learning around what students bring to the classroom

Appreciating all students' cultural wealth can include valuing Aboriginal Englishes as legitimate communication that educators can couple with explicit discussions around code-switching (Blanch, 2009). It can also manifest in expanded understandings of what cultural wealth may mean. Yosso (2005, pp. 77-81) offers the following capitals which many students may bring to the educational environment, which may not be typically seen or valued:

- Aspirational capital: resilience to maintain hopes and dreams in the face of adversity
- Linguistic capital: ability to communicate in more than one language or style
- Familial capital: deep ties to culture, history, traditions, and kinship
- Social capital: rich social networks and communities
- Navigational capital: ability to manoeuvre through social institutions and to persevere through racism/sexism by drawing on an inner set of resources and competencies
- Resistant capital: the capacity to draw on legacies of resistance to subordination where it is valuable to assert your worth and challenge the status quo in order to maintain self-worth

OBL, CBL, Storytelling Pedagogies, and Rap/Hip Hop

Overarching pedagogies that support First Nations as well as *all* learners, and which can be applied across learning areas may include (but are not limited to): Object Based Learning (OBL), Creative Body-Based Learning (CBL), and Storytelling Pedagogies, among others.

Frigo (2019) describes **OBL** as "a mode of education which involves the active integration of objects into the learning environment. Students are given a range of objects, varying in size, material, colour, purpose and age, and are encouraged to look at them, examine them closely and handle them freely" (p. 30). In this way, objects can generate deep, dialogical and relational learning activities that bring elements of local cultures into learning spaces. Maher (2022), for example, describes the ways in which a seemingly mundane object such as a basket,

> … can be used to critique colonialism and show appreciation for the resistance and survival of Aboriginal peoples and cultures. Students can come to appreciate the richness, complexity, purpose and significance of such objects and their uses (Riley, 2021). When taking time and care to engage with cultural objects, students are drawn to listen to, observe and learn with and from First Nations peoples. The stories of these objects and their makers are humanising and connected, breaking down demeaning representations of Aboriginal histories and cultures and resisting attempts to reduce Aboriginal peoples to reductive stereotypes. Sharing the stories of such cultural objects is a form of truth-telling that supports students to critique deficit notions of Aboriginality. (Maher, 2022, p. 10)

Rather than fixate on singular or narrow cultural capitals, such as reading and writing in the dominant language, pedagogies that utilise **CBL** "signal an epistemological and pedagogical shift toward mobilising bodies as agents of knowledge production and creativity as cultural capital" (Garrett & MacGill, 2021, p. 1221). This provides an important means of decolonising pedagogy by recognising that "Western educational practices have traditionally valued the mind over the body with a Cartesian division that privileges a rational view of knowledge untainted by the body, its feelings, or emotions (Turner 2008)" (Garrett & MacGill, 2021, p. 1222). CBL uses active, embodied and creative strategies from a range of art forms "to increase student engagement and expand pedagogic possibilities across the curriculum" (Garrett, Dawson, Meiners & Wrench, 2018).

On **Storytelling Pedagogies**, Maher (2022) says that "storytelling – whether through visual art, written texts, spoken word, film, a woven object or other means – is an approach which might be regarded as fundamentally but not exclusively Indigenous" (p. 12). In terms of the centrality of storytelling pedagogies for strengthening schools' and teachers' commitments to a decolonising educational approach, Carter (2022) notes:

> The traditions of the world's oldest living culture provide an educational model of the significance of oral stories, in passing on traditions and customs. These include stories about the foundational role of community and relationships, about living well together, and about the relationship to and care for country. These are told through old and new oral stories, through music, dance, and art. A deepening of Aboriginal content will require going beyond superficial and tokenistic approaches in order to disrupt ongoing colonial stories and practices that continue to authorise and perpetuate harm. This requires ongoing support for the curriculum and for teachers that is informed by research about decolonising curriculum and culturally responsive pedagogies as well as the production of an availability of relevant texts. (p. 197)

Carter (2022) adds, bringing First Nations stories to the centre of teaching and learning provides, "the basis for meaningful collective and dialogic experiences through which children and young people develop understandings and capacities to participate respectfully in local and national conversations about histories, reconciliation, and matters of race and difference." Hickey-Moody and Horn (2022, p.

1) suggest that "engagement with family stories, religious and community practices can change a teacher's conception of thought […] Family stories [are] an avenue for teachers to pedagogically engage with students' lived experiences [… in ways that can] can challenge persistent racism." Stories told from the perspective of racial minorities, which expand the ways in which those in the mainstream come to understand the world (and teach), are also sometimes called 'counter' stories, given that they counter the majoritarian perspectives that have become naturalised. Counter stories can be decolonising in that they offer a perspective on education, and life, that is not usually experienced or open to those in structurally privileged locations, and thus can catalyse a necessary shift in perspective (Ladson Billings, 1998; Solorzano & Yosso 2002). Ladson-Billings (1998) says that counter stories are vital for relationship building in that they constitute "a medicine to heal the wounds of pain caused by racial oppression" (p. 14). Storytelling pedagogy is thus a way to validate the experiences of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and can provide means of building empathy and understanding between groups. Furthermore, in terms of empowering educators, Maher (2022) poses the question:

> How might we as educators share space for truth-telling about local lands, waters and skies? What stories – spoken, written, sung, drawn, woven, danced, digitised – are shared by local First Nations Elders and communities? Drawing on the stories of local First Nations peoples and place can challenge settler colonial narratives about place and contribute to shifting Eurocentric spaces of schooling into spaces that question colonial occupation and affirm Indigenous presence. (p. 9)

Rap and Hip Hop are tools for learning, forms of literacy, and means of expression that, since at least the 1960s, have given Black communities (in various contexts) a platform and creative space to 1) reaffirm their blackness and 2) give voice to the issues facing them. In this sense, Rap/Hip Hop can provide culturally responsive access points to Aboriginal student lifeworlds. Blanch (2009) argues that the rap/hip hop literary and music genres are especially important within the context of Aboriginal youth for enabling political voice. Political voice means that the ontological lifeworlds and stories that Aboriginal youth bring into the oftentimes dangerous space of the mainstream classroom can be transformed into a space of wellbeing and ethical safety. The themes and issues that sometimes arise from the life stories of Aboriginal youth include their relationships with schooling, law enforcement, and their own families. Rap curriculum offers possibilities for transformation; a rap/hip hop curriculum breaks down and disrupts Western concepts that may confuse Indigenous youth and allow for 'walkin the walk and talkin the talk' (Blanch, 2009; see also Blanch & Worby, 2010; White, 2009; Kelly, 2013).

Rap curriculum can enable educators to tap into the knowledge about contemporary oppression and resistance experienced by Aboriginal youth, that is lodged in critical hip hop – it highlights the social, economic and racial injustices prevalent in society and advocates for struggle and social justice. Rap can also "contribute to sustaining a network of relationships and offer accessible pathways to expression of agency for young Nunga males" (Blanch & Worby, 2010, p. 3). Rap curriculum can enable Aboriginal learners to 'get home'; i.e. to find a place in the curriculum infused with a sense of agency, strength and belonging. Rap can legitimate Aboriginal voices and 'Aboriginal Englishes' in the official curriculum while teaching everyone about aspects of life that are often delegitimised, misunderstood or pathologised. Rap and hip hop are a framework to offer a change in the way that we teach our students. It incorporates literacy, translanguaging, dance, performance, spoken work, and music – all components that can included in any area of study including Science or Mathematics. Rap curriculum can integrate pedagogical processes aligned with storytelling pedagogy, CBL, Critical Place Based Learning (CPBL), Critical Race Theory (CRT), Anti-Racist education, reconciliation, and teaching for social justice. Rap curriculum brings voice to the classroom. It enables learning to be critical, analytical, creative, and fun, it allows students to become readers of the world not just the word (Freire, 1998).

Finally, planning for messiness (Acton et al., 2017), being okay with 'not knowing' everything (Maher, 2022), implementing personalised learning plans (PLPs) (see Miller & Steele, 2021), team-teaching, utilising pedagogies that make space for collaborative, contextualised learning that connects to students' lifeworlds, and being a co-learner 'with' students and community can all support individuals while fortifying group solidarity (as opposed to competitive, individualistic learning, which destabilises group cohesion). Such pedagogies support the development in students (and teachers) of a shared, social subjectivity. As Burgess et al. (2022, p. 166) explain, when teachers learn 'with' students this is an important element in developing 'audacious learning selves'. That is, teachers do not have to be experts but demonstrating openness and willingness to be co-learners on a complex journey for which there are, oftentimes, a paucity of immediate answers or support, becomes part of a rich, relational pedagogy of care capable of supporting First Nations' sovereignty.

Relationships and Wellbeing

With respect to improving schooling/early learning for First Nations students and communities, it is crucial that schools and centres recognise the intertwined nature of 'relationships' *for* 'wellbeing'. Murrup-Stewart et al. (2021) describe relationships for First Nations' wellbeing in terms *connections*: to Country, culture, family, community, spirituality, place, and identity, all of which colonisation and ongoing coloniality have damaged and disrupted. As First Nations academic Aileen Moreton-Robinson (1998) clarifies, being Aboriginal within the context of settler colonial Australia is itself an ongoing trauma. She says, "few white people ever consider how stressful it can be for Indigenous women, men and children living in their country controlled by white people" (1998, p. 39). Thus, for schools and centres to be spaces that fundamentally support and strengthen connections to culture for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander wellbeing, the need for all educational staff to develop deep understanding and awareness of past and ongoing impacts of colonisation is crucial. This deepening awareness can enable staff to move from decontextualised understandings of wellbeing as located *within* 'the individual', to awareness that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander wellbeing means "the social, emotional, and cultural wellbeing of the whole community" (National Aboriginal Health Strategy Working Party as cited in Murrup-Stewart et al., 2021, p. 1833). Moreover, it must be understood that non-Indigenous people play imperative roles in making our shared, overlapping social environments anti-racist and culturally safe – First Nations peoples cannot do this alone, and education is crucial for teaching widespread racial literacy.

Murrup-Stewart and colleagues (2021) offer a robust catalogue of ways that schools and centres can become spaces that enable strengthened connections to culture for First Nations' wellbeing. However, as noted repeatedly, such endeavours run the risk of superficiality or contrivance if non-Indigenous staff – especially the white cultural majority – are not simultaneously moving from limited understandings of cultural competence or awareness to cultural responsivity, safety, racial literacy, and as various writers increasingly suggest, trauma-informed practice. Tujague and Ryan (2021) explain, "Trauma-informed practice asks, 'What is that person's story?' rather than, 'What is wrong with that person?'" (p. 6412). As also noted, whilst First Nations Australians are unique individuals, they are also culturally located and share (albeit in different ways) the ongoing experience of being colonised: "The violent acts of colonisation, including genocide, have left a devastating legacy [on First Nations peoples including] historical trauma, collective trauma, and cultural trauma" (Tujague & Ryan, 2021, p. 6412). In light of this, Bellamy and colleagues (2022) emphasise that,

> First Nations advocates have […] called for the incorporation of trauma-informed care practices in schools. Trauma-informed education refers to educators understanding the prevalence of ACEs [adverse childhood experiences] and trauma amongst students, recognizing the pervasive impact of trauma on students and on systems of support around them and making planned efforts to avoid re-traumatization through opportunities for safety, trust, connection, and healing, rather than relying on punishment and exclusion. (p. 2)

While we would go further in appreciating that trauma is linked not merely to adverse childhood experiences but to the very fact of settler coloniality, these writers nonetheless recognise that a crucial part of trauma-informed schooling includes partnering with the wisdom of First Nations communities (see also McCalman, Benveniste, Wenitong, Saunders & Hunter, 2020; Armstrong et al., 2012; Exell &

Gower, 2021; Shay, Sarra & Woods, 2021). Partnering with community forms part of the robust catalogue of ways, aforementioned, that schools and centres can become spaces that enable strengthened connections to culture for First Nations' wellbeing. Murrup-Stewart and colleagues (2021) include within this catalogue: connecting Aboriginal youth with each other; connecting to dedicated Aboriginal spaces; connecting with Elders; connecting with formal/informal cultural learning activities; connecting with family, community, and Country; connecting with a strong First Nations formal education for everyone; and connecting with the reality that being Aboriginal can carry an unseen emotional load.

Connecting with other Aboriginal youth: The young people in Murrup-Stewart and colleagues' (2021) research expressed the importance "of opportunities and spaces to connect to other Aboriginal people" (p. 1838), especially in light of the fact that, in many urban educational settings, First Nations children and young people represent a minority group.

Connecting with dedicated Aboriginal spaces: Similar to the Nunga Room described as a space for transformation and empowerment in Blanch's (2009) research, Murrup-Stewart et al. (2021) explain the importance of dedicated First Nations' spaces within the context of schools as follows:

> … physical spaces, such as dedicated Aboriginal lounges […allow] for informal relationship building and relief from the environmental structural violence of settler colonial institutions. These spaces also [allow] for learning from other Aboriginal youth, for example, some [young Aboriginal participants in the study] felt stronger 'when you're able to meet with others you know, aspiring young Indigenous people'. (p. 1838)

Connecting with Elders: Elders play, "an essential role as teachers and sources of knowledge, wisdom, and spiritual support for many young people" (Murrup-Stewart et al., 2021, p. 1838).

Connecting with formal and informal cultural learning activities: Schools and centres may provide dedicated cultural learning activities, either for First Nations young people exclusively or as shared learning events for Indigenous and non-Indigenous learners together. The young people in Murrup-Stewart and colleagues' (2021) study spoke specifically about the former, noting "that the events, activities, and practices [made available to them] provided experiences of connection, and this included arts, weaving, dance, men's/women's groups, spending time on Country, sport, ceremonies and community gatherings, music, traditional foods/hunting, reading, and mindfulness practices" (p. 1838). However, opportunities for connection to culture which helped to strengthen First Nations' wellbeing were also attributed to leadership programmes and special events, such as a National Aborigines and Islanders Day Observance Committee (NAIDOC) march. Collectively, these events were seen to provide important chances for connection to culture.

Connecting with family/community: The young people in Murrup-Stewart and colleagues' (2021) study highlighted the importance of their schools (in this case) making meaningful connections to family and community, which resonates with the literature on culturally responsive schooling. For instance, Khalifa et al. (2016) emphasise the importance of creating authentic overlapping school-community spaces, which shift the focus from only reaching out to contact parents about what their child/ren may have done wrong (p. 1289) to engaging with students' home lives and communities in concerted relationship building (p. 1287).

Connecting with Country: As noted throughout the section of this review entitled Curriculum, connecting to Country is a foundational means of supporting the social and emotional wellbeing of First Nations students as well as re-educating non-Indigenous peoples. Tynan (2021) explicates that Country is a wellspring of relationality, and "relationality is foundational to the health and wellbeing of all entities, [thus] removing those relationships is extractive" (p. 605). Harrison and Skrebneva (2020) add that Country should be centralised in curriculum given its propensity to promote "a sense of belonging […] among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students [… which] is relevant when we acknowledge the ongoing relationship between Country and wellbeing (Ganesharajah, 2009), and the need to ensure that Indigenous children are [thus] connected to Country" (Harrison & Skrebneva, 2020, p. 17). These sentiments resound strongly with Murrup-Stewart and colleagues' (2021) study in which their young Aboriginal participants described connecting with Country as promoting feelings of, "calmness, clarity, happiness, a sense of connection with ancestors, resetting of one's spirit, and peacefulness" (p. 1841).

Connecting with strong formal First Nations education: As with the Aboriginal youth in Lowe and Weuffen's (2022) research, participants in Murrup-Stewart and colleagues' (2021) study were forthright in their view that formal educational institutions need to include a stronger focus on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education for all students, consistently from the early years through secondary schooling. With respect to the teaching of history, these writers explain:

> Young people were quick to point out that formal education systems had failed in the most fundamental teaching of Aboriginal history during formative childhood years. Knowledge holders expressed disappointment and frustration at the continued lack of taught Aboriginal history and culture:
>
> > *I think it's still really weird to hear that in secondary schools that Indigenous culture is still not being taught, like that really frustrates me at this day and age that kids only get 1788 the first fleet came and that's where Australia started. That just does my head in.*
>
> This knowledge holder's insight demonstrates that the ongoing lack of content on Aboriginal history within the Australian curriculum was an ongoing source of exclusion, dissatisfaction, and irritation for many Aboriginal students. (Murrup-Stewart et al., 2021, pp. 1837-38)

Connecting with the reality of the emotional load borne by Aboriginal peoples: For some of the young Aboriginal participants in Murrup-Stewart et al.'s (2021) study, they also spoke of the heavy emotional burden of participating in some activities or events with a First Nations' focus owing to the risk that Aboriginal cultural identity is sometimes distorted or misrepresented, which can be traumatic, such as when media presents Aboriginal issues negatively. As noted in the section of this review on Learners, the continued high circulation of negative discourses of Aboriginality within society, schools, and media can elicit resistance on the part of Aboriginal youth or their families to elements of schooling, even dedicated events with a First Nations' focus. It remains vital that education staff learn to read such resistance not as individual pathology or defiance, but in the broader context of past and ongoing settler colonial harm, and develop the stamina required to continue engaging in this important decolonial work (Stein et al., 2021).

Conclusion

Whilst Australian mainstream or formal education has never served First Nations' peoples adequately, and whilst mainstream schools and early learning centres have been implicated in reproducing colonial harms, they are also spaces where these historical patterns can be reversed. Indeed, formal education is a core cultural experience for virtually all young people that brings diverse communities together across the nation. Thus, its potential to lead the hard but necessary and combined work of decolonisation and reconciliation should not be underestimated. In the Catholic education system (as in all education systems) the impetus for this work must come from all levels – from the overarching systems right down to interpersonal relations in the classroom, staffroom, and schoolyard. The need for everyone involved in education to move beyond deficit frameworks to acknowledge the impacts of institutionalised racism on students' differential learning experiences and outcomes is also pivotal. As Aitken and Wareham (2017) attest, "racism, long normalised within Euro-Australian institutions, needs addressing at the institutional level through self-acknowledgement of the values and attitudes perpetrated by their own institutions" (p. 321).

It must be noted that Australian educational leaders and teachers are outstanding – they work tirelessly, and many have recently reported feeling 'at breaking point' (Windle et al., 2022). Embracing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education should not be conceived as adding more work to already full plates. Rather, it is about working together as whole schools, centres and systems to do things differently, at a pace that sites can sustain. For their part, leaders can "promote an inclusive education model, build quality learning organisations and effectively negate potential or existing deficit paradigms from within a school's [or centre's] culture" (Griffin & Trudgett, 2018, p. 2). And, for their part, "teachers [can] develop their skills in safely facilitating difficult conversations [with students and with one another] around the legacies of colonisation, including racism, so they can move beyond limited understandings of Aboriginality with all learners and value the perspectives and experiences that are already part of their classrooms" (Brown, 2019, p. 66). The responsibility for this work must be shared, and First Nations communities must be recognised as key knowledge holders and partners in the learning community.

We have framed this review around nine key areas via which this work can be initiated and/or progressed – we are mindful that many Catholic Education schools/centres, leaders, and educators within South Australia are already deeply engaged in this work. These key areas include: Cultural Responsivity; Racial Literacy; Leaders; Educators; Learners; Professional Learning; Curriculum; Pedagogy; and Relationships and Wellbeing. These are by no means the only viable inroads for thinking about, discussing, and advancing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education. However, they do represent rigorous openings which emerge strongly across the literature. In each of these focus areas, the same core messages surface, as captured so powerfully by proud Gomeroi woman, Associate Professor Nikki Moodie and colleagues. These researchers say:

> Indigenous families define a successful experience of schooling in terms of inclusion in the life of the school; a curriculum that enacts Country; and participation in both schooling and community life as current and future priorities […]. For decades, Indigenous people across Australia have consistently provided the same answers to the same questions asked at all levels of the education system: teach our complete

history, see your place in that history, employ Indigenous people, talk to community.
(Moodie et al., 2021, p. 11, 7)

We have intentionally avoided fixed or singular models for enacting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education. As noted throughout, there is no singular Aboriginal culture nor approach to teaching First Nations learners – Aboriginal learners are as diverse as any group. Moreover, Aboriginal Education is simultaneously about catering equitably for First Nations learners, centring First Nations knowledges, and re-educating everyone to unlearn the beliefs and practices which have and continue to profoundly harm Aboriginal peoples. Instead of fixed or singular approaches, the literature highlights the viability of seeking out and drawing upon a range of resources and approaches and working collaboratively within and across sites and communities to determine what works, growing programmes over time. Nonetheless, it also emphasises the worth of applying culturally responsive and racially literate lenses and practices to any approach, for this enables educators to move beyond and mitigate deficit assumptions. Central to these orientations is the reality that education flourishes when learner lifeworlds are brought to the centre of learning, which in turn means that 'learning' and 'relationships' are fundamentally intertwined. Put differently, by creating spaces to hear learners' voices, to give learners the gift of getting to know one another, and by opening curriculum such that First Nations knowledges and ways of being become part of everyone's knowing, effective learning will occur *through,* not separate from, these practices. Learners and learning are intertwined.

Finally, it bears remembering that this work continues the legacy of countless First Nations educators and activists who have toiled tirelessly, oftentimes without seeing equitable change occur in their own lifetimes. What is really at stake when discussing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education is that institutionalised and systemic forms of racism underpin the myriad lived realities of race in Australia, including that Aboriginal Australian young people have been intergenerationally underserved by the nation's education systems. Aboriginal children continue to die at nearly three times the rate of non-Indigenous children. And Aboriginal youth constitute approximately 80% of those in youth detention (Commonwealth of Australia, 2020). Education is a key vehicle for expanded life choices, chances, and outcomes, and sovereign First Nations' students deserve the very best. This is the work of generations and all efforts count.

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Appendix: Resources

8 Ways: 8 Ways is a pedagogical framework that was initially made publicly available through the PhD research of Indigenous academic, Tyson Yunkaporta (Yunkaporta, 2009a). This ancestrally informed approach seeks to centre Aboriginal ways of knowing, being and doing in contemporary schooling by drawing on localised capacities and understandings. 8 ways steps beyond simply outlining what to teach and proposes new ways of teaching and learning that must be attuned to the context in which they are enacted (Yunkaporta, 2019). The framework draws upon interconnected pedagogies including story sharing, learning maps, non-verbal learning, symbols and images, land links, non-linear learning, community links and a focus on deconstructing and reconstructing as a means of facilitating learning through culture rather than merely learning about culture (Yunkaporta, 2009c). https://www.8ways.online/

50 Words Project – Hear 50 words spoken in a First Nations language: https://50words.online/

ABC Education resources about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories and cultures: https://www.abc.net.au/education/resource-collections-to-help-study-important-indigenous-topics/13873548

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Mathematics Alliance (ATSIMA): https://atsima.com/

Appropriate Terminology Guide – 'A guide to writing and speaking about Indigenous People in Australia' (Roberts, Carlson, O'Sullivan, Day, Rey, Kennedy, Bakic & Farrell, 2021): https://research-management.mq.edu.au/ws/portalfiles/portal/161911416/Publisher_version.pdf

Art Gallery of South Australia (AGSA) – Education: https://www.agsa.sa.gov.au/education/

Australian Curriculum and Reporting Authority (ACARA), v.9 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Cross-Curriculum Priority (CCP): https://v9.australiancurriculum.edu.au/teacher-resources/understand-this-cross-curriculum-priority/aboriginal-and-torres-strait-islander-histories-and-cultures

Australian Institute of Teaching and School Leadership (AITSL) Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education: https://www.aitsl.edu.au/deliver-ite-programmes/aboriginal-and-torres-strait-islander-education

Australians Together: Is an organisation that works through respectful relationships with First Nations peoples to listen, learn and collaboratively create educational resources aligned with the Australian Curriculum for all Australians. AT aims to increase awareness and understanding of Australia's shared history, its ongoing impact, and help pave the way for meaningful actions. By the end 2022,

approximately 30,000 Australian teachers were accessing AT resources with estimates likely to hit 50-60,000 in the near future. https://australianstogether.org.au/

Bangarra Dance Company – Learning: https://www.bangarra.com.au/learning/

Bawaka Collective – Both Ways Learning: https://bawakacollective.com/teacher-notes/

BlackWords – Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Writing and Storytelling:
https://www.austlit.edu.au/blackwords

Carclew – Aboriginal Artists in Schools Programme: https://carclew.com.au/programme/aboriginal-artists-in-schools/

Christie Downs Kindegarten - Porlis' Pulgi ‚Äì Children's place: Example of an Aboriginal Focus Early Learning Environment. https://www.preschools.sa.gov.au/christie-downs-kindergarten.

City of Adelaide – Kaurna Place Names:
https://www.cityofadelaide.com.au/community/reconciliation/kaurna-place-naming/

City of Holdfast Bay – Aboriginal Culture and Heritage: https://www.holdfast.sa.gov.au/discover-our-place/aboriginal-culture-history

Creative and Body-Based (CBL) Learning Course: https://study.unisa.edu.au/courses/169311

Culturally Responsive Pedagogy: https://culturallyresponsivepedagogy.com.au/

Dark Emu – Teacher Resource: https://readingaustralia.com.au/books/dark-emu/

Diversity Council Australia – How Organisations Can Stand Up to and End Workplace Racism:
https://www.dca.org.au/research/project/racismatwork

Environment SA – Kaurna National Park Names:
https://www.environment.sa.gov.au/goodliving/posts/2019/05/sa-park-names

First Languages Australia: https://www.firstlanguages.org.au/

Good Humanities 9 Student Book (co-written by Dja Dja Wurrung man and former school teacher Dr Aleryk Fricker who is Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander content consultant on the Good Humanities series to ensure a decolonising orientation to Humanities and Geography): https://www.matildaeducation.com.au/products/9781420247220

Indigenous Knowledge in Science Education: https://livingknowledge.anu.edu.au/index.htm

Kaurna Language Hub: https://www.youtube.com/channel/UChOOYOnJuEeydJK0QjN_Fpw

Kaurna Place Names: http://www.kaurnaplacenames.com/

Koori Curriculum: https://kooricurriculum.com/

Language and Terminology Guide – Australians Together: https://australianstogether.org.au/assets/Uploads/General/AT-Language-and-Terminology-Guide-2020.pdf

Literacy for Life Foundation: https://www.lflf.org.au/

Living Kaurna Cultural Centre: https://www.southernculturalimmersion.com.au/living-kaurna-cultural-centre

Mparntwe (Alice Springs) Education Declaration: https://www.education.gov.au/alice-springs-mparntwe-education-declaration/resources/alice-springs-mparntwe-education-declaration

NAIDOC Teaching Guides: https://www.naidoc.org.au/resources/educational

Narragunnawali: Reconciliation in Education (Resources): https://www.narragunnawali.org.au/

National Library of Australia (NLA) – Aboriginal Australian Literature: https://catalogue.nla.gov.au/Browse/Subjects?browse=subjects&from=Aboriginal+Australian+Literature+

Ngarrindjeri Culture in Year 10 Science (online example): https://www.google.com/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=&ved=2ahUKEwiP567foYnyAhUr4XMBHdy5AX4QFjAAegQIBRAD&url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.adelaide.edu.au%2Fdirectory%2Fca

rolyn.schultz%3Fdsn%3Ddirectory.file%3Bfield%3Ddata%3Bid%3D41297%3Bm%3Dview&usg=AOvVa
w0dL7ts_4w7IpUm5cO8mZOH

NintiOne: https://www.nintione.com.au/

Reconciliation Australia: https://www.reconciliation.org.au/

Reconciliation SA: https://reconciliationsa.org.au/

Red Dirt Schools – Connecting Community and Curriculum:
https://www.nintione.com.au/resources/rao/red-dirt-schools-connecting-community-and-
curriculum/

Respect, Relationships, Education: https://rrr.edu.au/

Stronger Smarter Institute: https://strongersmarter.com.au/

Teens Talk Racism – https://www.wheelercentre.com/wlr-articles/teens-talk-racism/

The Conversation – Series on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education:
https://theconversation.com/au/topics/are-we-making-progress-on-indigenous-education-39329

The Final Quarter – Education Resources: https://thefinalquarterfilm.com.au/education/

The Unbound Collective: https://www.flinders.edu.au/college-humanities-arts-social-
sciences/unbound

What Works – The Work Programme: https://ncsonline.com.au/portfolio/what-works-the-work-
programme

Wingaru – Aboriginal Education for all stages of life: https://www.wingaru.com.au/

Yellaka Contemporary Aboriginal Dance Group: https://www.facebook.com/yellaka/

Your Story, Our Journey: https://www.yourstoryourjourney.net/