



Friends Igniting Reconciliation through Education (F.I.R.E) Carrier Covenant est. 2022

## Doxa School Bendigo: 2026 School Year

### Covenant

We recognise the special place and culture of Aboriginal peoples within Australia. We acknowledge that Aboriginal peoples have been the caretakers of this Land for more than 60,000 years. We respect their spiritual connection to Mother Earth through the Dreaming.

'An apology begins the healing process. Apology means understanding, a willingness to enter into the suffering. It implies a commitment to do more'. The late Sir Ronald Wilson, Chair of the National Inquiry into the removal of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children from their families.

We understand that practical measures need to address the disadvantage experienced by Aboriginal people in education, health, employment, and general opportunity.

'Reconciliation is an active pursuit – it's about getting on with what's needed and what we know to get the results we all want, and that's a mixture of measures that target the body, the mind and the spirit.' Mick Dodson, Australian of the Year, National Press Club address, 17 February 2009

True Reconciliation requires national and local solutions achieved through positive and purposeful partnerships not just for today but for tomorrow. We work for Reconciliation, in partnership with those who believe that there can be an alternative to the present order.

Covenants emphasise the ethos and faith of Catholic schools and the Social Justice response they are committed to make as part of their Christian identity. Each school expressed commitment is reflected in practical goals and actions which they strive to achieve in the year ahead.

School covenants express in ways, specific to each school, recognition of the special contribution Aboriginal peoples and their cultures make to Australian society, their relationship and connection to the land, their present position of disadvantage and social exclusion. They declare the school and school community's commitment to stand in solidarity with Aboriginal peoples to achieve True Reconciliation and acknowledgement, by all Australians, of their rightful position within Australian society. (See *'FireCarriersSandhurst.pdf'*).



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### Our School

Doxa School Bendigo's vision for Reconciliation is to be a place of learning and teaching that respects Aboriginal protocols, history and culture. We will have strong and mutually beneficial relationships with Aboriginal communities. These relationships will provide for the sharing of knowledge and ideas, and the opportunity to listen and learn from Aboriginal Australians about the past, their current circumstances, and their vision for the future. We will be a place where Aboriginal culture is respected and celebrated.

### Our Covenant

The F.I.R.E Carrier Project is an initiative of the Aboriginal Catholic Ministry, the Opening the Doors Foundation and the Sandhurst Catholic Education Office, to promote and assist Reconciliation through Education in our Schools.

Doxa School Bendigo commits to completing or putting steps in place to complete all actions through our measurable targets (outlined below). A review at the end of each school year will be conducted and the plan will be updated and passed to the following year's F.I.R.E Carrier Leader/s.

Our covenant was originally developed by our previous Principal, John Russell, together with students, staff and the broader school community. This update has been overseen by our current Principal, Vanessa Brown, in consultation with the Catholic Education Sandhurst Ltd Aboriginal team, and our staff group. Our school community was presented with ideas for Reconciliation in our local community by the Sandhurst Aboriginal Team who continue to be involved in the implementation of our Covenant.



## Friends Igniting Reconciliation through Education (F.I.R.E) Carrier Covenant est. 2022 Culturally Safe Environments

Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Cultural Safety is defined as an environment that is safe for Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islanders, where there is no assault, challenge or denial of their identity and experience (*Williams, 2008*).

Doxa School Bendigo makes all reasonable efforts to accommodate for the diversity of all children in implementing the Child Safe Standards relating to the following standard:

*Schools must establish culturally safe environments in which the diverse and unique identities and experiences of Aboriginal children, young people and students are respected and valued.*

Actions:

1. In endorsing and documenting the following activities contained within this F.I.R.E Carrier Covenant, Doxa School Bendigo commits to completing, or putting steps in place to complete, all actions through measurable targets outlined by the dates we have set out
2. Our F.I.R.E Carrier Covenant will be made accessible on Doxa School Bendigo's website to ensure all members of our school community understand our commitment to Indigenous culture and to meet our obligations regarding the child safe standards
3. A review at the end of each school year will be conducted and the plan will be updated and passed to the following year's F.I.R.E Carrier Leader/s



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 Our Short-Term and Long-Term Targets

<p>Annually</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Include Indigenous artefacts to build our school sacred space</li> <li>• Weekly use of Acknowledgement of Country at Staff meeting (Choice of 3)</li> <li>• Acknowledgement of Country at the beginning of all school assemblies</li> <li>• Term 1 assembly explaining the Doxa School message stick to student cohort</li> <li>• Teaching of our Indigenous Studies unit</li> <li>• Consolidate our school celebrations calendar to include significant Indigenous events and dates alongside our celebrated Catholic events</li> </ul>
<p>Bi-Annually</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Even Year – Incursion – Indigenous cultural day</li> <li>• Odd Year – Excursion – Welcome to country and Indigenous Cultural Day in the Whipstick</li> </ul>
<p>Ongoing</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Embed our cultural learnings as a school into our everyday school practices</li> <li>• Integrate our Indigenous teaching units as part of the core curriculum with our SELS and Student Experiences planned sessions/events</li> <li>• Enhance our school-wide knowledge of Indigenous spirituality and its relationship with Catholicism</li> <li>• Build relationships with local community members and organisations with Indigenous knowledge</li> </ul>



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### Spirituality

**Focus Areas: Learn, Teach, Share & Grow Towards Understanding Aboriginal Spirituality (holistic)**

***Spirituality:** This symbol in Aboriginal painting means campfire. The campfire is where people meet and stories are told. In the FIRE Carrier program, we use the campfire symbol to represent the core value of spirituality. We invite you to educate yourself and others about Aboriginal Spirituality and its connection to Eco Stewardship/stewards of the earth.*

Action	Responsibility	Timeline	Measurable Targets
<p>Engage, collaborate and consult with Aboriginal people to enrich and enhance spiritual experiences for staff, students and the Doxa School community</p> <p>Honour significant Aboriginal days/events through understanding, recognition and/or prayer</p> <p>Perform Aboriginal rituals as part of school events and gatherings (eg. Acknowledgment of Country and Message Stick)</p>	<p>All Staff (led by the Operational Leadership Group and F.I.R.E Carrier Leader/s)</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Work with colleagues with the Aboriginal Network and CEOS staff</li> <li>➤ Work with Elders and Aboriginal people locally to ensure protocols and knowledge are accurate</li> <li>➤ Encourage and support students that identify as Indigenous to be proud and celebrate their culture</li> <li>➤ Use the Message Stick during school gatherings and liturgies</li> <li>➤ Participate in retreats and immersion opportunities to significant Aboriginal Sites (eg. Lake Mungo) where possible</li> <li>➤ Use the prayer and liturgy materials provided by CEOS Staff for staff meetings, professional learning sessions and other gatherings</li> </ul>



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### Cultural Recognition & Awareness

**Focus Area: Recognise Cultural Perspectives, Demonstrate Awareness**

***Cultural Recognition & Awareness:** This symbol represents the Message Stick. The Message Stick is passed between clans and language groups to transmit messages, invitations and information. FIRE Carrier programs use the Message Stick to signify Cultural Recognition and Awareness.*

Action	Responsibility	Timeline	Measurable Targets
<p>Embrace Aboriginal stories and culture within Office ceremonies</p> <p>Publicly display our schools respect for Aboriginal people</p> <p>Engage in professional development and cross-cultural opportunities to better cater for the needs of Aboriginal students in our schools</p>	<p>All Staff (led by the Operational Leadership Group and F.I.R.E Carrier Leader/s)</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Acknowledge Country at staff meetings and all public events</li> <li>➤ Acknowledge Country on our school website, newsletter, email messages and printed material</li> <li>➤ Invite Elders to Welcome visitors to Country at events where appropriate</li> <li>➤ Work with staff to Incorporate Aboriginal perspectives into the curriculum</li> <li>➤ Appoint a senior staff member as a F.I.R.E Carrier Leader and perform a ceremony early in the year</li> </ul>



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**Practical Reconciliation & Justice**

**Focus Area: Walk the Journey Together, Put Learnings into Practice**

*Practical Reconciliation & Justice: This symbol represents journey in Aboriginal painting. It has been chosen to represent the journey towards Reconciliation for Aboriginal peoples.*

Action	Responsibility	Timeline	Measurable Targets
<p>Take Practical Measures toward Reconciliation and Justice</p> <p>Acknowledge and teach the true history of Australia</p> <p>Empower the F.I.R.E Carrier leaders to share the learning and messages within our school</p>	<p>All Staff (led by the Operational Leadership Group and F.I.R.E Carrier Leader/s)</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Display the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander flags</li> <li>➤ Include Indigenous history and experiences and part of curriculum that teaches the true history of Australia (linked with the Victorian Curriculum and VPC)</li> <li>➤ Display and maintain Aboriginal artefacts in the front foyer and as part of our Sacred Space, and add to these over time</li> <li>➤ Ensure a school-wide understanding is held regarding the challenges Indigenous students may have experienced accessing their education</li> <li>➤ Provide learning opportunities for our school F.I.R.E Carriers to grow their knowledge and understanding</li> </ul>



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Appendix One – School Action Plan (Yearly Cycle)



### Ecological Stewardship

**Focus Area: Ecological Renewal & Sustainability, Spiritual Awareness and Attitudes of Responsibility - Caring for Country**

***Ecological & Custodian Stewardship:** The Spirituality of Aboriginal people remains constant through the connection between the land and nature, and Aboriginal identity and the Dreaming. It is argued that ecological renewal and sustainability depends upon spiritual awareness and an attitude of responsibility. This must include the recognition of creation as sacred and behaviours that honour that sacredness.*

Action	Responsibility	Timeline	Measurable Target
<p>Take Practical Measures toward teaching and learning how Indigenous people cared for and lived off the land</p> <p>Develop the knowledge and skills of our F.I.R.E Carriers (and those part of our school Sustainability learning/teaching)</p> <p>Empower Doxa School's F.I.R.E Carrier Leader/s to share the learning and message within our school</p> <p>Build opportunities to share the story of how Totems are attached to the environment and what that means for us regarding Ecological Stewardship</p>	<p>All Staff (led by the Operational Leadership Group and F.I.R.E Carrier Leader/s)</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Include Indigenous ways of living as part of curriculum that teaches the true history of Australia (linked with the Victorian Curriculum and VPC)</li> <li>➤ Sustainability learning units provide opportunities for the whole school to be engaged and immersed in ways to help the land and country</li> <li>➤ Coordinate our school community to be an active participant in sustainability awareness actions (such as 'Sandhurst Switches Off')</li> </ul>



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Time Schedule	Action	Coordination Responsibility
End Student Orientation Period	☒ Identification of Indigenous students ('Staff F.I.R.E Carriers')	F.I.R.E Carrier Coordinator (supported by the Leadership Team)
Duration Term One	☒ Assembly introducing the DSB Talking Stick and the story of DSB	F.I.R.E Carrier Coordinator
End Term One	Identification of Topics for Indigenous and Sustainability Units of work	DP and Teaching Team
Semester One	☒ Delivery of Sustainability unit	DP and Teaching Team
Semester Two	☒ Delivery of Indigenous Unit  Cultural Immersion Day Yearly Review	DP and Teaching Team  F.I.R.E Carrier Coordinator