Religious Education in dialogue: curriculum around Australia
Acknowledgements

The National Catholic Education Commission (NCEC) wishes to acknowledge the members of its Religious Education Committee for coordinating the development of this monograph, and thanks the respective chapter authors.

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Foreword

This monograph was written and developed by members of the Religious Education Committee of the National Catholic Education Commission (NCEC). The NCEC has authorised the 2005-2008 Committee’s Strategic Plan and this monograph results from the first of three themes to be addressed in the plan: Learning and Teaching in Religious Education. The Committee responded by developing a document to map broad curriculum practices and their implications for Religious Education – hence this publication.

The members of the Committee are drawn from all states and territories of Australia. They meet four times per year and bring a diverse and rich background. Their first undertaking in approaching this task was to workshop curriculum development and Religious Education curriculum development within the respective states and territories. This was then formalised into written form into what now appears in this document.

This monograph is a contribution to curriculum reform and development in Australian states and territories. It reflects how classroom Religious Education curriculum is shaped by contemporary curriculum and pedagogy. It indicates how, as a discipline in its own right, it also shapes and informs educational development and innovation. The monograph demonstrates, firstly, that Religious Education classroom curriculum content in Australian Catholic Dioceses is firmly founded upon the Roman Catholic Tradition. Secondly, its curriculum methodologies reflect the requirements and standards of learning within respective states and territories and the opportunities for stimulating classroom pedagogy that flow from this.

I am grateful to my colleagues on the NCEC Religious Education Committee for their contribution and commitment to producing this monograph. I trust that it is a welcome contribution to further dialogue.

Bishop Gerard Holohan
Chair
NCEC Religious Education Committee

January 2008
Introduction

The focus of this monograph is Religious Education in dialogue with State and Territory curriculum. In this context Religious Education curriculum encompasses syllabi, texts, guidelines, frameworks, resources, units and materials that support classroom pedagogy.

This publication is divided into nine chapters and of necessity is a snapshot in time. The first eight chapters present an overview of curriculum development in respective states and territories and the context within which the teaching of Religious Education occurs. These chapters also provide brief commentary on approaches and resources in Religious Education that are used within respective jurisdictions. The final chapter provides a brief analysis. It presents two understandings and seven characteristics which the NCEC Religious Education Committee has identified as pertinent for further dialogue.

The monograph is available from the National Catholic Education Commission.

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## Contents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>One</th>
<th>Australian Capital Territory</th>
<th>3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Michael Gaffney</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Two</th>
<th>New South Wales</th>
<th>13</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Michael Gaffney in consultation with the NSW Heads of Religious Education Group</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Three</th>
<th>South Australia</th>
<th>25</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Monica Conway</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Four</th>
<th>Northern Territory</th>
<th>39</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Margaret Hughes and Beth Nolan</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Five</th>
<th>Western Australia</th>
<th>51</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Diana Alteri and Debra Sayce</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Six</th>
<th>Tasmania</th>
<th>61</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Helen Healey</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Seven</th>
<th>Queensland</th>
<th>67</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Damien F Brennan in consultation with Graeme Barry, Ernie Christie, Philip Fitzgerald, Dianne Rowan, Annette Rinaudo</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Eight</th>
<th>Victoria</th>
<th>79</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Tony Byrne, Liam Davison, Mary Lovelock, Janine Luttick, Geraldine Martin</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
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<table>
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<tr>
<th>Nine</th>
<th>Characteristics</th>
<th>99</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>NCEC Religious Education Committee</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Authors were responsible for the acknowledgement of resources cited in respective chapters
Chapter One

Australian Capital Territory
Introduction

The last major review in ACT school curriculum took place in 1994 around the time of the emergence of the Statements and Profiles for Australian Schools developed by the Ministerial Council for Employment, Education, training and Youth Affairs (MCEETYA) in the early 1990s. The general form of the curriculum since that time has been based around the eight key learning areas (KLAs) described in the Statements and Profiles documents. The KLAs are English, Mathematics, Science, Technology, The Arts, Languages, Studies of Society and Environment, and Physical Education and Health.

Along with the KLA based framework has been a continuing commitment by ACT government, Catholic and independent education authorities to ‘school-based curriculum development’. This has meant that Canberra schools do not follow a centralized syllabus. Rather, they select and design their own curriculum, within the general framework laid out in the Statements and Profiles documents, to suit the needs of their school communities and the capacities and interests of their students and teachers.

In September 2003, the ACT Government announced the formation of a Curriculum Renewal Taskforce to review and develop the ACT curriculum from preschool to Year 10. The Chief Executive for ACT Department of Education was appointed as Chair of the Taskforce with the Director of Catholic Education, as Deputy Chair. From its inception, membership of the Taskforce has been widely representative, including educators from the government, catholic and independent school sectors, teacher unions, and parent groups. The work of the Taskforce is supported by a secretariat within the ACT Department of Education, and a Consultative Committee with wide ranging membership, including teacher education, community and business organisations.

The main consultant to the ACT Curriculum Renewal process is a former Director of Curriculum in the ACT and Western Australia, and is currently the curriculum consultant to MCEETYA for the National Consistency in Curriculum Outcomes (NCCO) Project. To this point the NCCO project has produced nationally agreed ‘Statements of Learning’ in English, Mathematics, Science, Civics and Citizenship, and Information and Communication Technologies. As a consequence, consultancy support for the ACT Curriculum Renewal process has been closely aligned with work being undertaken through the NCCO project. This has been valuable in bridging the context of ACT school education with the priorities and regulations of the Australian Government’s School Assistance Act 2004. One of the requirements of the Act is that all states and territories incorporate these national Statements of Learning in their curriculum frameworks by 1 January 2008. In this sense, the timing of the ACT Curriculum Renewal process was also opportune, as the ACT is now the first jurisdiction to formally incorporate these new statements in school curricula.
While the Curriculum Renewal Task Force, on behalf of the ACT Government has taken steps to demonstrate compliance and accountability with the Australian Government regulations and priorities (through mapping the new ACT framework against the National Statements of Learning), the principle that schools should be responsible for their students’ curriculum has been maintained. School-based curriculum development has been a distinguishing characteristic of ACT school education since its establishment as a distinct educational authority when it ‘separated’ from NSW in the mid 1970s.

The continuation of the principle of school based curriculum development, together with the increased flexibility available to schools and teachers in ways to ‘organize curriculum’ on the basis of essential learning achievements (ELAs) rather than through KLAs, presents some interesting possibilities for integrating general curriculum with religious education in ACT Catholic schools. Before turning to these possibilities, the following overview of the new ACT Curriculum Framework is provided for background.

**ACT Curriculum Framework**

The ACT Curriculum Framework offers schools a foundation and the flexibility to adjust to local needs and expertise. The curriculum has a definition and purpose, a set of principles underpinning the framework and school-based curriculum decisions, as well as a choice of possibilities for organising the planning and delivery of the curriculum through Essential Learning Achievements. A summary of some major features of the framework is provided in Figure 1.

| **Definition** | Curriculum is all learning planned, guided and implemented by the school |
| **Purpose** | The purpose of the curriculum is to develop each student as a learner, person, community member and contributor to society |
| **Principles** | 1. The framework of the curriculum should identify learning that is essential for all ACT students  
2. Schools should be responsible for their students’ curriculum  
3. Curriculum should be based on the belief that every student can learn  
4. Curriculum should focus in maximising student learning  
5. Curriculum should provide every student with sustained opportunities to learn  
6. Curriculum should promote depth of student understanding and expertise  
7. Curriculum should be equitable and inclusive  
8. Curriculum decisions should be based in ethical practice  
9. Curriculum should be coherent and aligned  
10. Curriculum should be dynamic and responsive. |

Figure 1. ACT Curriculum Framework Definition, Purpose and Principles
The Essential Learning Achievements that make up the curriculum framework are listed below.

1. The student uses a range of strategies to think and learn
2. The student understands and applies the inquiry process
3. The student makes considered decisions
4. The student acts with integrity and regard for others
5. The student contributes to group effectiveness
6. The student uses information and communication technologies effectively
7. The student creates, presents and appreciates artistic works
8. The student listens and speaks with purpose and effect
9. The student reads effectively
10. The student writes effectively
11. The student critically interprets and creates texts
12. The student takes action to promote health
13. The student is physically skilled and active
14. The student manages self and relationships
15. The student communicates with intercultural understanding
16. The student understands and applies number
17. The student chooses and uses measures
18. The student recognizes and represents patterns and relationships
19. The student understands and applies scientific knowledge
20. The student acts for an environmentally sustainable future
21. The student understands about Australia and Australians
22. The student understands and values what it means to be a citizen within a democracy
23. The student understands world events and issues
24. The student makes informed choices about money and finance
25. The student designs, makes and appraises using technology

These twenty-five Essential Learning Achievements (ELAs) were identified and developed through a process of research and consultation, involving over three hundred teachers since 2004. During 2006-07, the ELAs were subject to an external validation study, school trial and community consultation, prior to their finalization for implementation in 2008. Throughout this period, Catholic schools, teachers and CEO officers were involved with colleagues in the government and independent school sectors in refining the draft Framework.
Each Essential Learning Achievement has an overview statement, with *markers of progress* and *essential content* described in four *bands of development*. These elements are summarized in Figure 2.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Overview</th>
<th>Describes the scope and defines the key features and concepts</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Bands of development</strong></td>
<td>Sequenced in four bands of development:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1. Early childhood – preschool to yr 2. Later childhood – yr 3 to yr 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3. Early Adolescence – yr 6 to yr 8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4. Later adolescence – yr 9 to year 10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Markers of progress</strong></td>
<td>Describe the typical achievement expected of students by the end of each band of development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Essential content</strong></td>
<td>Specifies the knowledge and understandings, skills and values that all students should have the opportunities to learn by the end of the band of development</td>
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</table>

Figure 2. Elements of Essential Learning Achievements
The ACT Curriculum Renewal process has proceeded, at least to this point, more or less independently of the ACT Board of Senior Secondary Studies (BSSS). The BSSS is a representative, cross-sectoral body responsible for approving courses and certifying student achievement in Years 11 and 12. The various features of ACT curriculum from preschool to year 10, and years 11 and 12 are presented in Figure 3.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>GENERAL CURRICULUM</th>
<th>ACT</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Emphasis</strong></td>
<td>School-based curriculum – outcomes-based Formally approved K-10 curriculum through Registration process</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Scope</strong></td>
<td>Pre-school – Y10 Moving to ‘Essential Learning Achievements’ (26 Statements embracing anticipated achievements by Years 2, 5, 8, 10 – not tied to Key Learning Areas. Trial 2007, implementation 2008 – mapped to ‘National Statements of Learning’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Y11-12 Courses based on ACT Course Frameworks and approved by ACT Board of Senior Secondary Studies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Organisation of Curriculum</strong></td>
<td>K-10 School-developed courses based on ‘ACT Curriculum Frameworks’ and approved by each school’s School Board (Government Schools only). Most ACT Catholic Primary schools use NSW syllabuses to develop their own curriculum.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Y11-12 All Courses are based on the following structure from Course Frameworks: • Rationale/Goals, etc • Essential Concepts &amp; Processed • Across Curriculum Perspectives • Pedagogy • Assessment Components and Weightings • Moderation • Achievement Standards</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Content</strong></td>
<td>K-10 For Catholic schools, content is drawn from curriculum documents from other States/Territories</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Y11-12 Content statements for each Unit in the course usually are brief and are based on the guide contained in the relevant Course Framework.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Assessment -- Internal</strong></td>
<td>K-10 Each school develops its own outcomes and assesses and reports to these.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Y11-12 Inter-school processes are designed to moderate student work samples against Course Framework Grade Descriptors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Assessment – External</strong></td>
<td>K-12 • ACT Assessment Program (ACTAP): literacy &amp; numeracy testing for Years 3, 5, 7, 9 derived from ‘National Curriculum Profiles’ outcomes. • No external testing for Years 10, 12, although, students wishing to attend university sit the ‘Australian Scaling Test’ (AST) in Year 12. This provides the scaling parameters for each Course studied.</td>
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</table>

Figure 3. Features of General Curriculum in the ACT
Over the next few years, one might expect developments in general curriculum across 7-10 associated with the new ACT Curriculum Framework (for example enhanced breadth of achievement across ELAs) to influence course design and choices as well as assessment practices in the senior (11-12) years. At this point it is too early to tell how these changes may unfold, in light of current moves toward an Australian Certificate of Education and/or national credentialing regime being raised by the Australian Government.

*Treasures New and Old – Archdiocese of Canberra and Goulburn Religious Education Curriculum*

The Religious Education curriculum (K-12) for the Archdiocese of Canberra and Goulburn is called *Treasures New and Old*. The curriculum was developed in collaboration with the diocese of Parramatta during its review of Sharing Our Story in the late 1990s. The core document was launched by Archbishop Francis Carroll on 17 March 2000 and formally promulgated in late 2002 following a period of syllabus development and school trialling.

In *Treasures New and Old*, Religious Education is defined as

> the making accessible of the traditions of the religious community and the making manifest of the intrinsic connection between traditions and transformation.


This is a dynamic definition in which students are invited to interpret life events and issues through reference to scripture and Church teaching, to reflect, to appropriate, and then take action to transform their community and the world.

The curriculum design is closely linked to NSW curriculum documents based around Content Strands and Stage Outcomes [from Early Stage 1 (Kindergarten) to Stage 6 (year 12)]. Over the past six years, the curriculum has evolved through the development and refinement of staged based units, written by teachers and staff of the Catholic Education Office, across the various content strands. These strands are

- **God** – Communion of Love, Source of all Being, Eternal Word and Holy spirit
- **Jesus Christ** – Word made flesh, wisdom, freedom and compassion of God
- **Church** – Body of Christ, communion in the Spirit, community of disciples, witness to unity and justice, pilgrims in service to the world
- **Sacraments** – Ritual celebrations of the experience of God's Spirit in the midst of life
- **Scripture** – Word of God in inspired human words interpreting the community’s foundational experience
- **Christian Life** – Growth in discernment and responsibility, gifted and challenged in the transforming presence of the Spirit
- **Prayer** – Growing faithful relationship, listening, trusting and celebrating the living God
- **Religion and society** (Stages 4 to 6 only) – understanding and respecting the role of diverse religious traditions, particularly in the Australian context
The *Treasures New and Old* Religious Education curriculum at each school is reviewed in two ways. First, for K-10, there is an external cyclical review (every 3 to 5 years) conducted by staff from the Catholic Education Office and peers from other schools. Second, for Years 11-12, there is a Religious Studies course developed by teachers and approved by ACT BSSS.

Teachers are supported in the implementation of the *Treasures New and Old* curriculum through the advice and guidance of CEO-based Religious Education and Curriculum Officers, regular and targeted spiritual formation and professional development programs, online networks, and teaching resources including the Core document and syllabus in hard copy and unit outlines and associated reference material available at www.vision.cg.catholic.edu.au

**The ACT Curriculum Framework and Implications for Religious Education**

Changes in curriculum brought about by Australian Government legislation and the curriculum renewal process in the Australian Capital Territory present opportunities and risks for Religious Education in ACT Catholic schools. These are discussed under the following themes.

1. **Integration of Religious Education and General Curriculum.** The ACT Framework makes explicit reference to the person of the learner and his/her spiritual development in stating that

   *Curriculum provides the foundation for each student’s intellectual, physical, social, emotional and spiritual development, enabling them to discover and develop their capabilities and talents through a balanced education of the whole person*


This purpose of curriculum, drawn from the MCEETYA Goals for Australian Schooling (i.e. the ‘Adelaide Declaration’), creates an important link to religious education. This link is further strengthened through the nature of several ELAs, particularly those relating to learning strategies, decision making, working with others, individual well being, citizenship, the environment, and understanding and valuing human diversity (see, for example, ELA 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 11, 15, 19 and 21 above). Indeed, the Religious Education curriculum may well be the vehicle through which significant aspects of these essential learnings are achieved.

Such potential links between general curriculum and Religious Education incorporate possibilities for new forms of integration and for building parity of esteem between Religious Education and other subjects, disciplines and learning areas. Moreover, the ACT Framework may be used to highlight the value of Religious Education in the curriculum and the contribution that it makes to Catholic school identity and effectiveness.

While the Essential Learning Achievement structure may facilitate integrated curriculum, there is a danger that the core methodology of Religious Education may be weakened or lost. This in turn may heighten the perceived educational/catechetical tension identified by some teachers between developing and assessing knowledge and understanding of religion on the one hand, and assisting students to develop their faith and relationship with God on the other. In this context, it will continue to be important to highlight the distinctiveness and centrality of Religious Education in Catholic schools, while recognising its relationship to other areas
of the curriculum. This includes how areas of content and student achievement (for example in knowledge, skills, values and attitudes) in Religious Education and general curriculum are designed, implemented, assessed, reported, reviewed and related to one another.

2. **Assessment and Reporting in Religious Education.** Assessing and reporting student achievement in Religious Education is complex – in part because of the educational/catechetical tension described above, and also due to recent changes to Australian government funding regulations requiring schools to report using A to E (or similar) gradings.

As a consequence some schools are struggling to report validly and reliably on students’ achievements in Religious Education, especially in primary schools where Religious Education is integrated with English, Studies of Society and Environment and the Arts. Extricating the ‘Religious Education’ knowledge, skills and attitudes from the integrated whole and then awarding grades on the basis of standards referenced criteria, norm-referenced criteria, or some combination of the two can prove difficult.

The issue is treated differently in secondary colleges where Religious Education is a separate subject and is assessed and reported accordingly. Formal assessment strategies such as the use of rubrics have been developed for units of work.

Regardless of the stage of schooling, the faith development dimension of the student’s learning is not assessed or reported. Hence an interesting question of priority and accountability arises. Through implementing the A to E reporting agenda, the Catholic schools’ and system’s accountability to the Australian government is satisfied. As an educational authority, we have accepted the requirements set by government to report student achievement, certainly in terms of students’ knowledge and understandings of content and their acquired skills. But how is the Catholic schools’ effectiveness and accountability to the Church demonstrated? Is it enough to report that our students ‘know about’ Christianity and Catholicism? How might we report the outcomes of catechesis in any case – and who really is the audience?
Chapter Two

New South Wales
New South Wales

Introduction

General curriculum in NSW is highly centralized and based around mandated syllabuses from Kindergarten to Year 12 across a range of traditional subject discipline and key learning areas. Curriculum is developed, approved and reviewed by the NSW Board of Studies, which is a statutory authority of the NSW government and includes representation from Catholic, independent and government school sectors.

The centralized nature of the system is designed to provide an equitable and uniform provision of curriculum across NSW, particularly to students in regional, rural and remote areas of the state. In contrast the governance of Catholic Education in NSW is based around the eleven diocesan authorities and coordinated by the NSW Catholic Education Commission. As a consequence, while general curriculum is characterised by standardization, Religious Education would be more accurately described in terms of diversity reflecting the approach and theology of the local bishop and the needs of the school communities in each diocese.

Diversity in approaches to Religious Education has both costs and benefits. On the positive side, diocesan authorities, that is the bishop and the Catholic Education Office (or Catholic Schools Office) working on his behalf, have the opportunity to develop a Religious Education curriculum which suits local needs and can be used to build a sense of cohesion and shared mission among the people of God within the diocese. However there are significant costs and inefficiencies associated with each diocese ‘doing its own thing’ with regard to curriculum development in Religious Education. In an environment where educational resources are scarce, few dioceses have the capital to invest in such ventures alone.

As a result we have seen increasing collaboration in matters of Religious Education among NSW dioceses over the last several years. This has been particularly evident in the willingness of dioceses, for example Parramatta and Sydney, to make curriculum resources available to other dioceses as bases for their development work in Religious Education. The form and capacity for further collaboration has been enhanced by the establishment of the Heads of Religious Education Group. This body comprises the Head of Religious Education from each diocesan office (or his or her delegate) and meets up to four times year.

Another vehicle for collaboration among the dioceses is the Religious Education Permanent Committee of the NSW Catholic Education Commission. The membership of this group is more diverse than that of the Heads of Religious Education, comprising for example parent and community representatives and members from religious congregations. This committee provides an important conduit to the Catholic Education Commission to assist it in its deliberations on developments and issues in religious education.

This background provides the context for the following discussion about the implications for religious education associated with changes in general curriculum taking place in NSW.
General Curriculum in NSW

The basic form of the current NSW curriculum is derived from work in the early 1990s commissioned by MCEETYA for the development of a common curriculum for Australian schools. While the notion of a ‘national curriculum’ was rejected by the NSW government back in 1993, the Minister for Education at the time advised by senior bureaucrats and the NSW Board of Studies used the resulting MCEETYA Curriculum Statement and Profiles documents as bases for the NSW school curriculum with relatively minor adaptation.

Since then there have been reviews of secondary school syllabuses, and an evaluation of Key Learning Area (KLA) documents used from Kindergarten to Year 6. The reasons for these reviews have included the need to update content and approaches to assessment. At secondary level there have been particular emphases on developing the capability of students in the areas of literacy and competencies in ICT across KLAs and traditional subject disciplines. In primary schools, we have seen a major consultation take place into the utility of curriculum documents, containing (literally) hundreds of outcomes, for assessment and reporting purposes.

The results of these reviews have been revised syllabuses at the secondary level, the development of ‘Foundation Statements’ which provide a welcome and concise summary of student outcomes at each stage of primary schooling for each KLA, and the emergence of a new orthodoxy for assessment based on the concepts of assessment of learning and assessment for learning.
Related salient features of the NSW general curriculum are presented in Figure 1.

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<tr>
<th>GENERAL CURRICULUM</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Emphasis</strong></td>
<td>Mandated centrally-developed syllabuses from Early Stage 1 to Stage 6 – outcomes-based</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Scope</strong></td>
<td>K-6 Syllabuses for 6 Key Learning Areas Y7-12 Syllabuses for 8 Key Learning Areas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Organisation of Curriculum</strong></td>
<td>K-6 Syllabus: • Rationale, Aims, Objectives, etc • Foundation Statements for each Stage • Outcomes &amp; Indicators • Content Strands • Links to other KLAs • Assessment &amp; Evaluation Y7-12 Syllabus: • Rationale, Aims, Objectives, etc • Outcomes • Content • Cross Curriculum Content • Assessment &amp; Reporting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Content</strong></td>
<td>K-6 Content drawn from knowledge, skills and attitude outcomes and indicators Y7-10 Content and learning experiences based on what students “learn to” and “learn about”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Assessment -- Internal</strong></td>
<td>K-12 • Assessment FOR and OF learning principles guide internal assessment – diagnostic, formative and summative • Assessment is Standards referenced against the NSW Board of Studies outcomes (&amp; indicators)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Assessment -- External</strong></td>
<td>K-6 Basic Skills Tests in literacy and numeracy (Years 3, 5) based on syllabus outcomes Y7-12 • Literacy &amp; Numeracy testing (SNAP &amp; ELLA in Year 7), Computer Skills Assessment (Year 10), trial Essential Science Skills Assessment (Year 8) based on syllabus outcomes • External syllabus testing in Y10 (School Certificate) and Y12 (HSC)</td>
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</table>

Figure 1. Features of the NSW General Curriculum

During 2006, there was significant opposition, particularly from the NSW Teachers Federation, to changes required by the Australian Government and supported by the NSW Government to reporting student achievement to parents. Schools were required to report using an A to E (or similar) grading system. While these changes did create some disquiet among Catholic schools, the view of the NSW Catholic Education Commission is that most principals and teachers took the requirements in their stride and that parents were generally appreciated the simpler formats. Indeed, the changes to reporting are seen by many as promoting dialogue and professional learning among teachers in the areas of student achievement expectations, pedagogy, and consistency of teacher judgement. Over the next several years, there is likely to be further work in these areas, along with refinements to report formats – particularly in areas concerned with social and affective outcomes of student performance.
Religious Education across the NSW Dioceses

NSW dioceses exhibit diversity in approaches to Religious Education curriculum. Some approaches are a consequence of history, politics and geography, as in the case of the ‘dual jurisdiction’ conundrum of the Archdiocese of Canberra and Goulburn where approximately half its Catholic schools are in the ACT with the remainder in surrounding NSW. Others are a result of individual personalities and idiosyncratic theological perspectives, which are of course subject to change once leadership succession takes place in various dioceses. This diversity is evident in the curriculum documents presented in Figure 2.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>RELIGIOUS EDUCATION</th>
<th>NSW</th>
</tr>
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| Curriculum Documents | • **Treasures New & Old K-12** (Canberra & Goulburn)  
  • **Sharing Our Story K-12** (Parramatta, Wagga Wagga, Wilcannia/Forbes)  
  • **K-12 Religious Education Curriculum** Broken Bay  
  • **Religious Education Curriculum K-12** (Sydney, Armidale, Wollongong, Lismore) supported by resource books To Know, Worship and Love, 2nd edition  
  • **The Christ We Proclaim K-6** (Bathurst)  
  • **K-12 Religion Syllabus** (Maitland/Newcastle) |
| External Approval of RE Curriculum | K-8  
  No external endorsement required  
  Y9-12  
  • RE Guidelines approved by NSW Board of Studies as a ‘Content Endorsed Course’  
  • Y11-12: Board-developed ‘Studies of Religion’ |
| Issues – General | • Divergence across dioceses  
  • Efforts made towards cooperation eg Foundation Statements  
  • Educational/catechetical tension  
  • Value of RE in the curriculum  
  • Contribution that RE makes towards Catholic school identity |
| Issues – Assessment & Reporting | K-6  
  • Not reporting on faith dimension  
  • Schools are struggling to report on RE  
  Y7-12  
  • RE is treated as a separate subject and is assessed and reported accordingly  
  • Formal assessment strategies such as the use of rubrics have been developed for units of work |

Figure 2. Diverse Features and Common Issues in Religious Education in NSW Catholic Schools
Along with the diversity, there is notable cooperation and sharing of curriculum documents. In some cases this has been borne of economic necessity, along with the genuine desire to provide the highest quality resources for teachers and learning opportunities for students regardless of their geographic or economic situation. These cooperative ventures have mostly developed through the goodwill and personal and professional networks of Religious Education staff working in diocesan offices, rather than through any form of centralized direction. Indeed the collaboration has been fostered to avoid duplication of very similar resources and in order that CEO office staffs might contribute to professional development of RE teachers and produce a more diversified range of student resources.

‘Sharing Our Story’. One example is the *Sharing Our Story* K-12 syllabus used in the dioceses of Parramatta, Wilcannia Forbes and Wagga Wagga. The syllabus is a construction of learning outcomes in eight key learning areas across the six stages of schooling. The approach to teaching and learning is based on identified principles of quality teaching and learning and the commitments to a praxis approach which seeks to integrate faith and life, religion and society. It is supported by approximately 120 units of work which include learning outcomes and indicators of achievement, links to Scripture and the Catechism of the Catholic Church, suggested activities and assessment tasks, and resource lists. The syllabus for years 9 to 12 has been approved by the NSW Board of Studies as a Board Endorsed Course.

**Changes to titles of Religious Education courses.** Influenced by the 1997 General Directory of Catechesis, which states that Religious Education be taught and delivered with similar rigour to all other academic learning in the school (cf n75), the dioceses of Armidale, Wollongong, Lismore and Sydney adopted *Religious Education K-12*, as the title for their revised collaborative RE curriculum. Religious titles, it was discerned, such as *Celebrating our Journey*, have increasingly caused unhelpful separation, in the minds and practices of teachers regarding the rigour and teaching required in classroom Religious Education in relation to other areas of learning.

This change, in addition to the decision in 1996 to engage an outcomes framework, is consistent with emerging curriculum trends in NSW and promotes a distinctive pedagogical emphasis on student learning. Underscoring this name change is the consistent way that this RE Curriculum approach K -12 incorporates a focus on life experience and education in the Catholic faith within the context of cultural realities.

Throughout this Religious Education curriculum K-12, The Emmaus Story (Luke 24:13-35) is central to all its aims. In this biblical account four movements are discerned and it is a source for the experience of Religious Education in which students are engaged in:

- **making sense** of everyday life experiences in the broader contexts of mystery, complexity, confusion and awe
- **gaining access** to and understanding the Scriptures, the traditions of the Catholic community, its stories, its experiences and its teachings
- **responding** to the activity of God in their lives and in the whole of creation
- **celebrating** with others the mystery and life of the risen Christ
These movements are interconnected, are intended for life-long learning and constitute a dynamic process, which assists students to find meaning in their experience on light of revelation.

This description of the Religious Education Curriculum K-12, compared with the praxis approach of Sharing our Story underscores the diversity as well as the common ground evident across the dioceses of NSW.

Student Religious Education Resources. A recent significant example of collaboration is the development of student resources is the To Know, Worship and Love 2nd edition student books K-12. This project spanned the period 2001-2006. The work involved initially a major collaboration between the Archdioceses of Sydney and Melbourne to negotiate a substantial revision of the 1st edition produced by the Melbourne based James Goold House. In the production of the revised 2nd edition further work was done by the dioceses of Wollongong, Armidale and Lismore together with Sydney Archdiocese.

Over this six year period, substantial trialling was undertaken in classrooms and comments sought from international and national Religious Educators, students, parents and teachers. Responses were received about the 1st edition and ideas offered in regard to what is needed in their revision. The suite of books now includes a sequential and developmental book for each year of school, Kindergarten to Year 12. Additionally a series of big books has been produced for Kindergarten, and Years 1 and 2 students, as well as various poster series. All of these books are commercially available and are being used extensively across Australia. As resources for students they contain no direct references to diocesan RE Curriculum and hence have potential for use generally.

The main fundamental aim of the student Religious Education books To Know, Worship and Love K-12, is that students have access to the books for regular independent and at-home use. It is intended that they are the available to students and be used far more extensively than in the classroom directed Religious Education lesson.

Testing students in Religious Education. Along with approaches to curriculum development have been some common issues concerned with assessment and reporting of student achievement in Religious Education. These issues concern ways to assess students’ knowledge and understanding of Religious Education and their capacity to apply this to the community in which they live. One approach to addressing this issue, used by the Archdiocese of Sydney and the Diocese of Wollongong, has been to design a written test for primary school students. While these tests do not seek to rank or grade a child’s faith or spirituality, one might expect their validity and reliability to be the subject of further investigation over the coming years, particularly in relation to the identity and effectiveness of Catholic schools accountable to the local and universal Church.

As a concluding note to diversity and cooperation among NSW dioceses, the NSW Catholic Education Commission plays a key role in promoting sharing of resources through its establishment and hosting an online Religious Education resource bank. The work of Adrian Brown is acknowledged here.
An important feature of the structure of NSW diocesan Religious Education curricula is that they are based on NSW Syllabus Frameworks. For example, Gerard Sullivan, Head of Religious Education and Spirituality in the Diocese of Maitland-Newcastle explains that "the new [RE] Syllabus was intentionally based on the NSW Syllabus Framework so teachers could recognize its professional foundation and coherence with other state syllabuses. Thus the key elements such as outcomes, strands, stages and assessment are evident in the syllabus."

The relationship between the form and structure of the general curriculum and the diocesan Religious Education curriculum has been firmly established particularly, as stated earlier, since the MCEETYA Curriculum Statements and Profiles work in the 1990s and related reviews and developments by the NSW Board of Studies. Throughout, an underpinning principle has been that Religious Education is perceived as a ‘fully-fledged’ Key Learning Area in Catholic schools, as Gerard Sullivan again makes clear: "Religion is perceived as a Key Learning Area in the school complemented and supported by the religious life of the school expressed through school liturgy, prayer, retreats, symbol and staff spirituality."

In this context, it should be noted that there has been much done in the Archdiocese of Sydney and other NSW dioceses not to call Religious Education a Key Learning Area. The concern is that using such terminology may be seen as moving the work of the confessional church ministry into government education and giving it a Board of Studies title.

Most recent changes in NSW curriculum have brought about by a combination of teacher disquiet related to the workload associated with assessing large numbers of outcomes in KLAs (especially across the stages of primary schooling), together with new compliance arrangements and regulations on student reporting using A-E (or similar) gradings. These factors largely contributed to the development of a series of Foundation Statements for each Key Learning Area by the NSW Board of Studies. The purpose of Foundation Statements was to provide teachers with a more concise description of the expected student achievement at various stages of primary schooling. The development of these statements has been generally welcomed by teachers as they seek to analyse and synthesise student outcome data from a range of sources and categories, to assist with reporting student achievement and informing their planning.
As noted above, the syllabus design of Religious Education in NSW has been consistently aligned with other KLAs and therefore teachers experienced similar issues and complexity in reporting student achievement in Religious Education as in other areas of the curriculum. This matter was addressed in a timely and cooperative manner by the NSW Heads of Religious Education during 2006. Their work represents a valuable insight into how dioceses with diverse curricula, contexts and traditions can cooperate.

Acting on their own initiative, representatives from each diocese met to develop the draft statement. The aim was to produce a version which not only reflect the format and structure of the NSW Board of Studies Foundation Statements, but would also meet the needs of all dioceses in NSW. To this end, the Strand headings, encompassing the broad learning intentions for each stage of Primary (K-6) Religious Education, were taken from the titles of the four sections of the Catechism of the Catholic Church:

- Profession of Faith
- The Celebration of the Christian Mystery
- Life in Christ
- Prayer

These strands provide the framework around which the key doctrine, outcomes and concepts for each syllabus could be grouped. The NSW Religious Education Foundation Statement for each stage of Primary schooling (K-6) is presented in Figure 3.
## Early Stage One - Kindergarten

### Profession of Faith
- The Celebration of the Christian Mystery
- Life in Christ
- Prayer

Students respond to the wonder of God’s creation. They express an understanding that God is with them and are able to communicate that they are created and loved by God. They engage with scripture stories and recognise the Bible as the Sacred Scripture of the Christian community. They name Mary as the Mother of Jesus.

Students demonstrate growing familiarity with key signs, symbols and rituals of the Catholic Tradition.

Students communicate some knowledge about Jesus.

Students demonstrate knowledge that the Church is a community of believers which gathers to pray and celebrate. They participate in praying simple formal and informal prayers.

## Stage One - Years 1 and 2

### Profession of Faith
- The Celebration of the Christian Mystery
- Life in Christ
- Prayer

Students are open and responsive to the presence of God in their lives, the lives of people, the Church and the whole of creation. They demonstrate growing familiarity with scripture stories and a reverence for the Bible. They recognise the role of Mary in the life of Jesus.

Students identify some symbols, signs and rituals of the Catholic tradition and the key times of the Liturgical Year. They express an understanding of God as loving and forgiving. They demonstrate a developing knowledge and understanding of the sacraments of initiation and the sacrament of Penance. They communicate an understanding of being forgiving and relating in a Catholic celebrating community. They begin to articulate an understanding that following Jesus is living according to the message of Jesus.

Students demonstrate developing knowledge and understanding of Jesus and his teachings. They identify holy people and saints as people who reflect God’s goodness. They are able to identify Christian ways of relating to others.

Students demonstrate an understanding and appreciation of the Church as a community which continues the mission of Jesus. They demonstrate familiarity with formal prayers and are able to compose and pray simple prayers.

## Stage Two - Years 3 and 4

### Profession of Faith
- The Celebration of the Christian Mystery
- Life in Christ
- Prayer

Students name God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit. They value the wonder and beauty of God’s creation and name ways they can live in harmony with the world. They identify and explore beliefs and traditions which are founded on Scripture and expressed in the story of the Catholic Church.

Students explore and describe the role and place of Sacraments and the Mass in their lives. They communicate an understanding of ways of belonging and relating in a Catholic celebrating community.

Students recognise the call to respond to God in their lives and explore challenges related to this response. They identify that they are part of the Church which continues the mission of Jesus to reach out in justice to others. They understand that being Christian is living according to the message of the Scriptures as expressed through the Church’s teaching and Traditions. They recognise and name the qualities of Mary and the saints and identify ways Mary and the saints responded to God.

Students examine ways in which the liturgical life of the Church nourishes and challenges them to respond to the presence of God. They appreciate the importance of signs, symbol, rites and rituals within the Church. They recognise that Scripture, symbol, rites and rituals are used in celebrations within the Catholic community. They are developing a familiarity with liturgical celebrations.
### Stage Three - Years 5 and 6

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Profession of Faith</th>
<th>The Celebration of the Christian Mystery</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Life in Christ</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prayer</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Students recognise that all of creation reflects the mystery of God. They demonstrate an understanding of the Church as a faith community which is inspired by the Holy Spirit. They explore the Traditions, beliefs and history of the Catholic Church including Mary and the Saints. They recall and describe key events associated with the Paschal mystery as revealed in the Scriptures and celebrated in the sacramental life of the Church.

Students explore the sacraments as key celebrations of the Christian mystery. They examine ways in which the liturgical life of the Church nourishes and challenges the Christian community in response to the presence of God. They communicate an understanding of sign, symbol, ritual and tradition as celebrated in the Church community.

Students articulate ways they can respond to the Scriptures by using the gifts of the Holy Spirit to live a life of love and service. They recognise responsibility to continue the mission of Jesus by reaching out in love and justice to people. They identify and explain appropriate actions of stewardship of the earth community. They evaluate ways in which they can build the Kingdom of God.

Students recognise prayer is relationship with God. They explore ways of praying in both formal and informal settings. They participate in a variety of prayers and prayer forms of the tradition using appropriate signs, symbol, rites and rituals. They are becoming increasingly familiar with a range of liturgical celebrations.

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**Figure 3 NSW Religious Education Foundation Statements K-6**

While the Foundation Statements were developed collaboratively, they have no formal standing unless they are accepted by the bishop or his delegate at the diocesan level. Accordingly, the current situation is that the Statements are being considered by diocesan authorities.

**Where to From Here?**

Much has been written about our current times as the so-called ‘Knowledge Age’. Yet this is not just an economic or technological phenomenon. It is also an educational, social and cultural one. It is about the changing ways people learn, relate and communicate with one another and what they value. This makes the role of schools all the more important in assisting young people to know who they are, to find meaning in their lives, and to make appropriate choices about the future.

Following from this, there are three important themes that need to be addressed in developing curriculum and Religious Education in particular:

**First, the emergence of new disciplines and fields, and the difficulty we have of dealing with new melded domains.** Disciplines are not what they used to be; and this has significant implications for what we currently understand as school subjects and key learning areas, or domains, or whatever. Think for a few moments about the divide between rich and poor countries, terrorism and the energy crisis, global warming, and the sustainability of life on earth – and you begin to see that understanding and action requires multidisciplinary (or even ‘transdisciplinary) thinking, study and investigation. New curriculum needs to tackles
these questions head on by building in flexibility and choice of organizers. This of course sets up new possibilities for integrating Religious Education with other subjects and disciplines.

The second theme is the **problem of finding meaning for the student.** This brings into focus the spiritual development of the student. The spiritual dimension of curriculum is what can give depth to our work as educators. It is about helping students develop an understanding of themselves and their ways of being in the world.

Curriculum can serve as a vehicle for encouraging students’ self knowledge and confidence, happiness, sense of awe and wonder, of transcendence (as the feeling of ‘going beyond their perceived limits’) – and their relationships, appreciation and compassion for others. This means that the curriculum should also provide space and guidance for students to reflect on the ‘big questions’ and concerns in life. That is what may be understood as supporting **students’ spiritual development.** It is more encompassing than any one religious tradition – and a lot more penetrating than a Values poster.

Clearly ‘classroom Religious Education’ and values education have important roles to play – but at the most fundamental level it is the wisdom, modelling and the guidance of the individual teacher which is paramount – and as teachers we know those moments when we reach a student, when we touch their soul, when we really make a difference in their lives. Perhaps we are not as good at recognising those moments as we might be - or don’t give ourselves enough credit. For Catholic schools, this issue finds its basis and challenge in the formation and faith commitment of its teachers.

The third and final theme in developing curriculum concerns **the place and respect for the work and expertise of teachers.** Any curriculum change must be assessed on its potential for building teachers’ knowledge and skills and sense of professionalism. Given the complexity of Religious Education and the diversity of its underpinnings and methodologies across various diocesan settings, the expertise, faith and generosity of spirit of teachers and those working in diocesan offices is absolutely vital.

Teaching Religious Education to young people who come with a variety of family backgrounds and life experiences, both religious and non religious, is challenging. Teachers’ ability to design and provide engaging learning experiences not only requires professional abilities but also an inspired and conducive ecclesial context.

At his Solemn Mass and Liturgical Reception in August 2006, the incoming Archbishop of Canberra and Goulburn, Mark Coleridge, drew upon analogy to describe the role of the Church in the modern world. With the challenges facing the Church he said the temptation was to ‘put the wagons in a circle in the hope of defending what is left’. A better approach he said was ‘to roll the wagons into the world and engage with it’ in the firm hope that what we are doing makes sense and has value.

Those engaged in Religious Education need to do just that.
Chapter Three

South Australia
The South Australian Religious Education Framework “Crossways”

Crossways, the Religious Education Framework for South Australian Catholic schools, provides scaffolding for the development of the Religious Education curriculum at the local level. It combines insights of the Catholic Tradition and a common curriculum entitlement for students.

A Catholic Tradition Framework

This Framework articulates, breaks open and reflects on the breadth of the Tradition which consists of both process and content. “Crossways” is designed so that students will engage with their own worlds of meaning and make links with Catholicism as a living, believing, praying, celebrating religious Tradition.

This Framework incorporates and replaces the content of the former Doctrinal Scope and Sequence (1) which itself was derived from the Catechism of the Catholic Church (2) and in an expanded way points to the broad range of doctrine from the Catholic Tradition. The four strands of the Framework - believing, living, celebrating and praying - invite students into an encounter with the richness of the Tradition and its implications for living.

Doctrinal statements in Crossways are organised and presented in the context of the ‘double page’ which accompanies each Learning Outcome.

This Religious Education Framework functions as the ‘local catechism’ for use in South Australian Catholic schools.

An Educational Framework

The Crossways South Australian Religious Education Framework provides a framework for the development of the Religious Education curriculum at the local level, as distinct from being a curriculum in itself. This Framework seeks to resolve the tension between the commitment to a common curriculum entitlement, whilst allowing educators the freedom to construct different approaches to meet the diverse needs of learners.

Thus it continues the South Australian tradition of respecting the unique context of each school and the principle of subsidiarity in designing curriculum, while providing a clear statement of the community consensus regarding expectations for this Key Learning Area. Therefore a key feature of this curriculum Framework is the articulation of mandated outcomes for student learning from pre-school to year twelve.
How the RE Framework relates to South Australian Curriculum Standards and Accountability Framework

The South Australian Curriculum Standards and Accountability Framework (SACSA) (3) was developed by South Australian educators in the government, Catholic and independent sectors. It was developed over eighteen months and was released in 2001. The collaboration of all sectors has meant that Religious Education has been accommodated in the Framework and teachers apply the same process to planning RE as they do in other learning areas.

The Crossways Religious Education Framework builds upon the principles and structures of the SACSA Framework. SACSA describes a single, cohesive Birth to Year 12 curriculum entitlement for all learners within children’s services and schools across all sectors in South Australia. It maps the scope of nine Key Learning Areas, including Religious Education.

The ‘Essential Learnings’ are integral to the SACSA Framework and are key to this Framework and to the articulation of a progressive Religious Education curriculum.

Figure 1 provides a diagrammatic overview of the SACSA Framework. It represents the way in which the Essential Learnings are woven through this Framework across four Bands (Early Years, Primary Years, Middle Years and Senior Years). The diagram shows the relationship between the Key Learning Areas and the Standards for accountability purposes. Principles of constructivism and outcomes-based education underpin the SACSA Framework.

How the RE Framework relates to the South Australian Certificate of Education

The Senior Secondary Assessment Board (SSABSA) provides Curriculum Statements for SACE subjects at Stages 1 and 2. The SACE Studies of Society and Environment Framework, which incorporates Religion, has its own broad outcomes specified.

A set of outcomes has been developed in Standard 6 of this Crossways Framework to articulate outcomes for Religious Education appropriate for Catholic schools. The outcomes in Standard 6 complement the general outcomes specified in the SACE Curriculum Statements.

Not all Religious Education subjects delivered at Years 11 and 12 are SACE subjects. The Standard 6 Outcomes are also intended to provide the framework for the design and delivery of internal Religious Education courses for Year 11 and 12 students.
Scope and Standards Overview
The Educational Foundations for the RE Framework

A Constructivist Approach to Education

The theoretical basis for teaching and learning in the Framework draws with appropriate discernment upon the family of theories that are grouped under the title of ‘constructivism’. Learners are active in the process of the construction of meaning as they engage with culture.

In the context of the Catholic school the construction of meaning engages the learner with Catholic teachings and beliefs. The aim is always to encourage learners to develop a deeper appreciation of the meaning of Catholic beliefs using language and concepts that are meaningful for them.

In a constructivist approach employed in this Framework students are encouraged to:

• Reflect critically on their own knowledge and values in the light of the values and beliefs of the Catholic Tradition and other cultural sources that disclose truth
• Engage in inquiry and reflection that fosters the interaction of thought and experience
• Make links between the content being studied, Catholic beliefs and values and their own experiences, interests, questions and beliefs
• Interact with and be challenged by the views of others
• Recognise that language conveys meanings and interpretations and that these meanings can be re-interpreted.

An Outcomes Based Approach to Education

The Framework also uses an Outcomes based approach to teaching and learning. The Learning Outcomes express what students need to demonstrate as a result of their learning.

Drawing from the Catholic Tradition this Framework clearly articulates the knowledge, skills and attitudes which are the desired outcomes for student learning. In this Framework these outcomes are shaped by a Catholic understanding of the nature of the human person.

Learning Outcomes in this Framework seek to foster a deeper understanding and appreciation of Catholic beliefs, values and practices.

They:

• focus on student learning
• articulate what students will demonstrate as a result of their learning
• make teaching and learning more precise and explicit
• employ a constructivist approach
• identify the individual student’s progress in learning
• help to identify gaps and overlap in the curriculum
• link planning, teaching, assessment and reporting
• provide a useful framework and a language for assessment and reporting.
The RE Framework addresses appropriate learnings for the 21st Century

Education today faces new challenges which are the result of changing socio-political and cultural contexts. Young people require new capabilities, dispositions and understandings to meet these challenges. Students are encouraged to broaden options and develop personal resources and flexibility suitable for living in the 21st century.

The RE Framework is informed by the SACSA Essential Learnings. The Framework invites teachers to develop and shape the Essential Learnings within the broader context of Catholic education and with an awareness of the religious dimension of the Catholic school.

The Framework integrates contemporary philosophies, theories and pedagogies within the context of the Catholic Tradition.

The Essential Learnings for Religious Education

There has been an important discussion in South Australia in recent years regarding the essential aspects of learning. One of the pillars of the SACSA Framework is the set of ‘Essential Learnings’, identified as futures, identity, interdependence, thinking and communication. These Essential Learnings are understandings, capabilities and dispositions which are considered as crucial in the education of learners from birth to Year 12 and beyond. They are developed in partnerships that are established with learners, parents and caregivers, families, parish and community, and are crucial to the progress of learners and to the future of society.

In the context of Catholic education, Essential Learnings are developed in the whole school experience, across all Key Learning Areas and particularly in Religious Education. In this context these learnings have their foundation in the Christian understanding of God, Church and the human person. They are resources which are drawn upon throughout life and enable people to productively engage with changing times as thoughtful, active, responsive and committed local, national and global citizens. Engaging with these concepts is crucial to building a learning culture.
The Aims of Religious Education in the Framework

Religious Education is part of the evangelising mission of the Catholic school and is a significant learning area. The purpose of Religious Education which underpins Crossways is: to deepen students’ understanding of the Tradition and to develop their appreciation of its significance in their lives, so that they may participate effectively in the life of the Church and wider society.

With this purpose in mind, there are four aims for the Religious Education Learning Area which have been shaped and informed by the Essential Learnings. In the context of Catholic education, Religious Education aims to develop in students:

- Knowledge and understanding of the Catholic Tradition
- Skills and capabilities related to learning in the religious domain
- Values and dispositions related to learning in the religious domain
- An openness to deepening faith, insofar as Religious Education complements Primary Proclamation and Catechesis.
The Structure of the Religious Education Framework

Strands and Key Ideas

Drawing its inspiration from the four sections of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, the Religious Education Framework explores the Catholic faith as a believing, living, celebrating and praying faith Tradition. This Framework is organised into three conceptual Strands and a fourth Strand, ‘praying’, is integrated across the Key Ideas.

The three conceptual Strands concern knowledge, skills and attitudes associated with

Believing

This Strand explores the Church as a believing community. It enables students to explore the rich heritage of the thoughts and beliefs of the Catholic Tradition and its meaning and significance for their lives.

Living

This Strand examines the qualities of discipleship as an invitation to promote the Reign of God. It explores ethical issues, moral decision making and conscience formation in light of the ethical codes of the Gospels and Catholic Tradition.

Celebrating

This Strand reflects on the Church as a celebrating community. It explores the nature of prayer, the liturgical and sacramental life of the Church and its relationships with other religions and their traditions.

The fourth integrated Strand:

Praying

This Strand is integrated across the three conceptual Strands and emphasises the importance of prayer across the life of the Church: in its beliefs about the nature of God and the human person, in its moral teachings and in its liturgical life.
Key Ideas

Each conceptual Strand is organised into four mandated Key Ideas. A Key Idea is a pedagogical and Tradition organiser which articulates fundamental concepts and learning.

Twelve Key Ideas are employed in the Religious Education Learning Area.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strand</th>
<th>Key Ideas</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Praying           | 1  God and Revelation  
Students explore God’s presence in creation and God’s self-revelation in Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit |
|                   | 2  Being Human  
Students respond to the idea that humanity is made in the image of God and grounded in God’s love, and explore the themes of grace and sin. |
|                   | 3  Textual Interpretation  
Students interpret and explore revelation given in Scripture, the Creeds and other foundational texts. |
|                   | 4  Church and Community  
Students critically reflect on change and continuity in the praying, believing, living and celebrating Church, as it engages with the world. |
|                   | 5  Discipleship and the Reign of God  
Students explore how Christian discipleship is a vocational commitment to Jesus’ vision of the Reign of God. |
|                   | 6  Moral Decision Making  
Students appreciate how the process of informing one’s conscience enables individuals to exercise authentic freedom when making decisions. |
| Living            | 7  Religious Authority for Ethics  
Students explore how a critical understanding of the origins, sources and principles of ethical codes contributes to responsible Christian living. |
|                   | 8  Social Justice and Ethical Issues  
Students critically reflect on and apply a Christian ethic of life to a range of contemporary justice and ethical issues. |
|                   | 9  Sacraments and Sacramentality  
Students research and explore the concept of sacramentality and the place of Christian sacraments in the life of the Church. |
| Celebrating       | 10  Prayer and Liturgy  
Students explore prayer, including liturgical prayer, within the Christian Tradition as celebration of God’s presence in people’s lives |
|                   | 11  The Liturgical Year of the Church  
Students research and communicate how the life, death and resurrection of Jesus is celebrated in the seasons and feasts of the Church’s Liturgical Year. |
|                   | 12  Religious Traditions  
Students investigate beliefs, rituals and festivals in diverse religious traditions and demonstrate an appreciation of their own tradition and respect for other religious traditions. |
Standards and Framework Learning Outcomes

- In this Religious Education Framework, seven Curriculum Standards have been developed to provide a common reference point and indication of student entitlement, expressed at significant points of the learning continuum: Preschool, Years 2, 4, 6, 8, 10 and 12.

- Each Standard contains Framework Learning Outcomes derived from the Key Ideas. Framework Learning Outcomes describe the knowledge, skills, attitudes and dispositions that learners are expected to develop, enabling progress in learning to be tracked.

- All twelve Framework Learning Outcomes are mandated: they need to be addressed in each Standard.

The Double Page: Purpose

Each Framework Learning Outcome is presented on a ‘Double Page’ with the following elements:

- the Learning Outcome
- Key Idea
- the Catholic Tradition supporting the Learning Outcome
- student context
- Essential Learnings
- examples of evidence
- skills, attitudes and dispositions relevant to the Learning Outcome
- links.

The Double Pages:

- are a tool for designing curriculum in the local context
- provide a ‘depthing’ of the Learning Outcomes and support religious educators as they plan, deliver and review the Religious Education curriculum
- explore some possible interpretations of Key Ideas through ‘Examples of Evidence’
- are a flexible tool for which there is no ‘lock-step’ approach.

End Notes

1. Doctrinal Scope and Sequence Catholic Education Office, Adelaide South Australia 1997
Religious Education in dialogue: curriculum around Australia

The Double Page Template

6.6

Strand
There are 4 Key Ideas in each of the 3 conceptual Strands: Believing, Living & Celebrating. The Praying Strand is integrated across the others.

The Catholic Tradition box
This contains a broad range of insights from the Tradition relevant to this Outcome, from Scripture, liturgy, doctrine and a range of Church documents.

Introduction to the Catholic Tradition box
This provides a contextual or interesting window into the Tradition.

Sub –Themes of the Key Idea
These provide groupings of the Tradition Statements, similar to the former DSS Themes.

Tradition Statements
Several of these could be incorporated in a unit developed for this Learning Outcome. They are written for teachers to present the concepts at the level at which they are meant to be understood by students.

Tradition Reference
The arrow points to Tradition sources such as Church documents, Scripture, doctrine, liturgy, moral theology, and theological reflection. See reference list in part 10.

Key Idea
This is one of the 12 Key Ideas which states the fundamental concepts and learnings. The Learning Outcome develops this Key Idea in a particular way at this Standard. The Tradition Box statements are identified under this Key Idea.

Standard 2
Discipleship and the Reign of God

Key Idea 5
Students explore how Christian discipleship is a vocational commitment to Jesus’ vision of the Reign of God.

Introduction
Most people love to have heroes; people who inspire us with what they can do, or what they have done. The Catholic tradition informs people that, throughout the Bible, and within the Catholic story, there are many women and men who too can inspire us to grow in love.

Statements from the Tradition like the following are relevant to this Key Idea and Learning Outcome:

Discipleship
• The Gospels present different understandings of discipleship.
• Discipleship is a call to a deepening friendship with God through Jesus.
• In the bonds of friendship and service to others, people come to experience the fullness of life promised by Jesus.
• Throughout the Christian story, there have been those who responded to the call to discipleship, some of whom the Church has named as saints.

Reign of God
• Jesus came to bring Good News to the poor, release to prisoners, recovery of sight to the blind and freedom for the oppressed. ⇒ Luke 4, Mark 1:14.
• Justice, peace and right relationships define what it means to be disciples in the world today.
• When people use their gifts for the service of others, they proclaim the Reign of God.

Mary
• Mary, the first disciple, listened to the Word of God in her life, and responded to it. ⇒ CCC 494, Hall Mary.
• Being a disciple is an invitation to live life to the fullest. The Assumption of Mary is a sign of hope that the living power of God will prevail. ⇒ CCC 966-969.

Skills, Attitudes and Dispositions
Learners have opportunities to explore and develop:

• A desire to be respectful towards others.
• A openness to explore the vocational commitment of being a follower of Jesus.

Skills, Attitudes and Dispositions
The range of examples provides a useful reminder of cognitive and affective skills, attitudes and possible faith responses which students could have opportunities to explore and develop.
Framework Learning Outcome

The Double Page is designed around the Framework Learning Outcome. The Framework Learning Outcome here combines Standard 2 with Key Idea 5 to articulate Outcome 2.5.

The Framework Learning Outcome broadly describes the knowledge, skills and understandings that learners are expected to develop in this Standard.

The verb is italicised to emphasise the learning process.

Learning Outcome 2.5

Examines the lives and teachings of key figures in the Judeo-Christian tradition and explores discipleship in the lives of contemporary people.

Programming and Planning in Religious Education

Student Context

The notion of heroes is appealing to students of this age. However, they will need help to differentiate between 'celebrity and hero', 'popularity and respect'. Many children face difficulty in defining positive role models even within the family. Biblical heroes and positive role models of discipleship provide a rich counter-cultural challenge to contemporary values. Imaginative presentation of these models will appeal strongly to this age.

Examples of Evidence

Each of the following examples would indicate that a student has achieved one or more aspects of the Learning Outcome:

- Examines texts relating to significant people in the First Testament e.g. Sarah, Moses, Abraham and Ruth, and identifies how these people responded to God's call. T + KC1 + KC6
- Reads and views a range of texts about Mary's life and records examples of her responses to God's call. T + KC7
- Examines art works and texts related to the ministry of Jesus (Matt: 8), identifies how Jesus befriended outsiders and critically reflects on the concept of inclusivity. T + In + F KC1 + KC6
- Presents evidence from the life of a contemporary person to show how they fulfil the criteria for Christian discipleship. T + KC1 + KC2
- Explores the growth of the Early Church Communities, and identifies ways that early Christians supported and helped each other. F + In + KC1 + KC2

Other Key Ideas:

- KI 4, 8

Other Learning Areas:

- English, The Arts, S & E

FLE:

- Relationships
- Making Choices

Sample Support Material:

- Unit 2.5-1 Lent Reaching Out
- Unit 2.5-2 Mary A Woman of Faith

School and Community:

- Parish Groups e.g. St Vincent de Paul Society, Patron saint of school/parish
- Project Compassion

Links

- Other Key Ideas - Double Pages and their Tradition boxes.
- Other Learning Areas.
- Family Life Education themes.
- Sample Support Material units.
- School and broader community.

Empty Space

Only the Framework Learning Outcome is mandated. Every other aspect of the Double Page invites the teacher to add and adjust in the light of the local context and curriculum focus.
Religious Education in dialogue: curriculum around Australia
Chapter Four

Northern Territory
Northern Territory

Northern Territory Curriculum Framework – NTCF

The *Northern Territory Curriculum Framework* (NTCF) identifies learning outcomes for all Northern Territory learners in classes from Transition to Year 10. It provides the major elements of curriculum, around which schools can

- develop flexible teaching and learning programs that are inclusive of the varied pedagogical approaches of educators
- assess learner progress
- report on the outcomes achieved.

The framework enables schools and teachers to select content and teaching methods consistent with local contexts and priorities to ensure learners achieve agreed outcomes.

The NTCF is also the first ever system-wide curriculum to recognize and integrate Indigenous knowledge. The Indigenous Languages and Culture component brings together curriculum development work done within local Indigenous communities over the past 25 years.

While the NTCF provides the necessary structure, it also acknowledges, values and promotes multiple learning pathways. Consideration of diverse ways and means of learning, as well as identifying and supporting communities to integrate their own cultural content into the curriculum, must be taken into account. The NTCF provides scope for learners to demonstrate outcomes within a range of contexts, including localised contexts. For example, Two-Way learning emphasises the importance of locally developed learning programs that uphold the values and learnings of particular communities. When judging the evidence of a learner’s progress towards or achievement of an outcome, learners’ conceptual development is the aspect evaluated. Any locally devised programs must work within the framework of NTCF outcomes (e.g. Religious Education Programs).
Principles

The six key principles of the NTCF guide schools in planning and monitoring ongoing teaching and learning programs. The principles are broad enough to enable teachers to develop and implement innovative programs reflecting varied pedagogical approaches.

The driving principles of developmental learning, partnerships and the EsseNTial Learnings reflect the processes and structure central to development of the NTCF. These contribute to the catalyst principles of flexibility and inclusivity, which are critical to maximising learning for the diverse student population within the Northern Territory. Through these driving and catalyst principles it is intended that the goal principle of a connected, lifelong learner will be achieved.

Principles underpinning the NT Curriculum Framework

Driving Principles

- **Developmental Approach** – Learning is a lifelong journey in which all learners develop at their own pace as they progress via many different pathways. Development patterns follow a broad continuum that builds on demonstrated knowledge and understandings. When planning and assessing, teachers should focus on the Band (level) that best reflects evidence of learners’ achievements. The NTCF provides learners, teachers and parents with a clear generic map of learners’ development.

- **EsseNTial Learnings** – are the critical processes that all learners should develop as a result of their formal schooling enabling them to leave school equipped to participate actively in and contribute to a changing world. **EsseNTial Learnings are not additional or optional curriculum extra—they are central to all teaching and learning programs.** The EsseNTial Learnings are developmentally mapped to achieve culminating outcomes. These outcomes are developed through the content of relevant Learning Areas and can be used as a strategy for curriculum integration. By their nature, the EsseNTial Learnings are both part of the NTCF outcome structure and an enabler of flexible, inclusive needs-based program development. Schools need to create environments, programs and structures that present opportunities for learners to participate in a meaningful way to ensure these EsseNTial Learnings are acquired.
• **Partnerships** – The NTCF was developed through extensive consultation with all stakeholders in Northern Territory education. These important partnerships between learners, teachers, parents/carers, school councils, tertiary educators, industry and the wider community play a critical role in education. This is achieved through the establishment of collaborative learning communities that are responsive and relevant to local contexts. Effective partnerships are vital if learners are to achieve outcomes that reflect each individual’s capability and potential.

**Catalyst Principles**

• **Flexibility** – The curriculum must cater for the diverse needs of Northern Territory schools and communities. It must acknowledge and provide for local responses to the social, cultural and technological changes that challenge us daily. Schools need to provide an environment in which learners can build resilience to assist them in adapting to the growing complexity of changing families, communities and cultures. Working within an agreed outcome framework enables this flexibility while also providing for accountability.

• **Inclusivity** – All learners, irrespective of culture, language, socio-economic background, geographical location, disability or gender, must be given the opportunity to access a diverse and empowering education. Learners’ backgrounds, interests, prior understandings, experiences, learning styles and learning rates should be valued and considered.

**Goal Principle**

• **Connected Lifelong Learner** – Learners need to make sense of and connect with their local and global communities, diverse environments and economies in order to participate effectively. In this information age, learners will have to be motivated, adaptable and capable of ongoing, self-directed, lifelong learning. Further, all learners need to gain an understanding of the global perspective. Opportunities must also exist for specific talents and interests to be developed.
Outcome-Focused Learning

The NTCF identifies the outcomes that learners should demonstrate at the end of significant learning experiences. An outcome-focused approach accepts that learning progresses along a broadly identifiable developmental continuum. Outcomes describe the observable changes in students’ learning and define how they can use what they know and have learned. The outcomes in the NTCF inform curriculum planning, are used to make judgments about learners’ progress and provide a common language for reporting achievements. The principles of outcome-focused learning include: (i) clarity of focus (ii) high expectations (iii) a focus on development (iv) a design down-deliver up model for curriculum planning and (v) expanded opportunities for all learners.

- **Clarity of focus** directs attention towards learning outcomes appropriate to the developmental levels of learners. It is critical that the outcomes are made explicit to learners, teachers, carers and others in the community to enable all partners in education to assist learners to achieve the outcomes.

- **High expectations** provides opportunities for all learners to reach the levels of which they are capable and is intended to extend teachers’ and learners' expectations of what they will come to know and be able to do. High expectations apply to all learners.

- **Focus on development** emphasises the likely sequence of conceptual and cognitive development and acknowledges the range of developmental differences between learners.

- **Design down-deliver up model** for curriculum planning and assessment is underpinned by a student centred approach to learning and teaching. It includes using long term goals as a focus then ‘designing down’ to the level of the learners. The following diagram identifies a set of questions to direct teachers’ planning, designing-down from the outcomes.

Expanded opportunities allows for a range of contexts, opportunities and support for learners to gain knowledge and to demonstrate evidence of outcomes. All students have different learning needs and all will not necessarily be ready to demonstrate learning outcomes in the same way or at the same time.
Structure

The NTCF consists of the following inter-related structural components

1. **Essential Learnings** - four domains of Inner Learner, Creative Learner, Collaborative Learner and Constructive Learner each of which has a set of culminating outcomes.

2. **Learning Technology** - four domains of Problem-Solving and Decision-Making through Research; Communicating through Presentation, Publication or Performance; Operating Computer Components; and Information Communication Technology (ICT) in Society.

3. **English as a Second Language** - includes Early Childhood/Primary and Secondary pathways.


5. **Indigenous Languages and Culture** - includes language and culture outcomes for Indigenous Language Maintenance and Language Revitalisation programs.
### NT Curriculum Framework Bands

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Bands</th>
<th>Approximately end of Year</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Beyond Band 5</td>
<td>Extension Level</td>
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<tr>
<td>Band 5</td>
<td>10</td>
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<tr>
<td>Band 4</td>
<td>8</td>
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<td>Band 3</td>
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<td>Band 2</td>
<td>4</td>
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<tr>
<td>Band 1</td>
<td>2</td>
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<tr>
<td>Key Growth Point 3</td>
<td>Key Growth Point 1 is a beginning point for the inclusion of high support needs learners.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Key Growth Point 2</td>
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<td>Key Growth Point 1</td>
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Year 7 Benchmark Level is within
Year 5 Benchmark Level is within
Year 3 Benchmark Level is within
School Entry Points

National Benchmarking information is collected through the system-wide assessment (Multilevel Assessment Program – MAP) in August each year. As the National Goal states that ALL learners should meet Benchmark, (minimum standards) this suggests that MOST learners should be working within the relevant Band by the end of the previous year. Years 3, 5 and 7 English Literacy and Numeracy Benchmarks are explicitly identified within Bands 1, 2 and 3 in the English and Mathematics Learning Areas.

**NOTE:**
- Learners identified as English as a Second language (ESL) or English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners are likely to demonstrate different pathways to those illustrated above for Standard Australian English (SAF) First Language Speakers. Refer to the ESL section for ESL pathways and the relationship to National Benchmarks.
- Learners of a Language Other Than English are likely to demonstrate different pathways depending on when they start learning the language, the nature of and continuity of their language program, and their prior language experiences including home language.
The NT Curriculum Framework is for All Students in the Northern Territory.

The Northern Territory Curriculum Framework (NTCF) is an inclusive framework for all students in the Northern Territory. Inclusivity means ensuring that all groups of students are included and valued.

Implementing the NTCF means that when teachers, schools and/or systems design and develop teaching and learning programs (e.g. Religious Education Guidelines) to suit the needs of their students, they must ensure that these programs include developmental learning, partnerships and essential learnings for their students aimed at achieving the outcomes set out in the Framework.

As a part of our formal orientation for all ‘beginning’ and ‘new’ teachers to the Northern Territory, a significant focus on understanding and ‘unpacking’ the NTCF is provided. In addition we have established ‘Band’ Network meetings for the purpose of sharing our understanding of the NTCF, shared planning and moderation of student work. Professional development opportunities are provided for all teaching staff in relation to the NTCF.

Catalysts Impacting on Religious Education in the Northern Territory

In 2002 all schools in the Northern Territory (NT) began using the NTCF. At this point Catholic schools were still using the Guidelines for Religious Education of Students in the Archdiocese of Melbourne (1995) and this brought about significant educational clashes.

These two curriculum documents were based on different educational approaches and languages, and suddenly teachers were trying to reconcile the NTCF outcomes based approach where learning was designated at particular band levels with the Guidelines language of ‘objectives’ and learning framed within year levels. This was most problematic in the area of assessment and reporting, as the credibility of Religious Education as a core learning area requires the same systematic and rigorous approach to assessment and reporting as any other learning area. Therefore there was a clear need to use a similar framework for Religious Education to mirror the educational philosophies and approaches of the NTCF.

An analysis of the context of the NT also revealed that a highly transient population resulted in a high turnover of teachers (and students), as a significant percentage of people chose to embark upon new experiences of living in the tropics or the desert to broaden their horizons for a short period of time. It was apparent that teachers new to the diocese had copious changes to contend with, including the geographical distance from family and friends; adjustment to a new climate; and trying to grasp a new curriculum framework with a shortage of relief teachers making professional development opportunities in school hours extremely limited. Such were the enormity of these changes that even the limited number of teachers highly skilled in Religious Education struggled to find the time and energy required to write appropriate educational programs for students from diverse backgrounds in a multicultural context.
Development of a Religious Education Program for the Diocese of Darwin

At a Leadership Conference for Principals, Deputy Principals and Religious Education Coordinators held in 2004, the development of a Religious Education program specifically for the NT context was voted in the top four priority areas. Other factors that influenced this decision included the significant number of teachers who had little background in Religious Education or Theology, and difficulties observed with the implementation of the NTCF. One of the difficulties teachers frequently voiced about using the NTCF was that it equipped teachers with a framework but failed to provide specific classroom teaching and learning strategies. Without any adequate models to follow, many teachers experienced that it was an onerous task to plan detailed and effective units of work in an era of constant educational change within an unfamiliar context. Therefore, there was widespread belief that the development of a Religious Education program written specifically for the NT context would be the most effective way for teachers to be empowered to teach meaningful and appropriate Religious Education lessons that engaged students positively in their own learning.

The decision was then made to use the South Australian Religious Education Framework (SA RE Framework) as the basis of this program, with the following twelve Key Ideas:

**KEY IDEA 1:** God and Revelation  
**KEY IDEA 2:** Created in the Image of God  
**KEY IDEA 3:** Textual Interpretation  
**KEY IDEA 4:** Church and Community  
**KEY IDEA 5:** Discipleship and the Reign of God  
**KEY IDEA 6:** Moral Decision Making  
**KEY IDEA 7:** Religious Authority for Ethics  
**KEY IDEA 8:** Social Justice and Ethical Issues  
**KEY IDEA 9:** Sacraments and Sacramentality  
**KEY IDEA 10:** Prayer and Liturgy  
**KEY IDEA 11:** The Liturgical Year of the Church  
**KEY IDEA 12:** Religious Traditions  

The South Australian Curriculum Standards and Accountability Framework was written around the same time as the NTCF and used many of the same principles and structures. Therefore, the SA RE Framework aligned closely with the NTCF, and feedback from teachers indicated that they found the SA RE Framework educationally and theologically user-friendly. Two other influential factors were that all secondary schools in the NT are legislated to follow the curriculum set by the Senior Secondary Assessment Board South Australia (SSABSA), and all schools in the Diocese of Darwin had been asked by the Bishop of Darwin to implement the Family Life Education Program developed by the Catholic Education Office in Adelaide. The SA RE Framework incorporated links with the Family Life Education Program, so no other state framework for religious education would have as many links with what was currently happening in the NT.
Experience of working with teachers in the NT revealed that by virtue of their profession, teachers were most engaged in their own professional learning when they could clearly see a direct correlation between what they were learning with their pedagogical endeavours in the classroom. Being confronted with so many changes, teachers new to the diocese mostly operate in the functional sphere of their profession, and their immediate need is to answer the question, ‘What will I teach my students tomorrow?’ and they do not have the capacity to give their full attention to other broader questions or issues. Therefore, the focus had to be on providing teachers with a structured and detailed program that they could pick up and use immediately as it had to provide explicit teaching points and specific teaching strategies.

Dr Maurice Ryan, from Australian Catholic University, was instrumental in working with Religious Education Coordinators to construct key criteria for the Religious Education program in order to meet the needs of teachers and students in the diocese.

As pedagogy was a key issue for the success of the development of the program, one of the first steps was to gather together a Writing Team (all Religious Education Coordinators and a few other people identified as having a keen interest and high skill level in religious education) to work with Dr Dan White, Director Hobart Catholic Education Office, on his ‘DEEP’ pedagogical approach for identifying and structuring appropriate activities in Religious Education. The DEEP pedagogical approach includes activities to cover the elements of 'Discernment,' 'Engagement', 'Enrichment' and 'Participation'. This was a time of rich discussions and learning about how the program could cater for individual learning differences to ensure that learning could be as stimulating and enjoyable as possible. This approach also melded well with the educational philosophy underpinning the SA RE Framework of a constructivist approach to education.

The following year the Writing Team worked with Dr Peta Goldburg from Australian Catholic University to establish a list of skills titled, ‘Religious Education Curriculum Essentials NT’, to go alongside the NT Essential Learnings listed in the NTCF. These skills were modified and adapted from the Queensland Studies Authority list of core skills (Common Curriculum Elements). This list of skills for the Religious Education Curriculum Essentials NT then provided the basis for assessment and reporting, and a generic rubric template was established so that all writers could provide a resource for teachers to use for assessment to be transparent, consistent and in line with assessment terminology used for other learning areas.

During 2007 the Writing Team has worked with Dr Margaret Carswell to establish a scope and sequence overview for teaching key understandings about Scripture. Further exploration of how to skill teachers in this area and the development of more teaching and learning strategies to teach specific Scripture texts will be a focus for 2008.

The Religious Education Program for the Diocese of Darwin is now called, ‘Journey in Faith’ and it is still a work in progress. By the end of 2007 it is hoped that there will be a draft unit of work for each Key Idea in the SA RE Framework, across all levels.
Key elements of ‘Journey in Faith’ include:

- Background information for teachers is inserted throughout the program wherever it directly impacts on the teaching content so that it is immediately relevant
- Explicit Teaching Points are provided to ensure that all teachers will be able to identify the important elements they need to specifically teach
- Indigenous perspectives are provided for each unit of work, as every school in the Diocese has Indigenous students
- Links to the NTCF
- Teaching and learning strategies are provided for every task or activity, so that teachers are given instructions on what to do and how to do it (teachers are not required to do any planning as the program is highly prescriptive)
- The inclusion of a wide variety of activities to try to cater for different learning styles, different thinking styles and different ways of praying
- Each of the twelve Key Ideas (from the SA RE Framework) are divided into a number of Learning Focus questions, to form separate units of work and provide teachers with flexibility about the timing and order of units of work they teach.

‘Journey in Faith’ will remain a document in progress for as long as it is deemed to be an effective and appropriate program for teachers and students. It will not be published in hard copy, but will be available to teachers in the diocese through ‘MyInternet’, as it is written specifically for the NT context. This decision reflects the philosophy that all teaching and learning is an ongoing journey, and when new educational documents and trends emerge or new resources become available the program can be edited and modified accordingly. It also reflects the belief that teachers are most engaged in their own learning when it directly relates to their professional challenge of providing a stimulating learning and teaching environment for their own students. Therefore, any professional development in religious education can directly impact on the units of work. After working with people who have specialised expertise in an area of Religious Education, units of work can be evaluated and modified or re-written accordingly, and this exercise in itself is a rich form of professional learning for all involved.

Implications for Indigenous Schools

While the above overview reflects the development of a Religious Education program for urban schools, Religious Education in Indigenous schools has been even more problematic. The process has now begun of writing a Religious Education Program for the five Indigenous schools in the diocese. This program will still be based on the SA RE Framework, but the twelve Key Ideas will be modified slightly to be appropriate for Indigenous teachers and students. There will be extensive consultation with leaders and RE Coordinators in each school as well as the elders and key members of each Indigenous community. One of the aims of this program will be to cater for Indigenous teachers for whom English is not their first language, and also for non Indigenous teachers who may have little understanding of the Catholic faith. Another aim of the program will be to incorporate aspects of the spirituality
and culture of each local community, so therefore it will be impossible to write one program that all five schools can use without modification. It is hoped that there will be one program that each of the schools can modify and adapt, to insert their own language and their own cultural stories and experiences wherever possible.

Policy Implications

The movement towards a Religious Education program for the diocese facilitated the need to develop a Diocesan Religious Education Policy. The successful implementation of ‘Journey in Faith’ will depend upon having shared understandings and beliefs about religious education within all schools in the diocese, and ultimately this is what the Diocesan Religious Education Policy aims to achieve.

‘Journey in Faith’ also has implications for the ongoing professional development of religious education teachers in the diocese, so the Diocesan Accreditation Policy has been revised. There is now an expectation that all teachers in the diocese will participate in a given number of hours each year to continually update their understanding of the Catholic Tradition. There is also an expectation that all religious education teachers will have some formal qualifications or studies in religious education, or work towards achieving such qualifications within a given timeframe.

Conclusion

For a significant length of time, in the NT Religious Education curriculum has been either driven by general curriculum trends or has been segregated and immune from general curriculum which did not cover Religious Education within its framework. Neither approach would appear to be healthy in the context of Catholic schools where the focus is on holistic education and weaving together all the elements that make up the human person to provide a vibrant context as the basis for life long growth and development. The advance of a Religious Education Program for the NT has meant that at last Religious Education is not only situated within the general educational curriculum, but can now contribute to shaping pedagogy in other curriculum areas.

However, Religious Education is more than a period of time on the daily timetable and more than part of the overall curriculum. It needs to be the priority learning area. Aspects of Religious Education need to be infused throughout the whole curriculum and the whole of the life of the school if Catholic schools are going to be credible in their Catholic identity and the living out of the Catholic ethos. The effectiveness and viability of Religious Education in the NT will depend upon being able to distinguish the differences and similarities between it and other learning areas, and ensuring that we do not let Religious Education become ‘just another subject’.

References

3 Congregation for the Clergy (1997) General Directory for Catechesi. Homebush NSW, St Paul Publications #223
Chapter Five

Western Australia
Western Australia

Western Australian Curriculum Framework

The School Education Act 1999 of Western Australia requires the Catholic school to be registered. Provisions for registration, in which the Catholic school must operate, are required by the State government. A System Agreement was established between the Catholic Education Commission of Western Australia (CECWA) and the Minister of Education. The Agreement enables the Director of Catholic Education to sign on behalf of the CECWA assuring the Minister that the standards of educational instruction are met. To ensure that the Act is adhered to, school audits occur every seven years, as the Act requires, whereby all aspects of the System Agreement are met (Section 174, 1(b), 2 School Education Act 1999).

The Curriculum Council, in accordance with the Curriculum Council Act 1997, (Section 4b) developed the Curriculum Framework for all West Australian schools. The established Curriculum Framework sets out what all students should know, understand, value and be able to do through the education provision of schools from kindergarten to Year 12. The Curriculum Policy of the Catholic Education Commission of Western Australia clearly states the link to the Curriculum Framework as the mandatory structure for schools to develop their educational program (Curriculum Framework 1998).

The Curriculum Framework

The Curriculum Framework establishes learning outcomes expected of all students from kindergarten to Year 12. The Curriculum Framework is used by schools to develop and implement their teaching and learning programs according to the needs and characteristics of their students. Its fundamental purpose is to provide a structure around which schools can build educational programs that ensure students achieve agreed outcomes.

It is neither a curriculum nor a syllabus, but a framework identifying common learning outcomes for all students, whether they attend government or non-government schools or receive home schooling. It is intended to give schools and teachers flexibility and ownership over curriculum in a dynamic and rapidly-changing world environment.

The Curriculum Framework establishes learning outcomes for all students, regardless of who they are, which school they attend, where they are from, or what approach their school takes to help them achieve those outcomes. The learning outcomes are set out within the Overarching and eight Learning Area Statements. The outcomes provide clarity of focus for students, parents, teachers and the general community and are an effective basis for monitoring and reporting to parents and others.

The Curriculum Framework does not prevent schools from offering programs that enable students to achieve outcomes additional to those specified. Schools are able to respond to their own ethos or that of their system, the needs of their community and the situations of their students by pursuing the common outcomes and by developing additional outcomes that match the specific needs of the students.
The Curriculum Framework reflects contemporary thinking about what students need to learn in order to lead successful and rewarding lives in the twenty-first century and how schools and teachers can best help them to learn. It provides teachers, parents, employers, those responsible for post-school education and the community with a clear statement of what students are expected to achieve as a result of their kindergarten to year 12 education.

The Overarching Statement
The Overarching Statement outlines seven key principles which underpin the Curriculum Framework and describes the Overarching learning outcomes to which all learning areas contribute. It describes learning and assessment strategies that are consistent with the Curriculum Framework and which promote achievement of the outcomes.

Particular attention is given to the importance of maintaining a holistic view of curriculum, the responsibility of curriculum as a whole for such vital skills as literacy, numeracy and social cooperation, and the need to integrate knowledge, skills and values across all learning areas. The fundamental role of curriculum in the promotion of students’ enjoyment of learning and excellence in learning is also emphasised. This statement provides a guide for whole-school planning and review.

The Learning Area Statements
Learning areas individually and collectively contribute to the achievement of the Overarching learning outcomes. Learning Area Statements are provided for The Arts; English; Health and Physical Education; Languages Other Than English; Mathematics; Science; Society and Environment; and Technology and Enterprise. These areas are a useful way of categorising the knowledge, skills and values essential for the education of students in Western Australia. They provide a structure for defining learning outcomes, for providing breadth and balance in students’ education and for ensuring attention is given to specific disciplines.

The learning areas are consistent with those endorsed by the Australian Education Council as the basis for curriculum development in Australian schools and which almost all Australian states and territories use. Adoption of these eight learning areas for the Curriculum Framework is in the interests of students who move between jurisdictions and reflects a spirit of cooperation among educators from all Australian states and territories.
Values in the Curriculum Framework

Values are fundamental to shaping curriculum. In recognition of this, the Curriculum Council has identified and endorsed as one of its Principles, a set of core shared values to underpin the Curriculum Framework.

The agreed values have been created through a process of consensus and wide consultation. Systems, sectors and schools may add to this minimum set or interpret and promote the values in relation to their particular school ethos or mission statement. The five clusters of thirty-two values are a starting point for systems, sectors and schools to integrate values into their learning and teaching programs.

In recognising that values underpin and shape the curriculum, the Curriculum Council determined that core shared values should be explicitly articulated within the Curriculum Framework.

An explicit acknowledgement of core shared values is one of the principles of the Curriculum Framework; the integration of these values will enhance the learning opportunities within school communities. Students are assisted in developing these values through discussion and modelling as part of the learning and teaching processes within the school environment.

1. A pursuit of knowledge and a commitment to achievement of potential
2. Self acceptance and respect of self
3. Respect and concern for others and their rights
4. Social and civic responsibility
5. Environmental responsibility

The Curriculum Framework is for all Students in Western Australia

The Curriculum Framework is an inclusive framework for all students in Western Australia. Inclusivity means ensuring that all groups of students are included and valued.

The Curriculum Framework does this by:

• specifying a wide and empowering set of outcomes for students to achieve;
• providing a basis for programs that challenge all students and offer all groups of students opportunities to achieve these outcomes;
• recognising and valuing the different knowledge and experience of different groups of students; and
• taking into account the diversity among children and young adults in Western Australia: for example, in terms of gender, languages, culture, learning capacity, socioeconomic background and geographic location.

A small number of students with specific physical or intellectual disabilities may not be able to participate fully in activities and programs designed to achieve certain outcomes set out in the Curriculum Framework.
Implementing the Curriculum Framework means that when teachers and schools design and develop learning and teaching programs to suit the needs of their students, they must ensure that these programs include learning opportunities and enriching experiences for their students aimed at achieving the outcomes set out in the Framework.

Implementing the mandatory parts of the Curriculum Framework does not mean that students are required to focus on all of the learning outcomes in each year of their schooling. There will be times when particular learning outcomes will need to be emphasised. There will be some periods (for example, in the early childhood and late adolescent years) when some of the learning outcomes are not included in the learning and teaching programs of the students. However, over the entire period of schooling of each student, it is expected that he or she will have been given engaging and enriching learning experiences to achieve the Curriculum Framework’s learning outcomes.

**Catholic Education Commission Policies**

The policies surrounding Catholic Education are endorsed by the Catholic Education Commission of Western Australia (W.A.). These policies, in their formation, include the legislative requirements of government. In addition, a significant consideration is the underpinning requirements of the Bishops of WA. The foundational document for Catholic Education in Western Australia is the Mandate Letter for all involved in Catholic Education 2001-2007 [Catholic Education Office of W.A. (C.E.O.W.A.), 2001]. This document, as promulgated by the Catholic Bishops of Western Australia, is the source document that defines Catholic Education. The Mandate is drawn from a number of educational documents of the Catholic Church and sets the educational context of the Catholic school in WA.

Every educational activity in a school is part of its curriculum. What makes the Catholic school curriculum different is its inclusion of activities that contribute to the development of students as followers of Jesus Christ (C.E.O.W.A., 2001, paragraphs 10, 12, 15 & 35). The curriculum of the Catholic school is drawn from an understanding of evangelisation. Through the evangelising activities of witness and the Ministry of the Word, students are presented with an education that fulfils its primary function. As activities drawn from the Ministry of the Word, primary proclamation, catechesis and Religious Education, the integration of faith, culture and life into the nine learning areas occur.
Distinctive Ethos of the Catholic School

The ethos of the Catholic school community includes everything that contributes to it as a place of evangelisation. In promoting the ethos, the school is promoting Jesus Christ as its foundation – his teachings and the values of his Gospel as the educational basis that permeates the entire curriculum.

There are nine learning areas in the curriculum of Catholic schools in Western Australia, the first being Religious Education (C.E.O.W.A., 2001, para. 45). What will be distinctive of a Catholic school’s curriculum will be the way Gospel Values are integrated into the outcomes and content of the Curriculum Framework by applying several important principles, including the following:

• Centred on the child (para. 46)
• Value of all human learning (para. 47)
• Human quest for truth (para. 48)
• Absolute values (para. 49)
• The Religious Dimension of human learning (para. 50)
• Knowledge offered in a spirit of service (para. 51)
• Knowledge brings responsibility (para. 52)

Catholic school leaders need to uphold these principles in their decision making about curriculum. They also need to ensure that Religious Education is given the prominence that is appropriate to a form of the Ministry of the Word in the Catholic school. As they are helped in these ways, students learn ultimately what is involved in ‘bringing the Good News into all the strata of human society, and through its influence, transforming humanity from within and making it new (Pope John Paul II, 1975, para. 18).
Religious Education Rationale and Definition

Catholic schools are required to provide all students with a systematic Religious Education that reflects the same educational demands, rigour and depth as other learning areas. Religious Education is governed by its own distinctive learning area outcomes and the Religious Education units of work. Religious Education is the first Learning Area in the Catholic school curriculum (C.E.O.W.A., 2001, para. 43; C.E.C.W.A., 2004). The RE program to be taught in the Catholic school is that which is promulgated by the diocesan Bishop. The RE program aims to assist students learn the teachings of the Gospel as proclaimed by the Catholic Church and develop a sense of the nature of Christianity and how Christians are trying to live their lives (C.E.C.W.A., 2004).

Religious Education is a learning area which focuses on knowledge and understanding of the Gospel as it is handed on by the Catholic Church. The underpinning principles of RE include its complementary nature to the catechesis that is offered by the family, school and parish. It acknowledges the different stages of faith development of students and requires the teachers of RE to be committed Catholics who give active Christian witness to Catholic beliefs.

The procedural requirements for the teaching of RE includes:

- priority in planning, staffing and resourcing
- mandatory minimum teaching time:
  - PP -1  15 minutes per day
  - Yr 2 -7  30 minutes per day
  - Yr 8 -10  160 minutes per week
  - Yr 11-12  200 minutes per week
- Planned catechesis time that includes liturgies and Christian service learning are not part of the allocated time for RE
- Provision of at least 60 minutes per week averaged over a particular year level's academic year of catechesis experiences.
- The RE program is implemented with reference to the CECWA Policy Statement on Curriculum.
- Teachers of RE have the necessary accreditation stipulated by the CECWA Policy Statement Accreditation
- Appropriate professional development be available for teachers or RE
Religious Education Learning Outcomes

The outcomes in the RE learning area are interrelated and describe learning that occurs from kindergarten to Year 12. Learning and teaching programs should allow students to learn and achieve essential knowledge, understandings, values and skills in an integrated manner.

There are five outcomes which provide a framework to the RE curriculum. Students achieve the outcomes of the RE Learning Area by following the RE program mandated by the Bishops of WA.

Religious Education Learning Outcomes

1. Discovering God – students understand that people come to discover God through experiences in creation.
2. Drawing on Human Experiences – students understand the content of the Christian message and its significance by relating it to examples drawn from human experience.
3. Knowing Jesus – students know the person of Jesus, the model for living out the Christian mission in the world.
4. Living like Jesus – students understand that Catholics are empowered to live like Jesus the Saviour as they draw on the power of God’s Spirit.
5. Catholic Practices – students demonstrate the skills necessary in order to read and apply Scripture to life and to participate in Catholic rituals and prayer.

The Religious Education Program K -12 is comprised of 83 units of work. Primary aged children, starting from pre-primary to Year 7, complete eight units of work per year, yielding 64 units covered formally in class. Kindergarten aged children do not have formal lessons, however, teachers utilise the Guidelines for Kindergarten Religious Education. Year 8 – 11 have four units presented in each year, with Year 12 completing three units.

What is mandated in the RE program include:

• The Key understandings
• The Learning Points
• The order in which these Learning Points are presented
Religious Education Progress Maps and Reporting

Through ongoing assessment, student progress is monitored. The RE Progress Maps describe the nature of achievement as students develop the outcomes. For each of the RE Learning Area outcomes, descriptions have been developed for students achieving at Foundation and then at eight levels of achievement. The descriptions at each level are based on a developmental continuum of how students demonstrate their knowledge, skills, understandings, values and attitudes in increasingly challenging contexts.

The Religious Education Units are the means by which the RE Outcomes are achieved. They provide the context and the content for achieving the outcomes. They are an effective basis for monitoring and reporting to parents.

Each outcome is reported formally twice a year in semester reports. The reporting schedule is the same as the other eight learning areas.

Curriculum Framework and Religious Education

Catholic schools are required to provide all students with a systematic religious education that reflects the same educational demands, rigour and depth as other learning areas. Religious Education in WA aims to parallel the outcomes focus of the Curriculum Framework, however, the content and process of teaching Religious Education is that which is promulgated by the Bishops of WA.

The Curriculum supports the other learning areas have also been developed for Religious Education. These documents are formatted and presented in the same way as other curriculum documents. They seek to support the teacher in the provision of quality educational experiences for students.

The curriculum issues for the RE Learning Area are the same issues as other learning areas. These include:

- Familiarity with the outcomes, Assessment, Understanding ‘levelness’ Moderation and Reporting

REFERENCES


Chapter Six

Tasmania
The Archdiocese of Hobart

As in all other states, curriculum in Tasmania has been and is undergoing significant change over the last decade. Educators have grappled with the challenges of developing a philosophy of education that responds to the needs of students in the twenty-first century and have been working on a curriculum framework that enables teachers to teach towards that goal. The Catholic Education Office in the Archdiocese of Hobart has aligned itself with the philosophy of the Essential Learnings Framework (ELs). The development of our first Tasmanian Curriculum Framework for Religious Education: Good News for Living (2005) is aligned with ELs in the articulation of particular values in its content (pp 84-88) and in planning for learning and teaching (pp 69-73).

This chapter outlines what has been evolving in this State in recent years in education and shows how Religious Education has responded to the curriculum changes.

The Development of the Essential Learnings Framework

The Essential Learnings Framework has been in development since the late 1990s and the first Framework was published in 2000. It involved wide community consultation between educators at all levels and also parents. The resulting Framework One described a curriculum for learners from birth to sixteen years. The philosophy of learning and teaching outlined the essential values and purposes of education necessary for young people today. It asked two questions: What are the core values we want our young people to acquire? What is the core purpose of education? Not the acquisition of empty facts, but the capacity to live life fully (Framework 1 and 2 Overview).

The philosophy underpinning Essential Learnings is strongly interdisciplinary, recognising that learning does not occur in isolation. At the heart of Essential Learnings is the development of the capacity to think deeply, using higher order thinking skills, and to develop the capacity to communicate at a sophisticated level. The goal of learning was identified in the formation of young people who are well developed personally and socially and who can engage effectively with the issues that affect the global community. The document identifies what is essential about learning: Thinking, Communicating, Personal Futures, Social Responsibility and World Futures.

Framework One provides a philosophy of assessment founded on a set of beliefs about effective learning:

- Learning is profoundly influenced by social relationships
- Humans want to learn
- Learning is an innate and lifelong process
- Learning is a process of making meaning of the world
- Learners are unique and they determine their own learning
- Learning depends on being able to connect prior knowledge, perceptions or patterns of experience to new experience or new information and contexts
• Learning is profoundly influenced by social relationships
• Learning is significantly affected by emotions
• Self-concept directly affects motivation and learning
• Learning is more effective when information is embedded in purposeful and meaningful experiences
• Learning occurs all the time and part of what is learned is understanding about context
• Learning is enhanced by learners being aware of how thinking and learning occur. Metacognition gives learners increased control over their learning
• Learning is demonstrated when learners can apply their understandings in new situations in flexible and thought-provoking ways
• Learning is complex and non-linear.

The implications of this set of beliefs are that assessment is necessary for learning to identify prior understandings; assessment is also necessary as learning to monitor progress in the learning sequence; and, assessment of learning as the learning sequence concludes or leads to further learning. The Framework outlines the variety of ways to assess and places it firmly at the core of learning and the ongoing development of the young person, recognising the different purposes of assessment depending on its place in the learning and teaching sequence as a whole (Framework One, pp 41-49).

Subsequent to the publication of Framework One, in 2003, Framework Two and an Introduction to the Outcomes and Standards were published. Framework Two discussed the most effective environments for effective learning. The Introduction to the Outcomes and Standards gives guidance to teachers to enable them to construct a curriculum by identifying expected outcomes and standards or levels of achievement expected at particular stages in the student’s development.
Essential Learnings Outcomes and Standards

In the Essential Learnings Framework there are five Essential Learnings. Within each Essential Learning is a series of Key Elements. These total eighteen. Outcomes and standards were written for each of these key elements. There are five standards and these Standards refer to students up to sixteen years of age. Expectations of young students prior to Standard One are also outlined. The standards describe what learning can be expected and they are written as goals for learning. The teacher is also provided with “Performance guidelines” or descriptors to show how learning can be identified (Introduction to the Outcomes and Standards, pp 2-4).

Challenges to the Essential Learnings Framework: The Advent of the “Tasmanian Curriculum”

The Tasmanian Essential Learnings Framework Project (2000-2005) at its best is an example of community collaboration in the development of an interdisciplinary approach to education which is based on a philosophy of education which had as its goal the integrated development of young person for the 21st century.

In the light of developments at a National level, particularly with regard to reporting to parents, the language and the organization of content within the Framework has had to change. The issue is around what is understood as interdisciplinary education and what must be explicitly taught and reported on as “essential for learning”. Following a State election early in 2006, the new Tasmanian Minister for Education has directed that Curriculum in Tasmania should be “refined”. His media release of August 2006 stated that in spite of the positive gains in curriculum development, the goal now is “a curriculum framework that is simpler to understand, clearer for parents and the community in the language it uses and more manageable for teachers to implement.” In the light of this, the new evolving “Tasmanian Curriculum” will continue to be based on the identified community values and shared purposes whilst focusing on the central goals for students. The learning and teaching principles also remain. However the new curriculum will be more explicit in the traditional subject areas. It will have a scope and sequence and therefore a defined syllabus and a simpler, more manageable, approach to assessment. Standards will be revised to match the new structure.
**The Essential Learnings Framework and Good News for Living**

*Good News for Living*, the first Curriculum Framework for Religious Education of Students in the Archdiocese of Hobart was launched in 2005. In its development, it was influenced by the Essential Learning Framework in both the underpinning philosophy of education and in the curriculum structure, which is named in the document as the Curriculum Dimension of RE. A third significant area of influence was the learning and teaching sequence. In all three of these areas, what was being developed through Essential Learnings as good curriculum in general was also very true for Religious Education. The goals of education and the goals of Catholic Education complemented one another.

In the production of *Good News for Living*, there was also a deliberate and successful attempt to align the content and curriculum organisers of ELs to the Doctrinal concepts and values expected within a Curriculum Framework for Religious Education. It is in this area that the most significant curriculum development will evolve both in the Catholic and government sectors over the next few years.

**The Way Forward: The Development of Curriculum Standards for Religious Education in the Archdiocese of Hobart.**

*Good News for Living* is currently in a trialling phase. This phase involves the learning and teaching materials provided. These are named as *Resource Banks*. In other places these are known as *Unit Outlines*. The goals of this trialling phase are:

- To enable teachers to use the curriculum materials provided and to be assisted in this with appropriate professional learning in the workplace
- To provide feedback to the system on the most useful aspects of the learning and teaching materials and to redevelop these to reflect quality practice in the Religious Education of students
- To critique the student learning goals currently provided in the learning and teaching materials as appropriate for students and in line with the expected concepts skills attitudes and values of the content frameworks as they stand in Section Five of *Good News for Living*
- To ensure that these learning and teaching goals link directly with the expected content based on the Catechism of the Catholic Church and at the same time reflect the learning capacity of students at their stage of development
- To explore authentic articulation of holistic learning goals that aim for deep reflective thinking around the content and substance of religious understandings
- To develop a framework of learning goals (standards) drawn from the learning and teaching of RE in the classroom and to provide teachers with an appropriate rubric for the effective assessment of Religious Education.
CONCLUSION

We have seen recently how the political forces are a powerful influence on what is taught in schools, how that content is organised and also how it is taught. The Tasmanian experience shows that whilst Religious Education must complement the general curriculum, especially when it involves a life-giving approach to education for the whole person, it is important to identify the unique features of RE that cannot be compromised. Amongst these features are the foundational principles that Religious Education is about enabling students to make religious meaning from the experiences of life.

Curriculum developers in RE, whilst wise in aligning with curriculum innovations from the government sector, must still maintain an independence that allows religious educators to work towards RE that aims at the deepest and broadest understandings of faith and life. The question is: Does a particular curriculum innovation really add to what we know is good learning and teaching in RE? In Tasmania, the Essential Learnings philosophy strongly supports the aims of the RE Curriculum: holistic learning for life.

Religious Education in Tasmania will continue to explore questions about authentic assessment in Religious Education and by drawing on the expertise of classroom teachers, work towards the development of a Religious Education Standards Framework. As we continue to trial *Good News for Living* the goal of Project is to enable students to have access to, and to respond to the content of Religious Education through rich and active learning and teaching processes. Whilst recognising that the development of faith and spirituality are intangible elements in the Religious Education curriculum, a Standards Framework in RE will enable teachers to articulate learning goals that aim towards deep learning through the RE program i.e. learning that involves higher order thinking skills to develop knowledge, skills, attitudes and values in the field of Religious Education. The provision of a rich, educationally sound and challenging learning environment for RE is within the capacity of Religious Educators and a Standards Framework will assist teachers to provide for a challenging and stimulating learning environment.

REFERENCES


Chapter Seven

Queensland
Queensland

Organisation and Management:

The organization of curriculum in Queensland has had an interesting evolution over the last ten years. There were a number of curriculum bodies prior to the establishment of the Queensland Studies Authority (QSA) as the independent Statutory Authority that supports the school providers in Queensland with syllabus development and the organization of assessment in senior schooling. These former bodies included the Board of Senior Secondary School Studies (BSSSS) which had responsibility for credentialing of students upon their completion of Year 12; the Tertiary Entrance Procedure Authority (TEPA) that assisted in establishing the processes through which student information was passed on to the Universities following the completion of the Year 11 and 12 courses of study; and the Queensland School Curriculum Council (QSCC) which developed the years 1 – 10 key learning area syllabuses and preschool guidelines.

The Queensland Studies Authority was established in 2002 after a period of consultation with key stakeholders in Queensland. It merged the three former bodies. It is, as stated above, an independent statutory authority which is responsible for the development of syllabuses. Its current suite of syllabuses includes:

- Early Years Curriculum Guidelines to assist with the implementation of the preparatory year in Queensland in 2007
- Years 1 to 10 Key Learning Areas syllabuses.
- Senior subject syllabuses for years 11 and 12. The QSA manages the credentialing the range of pathways that students in their senior years undertake, including vocational education and training options.

The QSA also has the responsibility for managing the processes surrounding the Early Years Diagnostic Net, the Years 3, 5 and 7 tests, the Moderation quality control surrounding school based assessment processes at Years 11 and 12, and the external Core Skills test undertaken by Yr 12 students seeking tertiary entrance credentialing.

It was hoped that the emergence of the QSA would see greater connection between the Years 1–10 Key Learning Area syllabuses, which focus on learning outcomes and reflect a constructivist approach to learning, and the senior subject syllabuses, which are criterion based. Greater connectivity is gradually occurring, although too slowly for many curriculum leaders in the Catholic sector. An establishing Parliamentary Act also enabled the QSA to accredit syllabuses from other providers or other jurisdictions provided they are of a similar standard to Queensland syllabuses.
Continual Curriculum Reform:

Queensland, like other States and Territories in Australia, has undergone continual curriculum reform throughout the 1990’s and in the first part of this decade. For example, two major reforms that occurred in the early 1990’s were the Hughes and Wiltshire reports. The latter led the government to establish the QSCC to take responsibility for the Years 1 – 10 Syllabuses and focused the BSSSS upon senior schooling. Other examples include the Education and Training Reforms for the Future (ETRF) White Paper in 2002 which focused upon:

• Improving the early and middle phases of schooling
• Ensuring Year 10 completion and transition to a Senior Phase of Learning
• Reshaping senior
• Providing more options and flexibility for young people
• Giving more support to young people
• Building new community partnerships.

None of the above has been insubstantial, especially the continual impact upon teachers and those responsible for the ongoing professional learning of teachers. These reforms have been led by successive state governments. In more recent times the increasing Commonwealth accountability requirements in relation to school and student reporting, some of which parallels the state and some which is different, is adding to the complexity of leading Queensland schooling systems and schools.

Syllabus implementation:

The implementation of the 1-10 Key Learning Area syllabuses has occurred over an eight year period and has been a highly collaborative process that has engaged schools and teachers. This collaborative process has been a strength but the length of time since the introduction of the first syllabus, Health and Physical Education, and the last syllabus, a revised trial English syllabus, has presented many challenges for schooling providers and for teachers. Not the least of these has been the need to understand and implement outcomes orientated assessment and reporting strategies and processes, with little initial support from the former statutory authority of the time and mixed messages emanating from the state education bureaucracy. There has also been some criticism of some variation in the quality of some outcomes and of some lack of consistency in the educational standard of outcomes across syllabuses. This can be attributed to the length of time in the development process. There is, however, an excellent learning overview about the levels of learning and this has been well embraced by diocesan education leaders.
The judging of “expected level of achievement” is made in alignment with the levels of the KLA syllabuses as they “typically relate to year levels.” (QSA English Years 1-10 Syllabus, p9)

~ Level 1 typically aligns with the middle of Year 2
~ Level 2 typically aligns with the end of Year 3
~ Level 3 typically aligns with the end of Year 5
~ Level 4 typically aligns with the end of Year 7
~ Level 5 typically aligns with the middle of Year 9
~ Level 6 typically aligns with the end of Year 10

However, the different orientations of syllabus design at Years 11 and 12 and the well established and well supported assessment and reporting processes in these senior years has posed challenges to secondary schools as they engaged with the 1-10 Key Learning Area syllabuses. Many Catholic diocesan secondary schools and some religious Institute schools are somewhere along the journey to implementing a consistent understanding of the outcomes syllabuses below Year 11. Other, mostly Religious Institute Catholic secondary schools but not entirely, show little evidence of engagement.

The senior subject syllabuses have been marked by a well managed and strategic renewal process. The quality assurance processes that overview the approval of school programs, the moderation of student work and the rigour of the external Core Skills Test (QCS) have a thirty year history in Queensland.

Moderation is the set of processes designed and implemented by the Queensland Studies Authority (QSA) to:

• provide comparability in the system of school-based assessment
• form the basis for valid and reliable assessment in senior secondary schools
• involve the QSA and schools in cooperation and in partnership
• maintain the quality of school-based assessment and the credibility, validity and acceptability of QSA certificates.ii

The system of moderation is based on a close partnership between the QSA and the schools. The QSA contributes the design, operation and servicing of the structures that allow
the system to operate. It accepts the responsibility for training the people who serve on review panels to review school work programs and student results. On their part, schools contribute the services of teachers as review panellists, and are responsible for developing and implementing work programs in line with syllabuses, and for assessing students’ work against statewide standards. They collect the student work samples and data necessary for their students to receive Senior Certificates.

The various phases of the moderation process are:

1. approval of work programs
2. monitoring of Year 11 standards
3. verification of Year 12 standards
4. approval of Year 12 results
5. random sampling

The QCS Test is a cross-curriculum test which assesses achievement in the 49 common curriculum elements covered by students across their senior subjects. The 49 common elements are the threads of the Queensland senior curriculum. These elements are called Common Curriculum Elements.

A recent development has been the introduction of a Queensland Certificate of Education (QCE) that will be a broad-based school qualification awarded to young people who have achieved a significant amount of learning at a set standard and have met certain literacy and numeracy requirements.

The QCE is to be a passport for students to move confidently from school to work, training, and further education. Since 2006, students in Year 10 are working towards the Queensland Certificate of Education. It will replace the Senior Certificate for these young people. The first QCEs will be awarded to students in 2008 achieving 20 credits in the required pattern at the required standard, and meeting the literacy and numeracy requirements.

Current Reforms:

There are currently, at the time of writing, two items on the immediate agenda for providers of schooling in Queensland. These include the review of the Senior Syllabuses and the Queensland Curriculum Assessment and Reporting Framework (QCAR). The former process has been requested from schools for some time due to the lack of connection between other syllabuses and the abundance of subjects for student choice at Years 11 and 12. Recent legislative reform has also “opened up” the range of pathways for students at the senior level. Queensland has undertaken a leading role in the vocational education and training opportunities for students within their final two years of schooling.

QCAR is a recent emergence that centres on establishing Essentials for Learning and Standards for Learning. After a period of drafting and consultation the Essentials and Standards were finalised and published in December 2007.
The (QCAR) Framework is to define what Queensland school students should learn, how they are assessed, and how schools report student achievement. The Framework will define essential learnings, standards, assessment strategies and reporting requirements in Years 1–10.

The QCAR Framework consists of:

- Essential Learnings and Standards
- Tools and strategies for improving assessment practices and comparability
- A reporting framework.

The QSA and the three school sectors (state, Catholic and independent) worked with schools to develop and refine the elements of QCAR. This was not always an easy exercise given the tight timelines and the fact that those schools that became part of the trial process also had to engage in the normal cut and thrust of school life. We remain grateful to the school communities in Queensland who offered to be trial or partner schools.

The Catholic sector, like other sectors, was engaged in the processes of dialogue and development through the auspices of the QSA that has carriage of this process on behalf of the schooling community in Queensland. There was debate about what was initially nominated as Essentials and what was initially drafted as Standards. Staff members in the QSA were required to work hard to establish consensus about these essentials and standards across Years 1-10 within tight timelines and expectations of the government.

One of the biggest discussions remains about how the draft Essentials and draft Standards relate to the current syllabus documents and their refinement. There remains a need for greater clarification about how these essentials and standards will take their place in relation to the syllabus redesign that is to occur beyond 2008. The Catholic sector is monitoring both the review of the senior syllabuses and the redesign of 1-10 syllabuses beyond 2008. Some within the sector have expressed concern about the manner in which the Essentials and Standards might impact inauspiciously upon the redesign and implementation of new syllabuses. The QCAR timeline remains a challenge as presented on the next page.
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<tr>
<td><strong>Essentials and Standards</strong></td>
<td>Identified and described Essential Learnings and specify Standards</td>
<td>Developed and refined Essential Learnings and Standards with identified partner and trial schools</td>
<td>Providing draft of Essential Learnings and Standards for open trial and</td>
<td>Publish and disseminate final version of Essential Learnings and Standards</td>
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<td><strong>Assessment</strong></td>
<td>Developed, collected and refined items and resources for Assessment Bank</td>
<td>Working with selected schools and teachers to develop and refine further tools and resources</td>
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<td>Full suite of P-12 curriculum framework is available, including Essential Learnings, Standards and assessment resources and tools</td>
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<td>Developed model of statewide assessment for Years 4, 6 and 9</td>
<td>Trialled statewide assessment model in English and Maths for Years 4 and 9</td>
<td>Developing and refining quality assurance processes for assessment tasks</td>
<td>Trial assessment tools and processes and data management procedures</td>
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<td><strong>Reporting framework</strong></td>
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<td>Publish and disseminate reporting framework</td>
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**SUPPORT PROVIDED BY QSA**

Several elements of the QCAR agenda are supported and endorsed by the Catholic Education sector. This is expressed in a Position Paper of the Queensland Catholic Education Commission (QCEC) of June 30, 2006. These include:

- **Uncluttering of syllabuses** *(uncluttering of the curriculum is a school responsibility)*
- **The maintenance of a P-10 learning continuum, and the monitoring of student learning progress along this continuum**
- **The use of the KLA syllabuses as the primary source of curriculum intent**
- **Refined clarity and succinctness of syllabus content and requirements**
- **Strengthening of a healthy climate of assessment based on teacher professional judgement**
- **Learner centred focus assisting students to develop the complex abilities needed to demonstrate characteristics of lifelong learning and the capacities needed to shape tomorrow’s world.**
The QCEC also argued for three factors that were sees as non-negotiable:

A full and rich curriculum

The purposes of Catholic schooling are to develop the whole person – spiritually, academically, physically, emotionally. This requires a full and rich curriculum.

An outcomes philosophy

Catholic systemic authorities explicitly support an outcomes philosophy across Years P-10 and beliefs about learners and learning based on this approach. While acknowledging that there is work to be done in refining the outcomes frameworks in the existing syllabuses and addressing discontinuities and disconnections, we remain committed to the underlying philosophy.

Catholic values and principles

Each element of the QCAR project must be able to be consistent with and accommodated within the values and beliefs of Catholic education (as well as those of the other key sectors). For the Catholic sector, these include dignity of each person, a positive view of and commitment to teacher professionalism, a climate of genuine participation and collaboration, right relationships and appropriate levels of responsibility.

The Catholic sector is also concerned that the energy and resourcing that it has placed, particularly by diocesan authorities, into consistency of teacher judgement (CTJ) processes is respected when it comes to comparable assessment tasks. It continues to argue that an option that is inclusive of CTJ remains and that there not be reductionism that insists upon the only option being common assessment tasks undertaken by all. This is still being worked through.

The implementation of Queensland Syllabuses is very much left to the education authorities within the State. The Catholic Diocesan Authorities have embraced the Queensland Studies Authorities 1-10 Syllabuses and implemented them through strategic processes throughout their respective schools. The Religious Institutes vary in the manner in which they have implemented all aspects of all syllabuses. Some would be closely aligned with diocesan developments and processes for implementation whereas others would work differently.

Education Queensland has not been as proactive in implementing the 1-10 Syllabuses in such an organized manner. It has also engaged in other valuable curriculum projects such as New Basics and other research projects such as Productive Pedagogies. Unlike the implementation of the senior syllabuses, it is fair to say that the implementation of the 1 – 10 syllabuses has been uneven across Queensland, hence one reason for the politically driven QCAR process.
Learning Frameworks:

Many of the dioceses in Queensland and some Religious Institutes have, since 2001, introduced Learning Frameworks to assist their respective schooling communities implement an outcomes approach to education that aligns with a Catholic philosophy of education. The Archdiocese of Brisbane Learning Framework (LF), which is the foundational one, is presented here.

![Learning Framework Diagram](image)

The LF presents an overall goal for learning that is closely aligned with the gospel imperative to be actively engaged in working to bring the reign of God into our midst.

You will also note the LF contains the following: A section on Beliefs and a section on Values. These are unpacked in an electronic version of the LF and link to background materials that can be used to assist school communities engage. The middle section contains Roles for Lifelong Learning (RLL). Their genesis was in the 1-10 KLA syllabuses of the QSA and a development of the attributes for life long learning in those documents.

These RLL have assisted school communities to embrace the “big ideas” about the purposes of schooling. They have been well received by parent groups and employers as pointers of expectations from the schooling process. They evidence the skills required of C21st learners. Schools generally use the RLL to plan for and organise the learning opportunities for students. Some schools have so embraced the RLL that they use them as in their formal reporting processes to parents.
Consistency of Teacher Judgement:

One of the other aspects of curriculum implementation which has been strong in the Catholic sector in Queensland, particularly within the Archdiocese of Brisbane, is the use of Consistency of Teacher Judgement (CTJ). This formal process has been in place for over ten years and supports and encourages schools to establish processes whereby teachers within and across schools gather regularly to reflect on their standards of assessment and reporting of student work. This has been used in a number of Key Learning Areas over the past decade and particularly so in Religious Education when the Religious Education Guidelines and their support materials were implemented. The CTJ process has encouraged and enabled a higher level of professionalism among teachers in the judgements that they assigned student work and in the manner in which they evaluate and describe student performance.

Religious Education in Catholic schools in Queensland:

In 1997 the Archdiocese of Brisbane produced Religious Education Guidelines and support materials. They replaced earlier guidelines and were developed in a collaborative process. The other dioceses of Queensland also participated in reviewing aspects of the Brisbane developments. All dioceses in Queensland now use the Brisbane Religious Education Guidelines and the associated support materials.

The 1997 materials consist of three source documents: a Statement on Religious Education, a Syllabus Document, and a Profile Document. These were based upon the National Statements developed by the Curriculum Corporation in the early 1990’s. A staff member of the Corporation acted as an external consultant to the project writers. 52 Units of work were also published to assist schools and teachers apply the curriculum orientation of the Guidelines.

The Statement clarifies the purposes of Religious Education and establishes that these Guidelines are orientated primarily to the classroom teaching of religion. Thus they are curriculum documents to assist the development of school programs and classroom teaching practices. The Syllabus is based upon the Catechism of the Catholic Church and is ordered around four strands: Beliefs, Scripture, Celebration and Prayer, and Morality. The Profile provided samples of student work and assessment guidance.

The Religious Education Guidelines were written prior to the publication of the former Queensland School Curriculum Council (now QSA) 1 – 10 Syllabuses. As these syllabuses emerged the Archdiocese developed, with the formal support of some QSA staff, a reworked document the Religious Education Years 1–10 Learning Outcomes and supporting materials that include 41 Religious Education Modules. The Religious Education Years 1–10 Learning Outcomes source book was published in 2003 to align better with other Key Learning Area syllabuses. The accompanying Religious Education Modules were published over an eighteen month period beginning in 2003. These combined resources replaced the Profile document and the units of work that were published in 1997.

Teachers in Catholic schools across Queensland have found these above materials to be very accessible as they mirror and advance the approach of the other Key Learning Areas syllabuses and provide consistency in application of the six levels of learning of the typicality framework of the QSA 1-10 Syllabuses.
At Years 11 and 12 most Catholic schools, aligned with the RE Guidelines Syllabus document, would primarily use the QSA Study of Religion Syllabus. Some also use the Religion and Ethics Syllabus or have another approved school based programs that are based upon Catholic Religious Education orientations. We are currently monitoring carefully the redevelopment of the Senior Syllabus structure, the placing of Study of Religion within that, and the reshaping of the Syllabus itself.

The Preparatory Year was formally introduced into Queensland in 2007 after several years of trialing. Draft Religious Education Curriculum Guidelines for the Early Years were developed to support the trial. In mid 2007 the finalised guidelines were published in the Archdiocese and made available to the country dioceses. There was collaboration with trial schools in the development of the Brisbane Archdiocese Religious Education Early Years Curriculum Guidelines and the accompanying teacher resource materials. These materials will assist teachers to further their understanding of the QSA’s Early Years Curriculum Guidelines and align well with its five early learning areas.

One of the key observations that is readily made about the Archdiocese of Brisbane Religious Education materials is that they have assisted classroom teachers to engage better with the other Key Learning Area Syllabuses. This is especially so in the primary years where teachers often plan “connected units” or themes of work. Many communities would use the Religious Education materials as the “host KLA” for such activities. Materials have been made available in both paper and digital form to assist unit planning and general usefulness to teachers.

Conclusion:

Queensland has a long history of collaborative syllabus development and implementation, and of school based assessment in the senior years. It has also benefited from well established moderation and teacher consistency of judgement practices.

Religious Education has built upon these practices and has also been able to build strategically upon the educational orientation of the state syllabuses, and also assist in the advancement of this orientation.

As a state we are in many ways “over-reformed” in curriculum directions. At times we suffer from a predilection of governments of both state and commonwealth persuasions to interfere with or alter expectations of schooling without adequately appreciating what is currently occurring and the journey to date. Any change in direction takes time to introduce systematically and comprehensively. Teachers don’t like disposing of what has worked well.

Religious Education is clearly established in Queensland Catholic schools as a Key Learning Area that is on a par academically with other subject areas. The refinement of QCAR agenda and implications for Religious Education that flow from defining the Essentials and Standards are yet to be determined. The syllabus redesign to occur from 2008 onwards also poses questions about what may need to occur with the current Religious Education source materials and teacher support resources.

To assist the ‘soul’ of education, Brisbane Catholic Education will publish in 2008 Guidelines for the Religious Life of the School. Materials were in consultation phase in the latter part of 2007 with the necessary Archdiocesan authorisation processes and editing processes to be finalised for publication in September 2008. These resources will assist school communities to
engage with what is described as four domains: religious identity and culture; evangelisation and faith formation; prayer and worship; social action and justice. They will complement the decade of work that has been focused upon the classroom teaching component of Religious Education and further assist learners and teachers with the dual aspects of Religious Education: teaching people religion and teaching people to be religious in a particular way. x

The journey is never ending.

References


v  ibid


Chapter Eight

Victoria
Victoria

Introduction

The Religious Education curriculum documents developed in Victorian dioceses in recent years have been shaped and framed in response to the changing circumstances of the students attending Catholic schools and the requirements and policy of each diocese as well as to the curriculum needs of schools. While the requirements and foci of the four dioceses have varied, the development of the Victorian Essential Learning Standards have provided an opportunity for Religious Education curricula to be developed and implemented in a new and exciting way.

The Victorian Essential Learning Standards

The Victorian Essential Learning Standards (VELS) provide a holistic approach to curriculum and assessment from Prep to Year 10 for all Victorian schools. The VELS outline what is essential for students to learn and develop during different stages of their schooling. It is designed to encourage a deep understanding of essential knowledge, skills and behaviours in a range of learning areas.

The underlying purpose of the VELS is to equip students with capacities to:

• Manage themselves and relations with others
• Understand the world and
• Act effectively in that world

The VELS is underpinned by a clear set of educational principles which are:

Learning for all - all students can learn given sufficient time and space, and that good schools and good teaching make a positive difference to student outcomes

Pursuit of excellence - seeking to accomplish something noteworthy and admirable individually and collectively and performing at one’s best

Engagement and effort - acknowledging that student ability is only one factor in achievement and that if students work hard and make an effort, they improve

Respect for evidence - seeking understanding and truth through structures inquiry and the application of evidence to test and question beliefs

Openness of mind - being willing to consider a range of different views and consider different ways in which evidence is perceived and solutions can be reached

The VELS are set in three interwoven and interconnected strands. These are:

• physical, personal and social skills such as being active and healthy, developing self confidence, managing personal learning and working with others
• knowledge and understanding from the key discipline areas of English, Science, Mathematics, The Humanities, Languages and The Arts
• other essential skills that apply across curriculum areas such as thinking, design, problem solving, communicating, and using information and communications technology
The VELS are represented by the symbol of the triple helix

The interwoven triple helix image represents the weaving of knowledge, skills and behaviours that are perceived as essential for students to move beyond the compulsory years of schooling into further education, work and life.

**Domains and Dimensions of Learning**

Each of the three strands within the VELS further divides into particular *domains* of learning with each domain having a specific number of *dimensions*. For example, English is located in the Disciplined-based learning Strand. Within the English domain there are three dimensions: *Reading, Writing, Speaking and Listening*.

The domains in each of the three strands comprise two interrelated elements; learning focus statements; and standards.

**Learning focus statements**

At each level of schooling a learning focus statement has been written to focus teachers on the learning that needs to occur if students are to progress through the various dimensions of the domain and achieve the standards that apply at that level.

**Standards**

Where appropriate level standards have been set to which students aspire. These standards apply across the state in the various domains and it is against these that teachers will report to parents.
The relationship between learning focus statements and the standards

Learning focus statements are provided for each domain at all six levels and are broadly associated with two years of learning and teaching (see Table 1). The standards set in each six levels of schooling are challenging and developmentally appropriate. The standards ensure that students are constantly challenged in their learning. VELS is used to plan student learning and assess student progress. They also provide a clear basis for reporting to parents.

### VELS Levels of Schooling

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level 1</th>
<th>Prep</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Level 2</td>
<td>Years 1 and 2</td>
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<td>Level 3</td>
<td>Years 3 and 4</td>
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<td>Level 4</td>
<td>Years 5 and 6</td>
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<td>Level 5</td>
<td>Years 7 and 8</td>
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<tr>
<td>Level 6</td>
<td>Years 9 and 10</td>
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### Years of Schooling

- Primary school
- Secondary school

School based curriculum design

The VELS allow schools to develop innovative programs designed to meet local needs. Schools have flexibility in and ownership of the scope and delivery of curriculum. This means, in practice, that there are many different ways in which the VELS is being implemented in Catholic schools.

The VELS incorporates a multi-domain approach. The domains within the work are developed through the interweaving of a number of domains. A science subject at Level 5 could include domains such as Interpersonal Development, Civics and Citizenship, Science, Information and Communications Technology and Thinking Processes. A unit of work, for example, on Cultural groups in Australia at Level 3 could incorporate domains such as, Personal Learning, Interpersonal Development, the Arts and Communication.

As the VELS encourages flexible curriculum design, an important stage in implementing and reviewing the curriculum, is a whole school curriculum plan. Each school develops its own plan so that all domains are covered appropriately.
Assessment

The VELS is supported by a set of assessment principles:

• The primary purpose of assessment is to improve student performance
• Assessment should be based on an understanding of how students learn
• Assessment should be an integral component of course design and not something to add afterwards
• Good assessment provides useful information to report credibly to parents on student achievement
• Good assessment requires clarity of purpose, goals, standards and criteria
• Good assessment requires a variety of measures
• Assessment methods used should be valid, reliable and consistent
• Assessment for improved performance involves feedback and reflection.

Assessment is aligned to the elements of the standards which are the focus of the unit of work. Teachers are encouraged to clearly define the purpose of an assessment task and the criteria or ways in which it will be assessed. Assessment tasks can be designed to assess a single or multiple numbers of domains and dimensions.

Assessment and Reporting

Schools in Victoria are required to meet Commonwealth Government Compliance requirements in relation to reporting.

VELS and Catholic Education in Victoria

Catholic Schools in Victoria are in the process of adopting VELS as the framework for learning and teaching in the compulsory years of schooling. Such an integrated approach to learning and teaching sits comfortably with a Catholic approach to learning and teaching which involves the formation of the whole person in all his or her dimensions. The Church has always promoted an education which includes an integration of faith and life, a marriage of faith and reason and a promotion of the whole person, body, mind and spirit. Therefore the Catholic Education system in Victoria has adopted a planned approach for the full implementation of the VELS by 2008.

In the implementation of VELS, each Catholic school establishes a timeline in which the domains of the VELS are introduced into the student learning program. This staged implementation does have to take into account the Commonwealth Reporting Compliance Requirements for each domain.
Religious Education in Victoria and VELS

The Catholic Education Offices in each of the Victorian dioceses have undertaken the development of curriculum documents to facilitate teaching and learning in Religious Education that takes advantage of the possibilities provided by the introduction of VELS. At the same time the development of these materials has been undertaken in line with the requirements of each Diocese and of the local Ordinary.

Dimensions of Religious Education

The Religious Education framework documents of all Victorian dioceses draw upon the VELS in attempting to develop an approach to Religious Education that is faithful to the requirements of each diocese and is consistent with the pedagogical approach adopted through VELS. The domain of Religious Education is situated within the discipline-based learning strand. At the same time it contains elements of the Physical, Personal and Social Learning Strand as well as of the Interdisciplinary Learning Strand. The domain contains three dimensions:

(i) religious knowledge and understanding
This dimension develops the knowledge and understanding of the key practices and beliefs of Christian communities both past and present.

(ii) reasoning and responding
This dimension focuses on the development of particular ways of thinking and acting that arise out of Christian knowledge and understanding. The combination of knowledge and reasoning will enable students to respond to Catholic tradition and its call to contribute to the building of the reign of God.

(iii) personal and communal engagement
This dimension focuses on the nurturing of the spiritual life, the importance of belonging to the faith community and engagement in community service. It is within this dimension that the Religious Education curriculum extends beyond the classroom to include retreats, the sacramental life of the Church, community service, leadership formation and contribution to civic and faith communities.

All four dioceses have adopted the use of these dimensions as part of the domain of Religious Education in describing the learning foci and standards for each VELS level, in developing assessment tasks and in developing reports for parents. This approach not only allows schools to tailor the curriculum to local needs, it accommodates and supports a more comprehensive approach to developing engaging Religious Education programs, to assessment and reporting and to integrating Religious Education with other domains of learning.
Assessment

As identified by VELS, the primary purpose of assessment is to assist in better teaching and learning. It is critically important in the cycle of teaching and learning that students can demonstrate what they have learnt. In addition teachers are required to demonstrate that they can ascertain what children have learnt and can report on that to the student and their families.

Assessment of student achievement across the Dimensions of Religious Education is an essential component of the educational nature of Religious Education. In this way, students will have the opportunity to demonstrate how they have been engaged in a whole learning process that has involved mind, heart and hands. All Victorian dioceses are developing Standards in Religious Education against which student learning can be assessed and reported.

Archdiocese of Melbourne

The Archdiocese of Melbourne has developed and adopted the *To Know Worship and Love* text book series over the last nine years. The series is mandated for Catholic schools in the Archdiocese. The pedagogy used with the text book series maintains a catechetical intention while diverging from the four point plan of the earlier catechetical approach used in the Religious Education Guidelines. While the student text books have been mandated since 2000 the curriculum framework used by Catholic schools has varied. The introduction of the VELS has provided an opportunity to align the completed Religious Education text book series with the state framework and to provide a scaffold for Religious Education that enables a systematic coverage of the content of *To Know Worship and Love*.

In order to guide schools in the development of a rigorous and engaging curriculum, the Religious Education framework uses five content strands across all levels from Prep to Year 10. The content strands emerge from an understanding of the Church and of its life where the person of Jesus, as known in the Scriptures, is central. The content strands of learning are: *Scripture and Jesus, Church and Community, God, Religion and Life, Prayer, Liturgy and Sacraments, Morality and Justice*. These content strands are integrated into the dimensions of Religious Education set out below.

Secondary

The framework for levels 5 and 6 (Years 7 to 10) was developed, in cooperation with the Archdiocese of Sydney, using the mandated text *To Know, Worship and Love* as the basis for the core content. This framework was published in 2005 under the title *Coming to Know Worship and Love*. Further refinement of the framework is being undertaken to establish standards across the dimensions against which realistic assessment of student progress can be undertaken and to facilitate reporting processes.
Primary

The Levels 1-4 framework is currently being developed and is due for publication early 2008. The framework is organised around learning foci at each of the four VELS levels that describe what is essential for students to learn and experience within each of the three dimension of RE. Exemplar units that model ways of supporting students through the learning foci are currently being trialled. Standards that will inform assessment of student progress through this learning are currently being developed in a research project across the Archdiocese.

The theology and pedagogy of the framework documents

The Religious Education Curriculum Framework uses the post resurrection narrative in Luke’s Gospel (the disciples on the road to Emmaus) as the paradigm for developing the broad goals. In this story the confused and questioning disciples leave Jerusalem believing that the life and message of Jesus was of no value.

The Lukan narrative unfolds in three broad movements. The disciples recalled that while on the road Jesus opened the Scriptures to them and they came to know (informed) about him. When they reached Emmaus they experienced Jesus in the ‘breaking of the bread’, in sacrament and worship (formed). Finally they return to Jerusalem and with love (transformed) burning in their hearts told ‘what had happened on the road and how he had been made known to them in the breaking of the bread’. It is this movement that is reflected in the title of the religious education texts: To Know, Worship and Love.

Using this paradigm as a guide, the units of work in Coming to Know Worship and Love adopt an inquiry learning approach and attempt to engage students through the development of rich tasks that provide students with the opportunity to explore their faith and its traditions in a deeper way and to connect with the questions and issues they face.

The Good Shepherd Experience

The Religious Education Curriculum Prep–2 has been developed with a focus on the particular ways young children learn. Research on the spirituality and faith development of young children also informed its development.

The curriculum draws on the research and work of Sofia Cavalletti and Gianna Gobbi (1996) in The Catechesis of the Good Shepherd and Jerome Berryman (2003) in Godly Play, both of which were influenced by the work of Maria Montessori in the early 20th century. It also draws on the work of the Archdiocese of Sydney reflected in their K–2 religious education curriculum that derives from To Know, Worship and Love student books and the Good Shepherd Experience developed in the Archdiocese of Melbourne in 2001.
Faith Seeking Understanding: The Inquiry Approach and Religious Education

The learning and teaching approach in years 3–6 is inquiry based. In this approach students form understandings about God, themselves and their world through the ongoing exploration of religious truths and through the development of processes and skills that enable thinking, reflecting and acting as a result of this knowledge. In Religious Education inquiry learning is concerned with engaging with different perspectives of the Catholic tradition to form deep religious understandings. It is concerned with exploring how we can come to know the mystery of God in our lives, and how others in the past have come to know and express this mystery. It begins with a question around which students offer their own experiences and thinking, and then gather and explore new stories and information from Catholic teaching and practice. This knowledge is processed in a way that ideally enhances or develops new ways of thinking and responding to the question. This may lead students to plan and take action in their own context as a result of their new learning.

The learning process in Coming to Know, Worship and Love involves providing students with opportunities to name and build upon the personal experience and knowledge they bring to a topic question. They are also given opportunities to wonder about, and name, some of their own questions. Students then gather insights and information from a variety of sources that describe key practices, teachings and stories of the Church. They learn about, and use, processes and tools that enable them to organise, internalise and reflect on this knowledge and to evaluate their prior thinking and understanding. Some of these processes and tools may include those being developed in the Interdisciplinary strand in the VELS, as well as practices concerned with inner reflection and awareness, such as journals, the creative arts, and preferred ways of praying and reflecting. These skills enable students to form new concepts and understandings about the relationship between God, themselves and the world. The final part of the learning process invites students to take action as a result of their new learning and refined understandings. Integral to this phase is the development of skills and behaviours in order to take that action.
Dioceses of Ballarat, Sandhurst and Sale

The dioceses of Ballarat, Sandhurst and Sale, in partnership with the Archdiocese of Hobart, have developed individual diocesan Religious Education Core Documents around common principles and agreed educational approaches. Each diocese has a distinctive and locally chosen title for the core document: In Sale – *Journeying Together in Hope*, Sandhurst – *Source of Life*, Ballarat – *Awakenings* and Hobart – *Good News for Living*.

The common content for the curriculum in all of these documents is an eight interrelated content strand structure consisting of *Jesus Christ, Church, Christian Prayer, Religion and Society, Scripture, Christian Life, Sacraments, and God*.

The common pedagogical approach to classroom Religious Education, as described in the Core Documents of these dioceses, is a critical and creative adaptation of *Shared Christian Praxis* (Groome 1991).

This process is grounded in the understanding that God has been and continues to be present and active in the community of faith through the Spirit. The expression of the living faith of the community through history is carried in the community's Tradition. Religious Education promotes the knowing, valuing and acting of the learner who is making meaning of his or her life now. An important context for this meaning-making activity is the living Tradition: the faith and life of the Christian community.

Shared Christian Praxis is not simply a teaching method or a series of strategies. It is most appropriately understood as an overarching perspective and general way of proceeding which can be easily adapted in a great variety of situations. As a general approach to teaching it accommodates a rich variety of teaching and learning strategies.

The focus of Shared Christian Praxis is the whole learner, the one who thinks, feels, relates, acts, and is making his or her own meaning. It is concerned with ways of knowing, with an emphasis on critical knowing which results from investigation and analysis of ideas and practices in the context of group inquiry.
Conclusion

The document, *The Religious Dimension of Education in a Catholic School* called for both a specific Religious Education course in Catholic Schools as well as links to other disciplines:

Religious Education ‘should have its own syllabus, approved by those in authority; it should also seek appropriate interdisciplinary links with other course material so that there is a coordination between human learning and religious awareness. Like other coursework, it should promote culture, and it should make use of the best educational methods available to schools today.’

(The Religious Dimension of Education in a Catholic School, n. 70)

Because it articulates intentionally the connectedness of the human person with the whole of reality, human and divine, Religious Education awakens all disciplines of learning to their deep potential. It lies at the heart of the curriculum of Catholic Schools, synthesizing, enriching and complementing the learning experiences of students.3

Every curriculum area or subject that is taught within a Catholic school has a religious dimension, a capacity to assist students to examine the world of human culture and the world of religious meaning, providing knowledge and skills, and fostering attitudes and values that are life–giving and that assist young people to search for meaning and truth.

Inter-disciplinary links between Religious Education and other curriculum areas are a vital means of engaging students with the Catholic world-view described earlier. They are also a means of making available the insights, understandings and values derived from the Gospel to the public discourse of society.

Potentially, the Victorian Essential Learning Standards will allow Catholic Schools to develop courses in Religious Education and in other domains that provide both a specific and broad ranging Catholic curriculum in a way that has not before been achieved systemically.
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3  This and the following two paragraphs are taken from Awakenings Core Document – Religious Education P-12 Curriculum (2005) Ballarat: The Catholic Diocese of Ballarat. Page 57

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Diocese</th>
<th>Resources</th>
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Chapter Nine

Characteristics
Characteristics

Reflection upon the current approaches to Religious Education across States and Territories in Australia presents seven characteristics. These characteristics are premised upon two foundational understandings.

Two Foundational Understandings

1 Religious Education has its purpose in the mission of the Church

This understanding grounds Religious Education within the mission of the Church in the Church’s outreach to and its engagement in the activities of the world and its citizens. Religious Education presents, certainly within the Catholic schooling context of this paper, as a vital, educational and formational activity specifically directed towards students and their development.

Depending upon the orientation required at specific times, Religious Education can engage with students as an action of the Church that is:

• A means of evangelisation
• An introduction to mission and outreach
• Part of broader formation and faith development
• Formative and invitational.

Within the context of this paper the above are predicated upon educational outcomes that can be achieved by Religious Educators in Catholic schools in contemporary Australian culture.

2 Religious Education is a distinct area of learning

The classroom teaching component in Religious Education is recognised by diocesan resource developers as an area of learning on a par with the learning and teaching characteristics of other defined areas of learning. Many dioceses represent this by stating there are nine KLAS in Catholic schools whereas the Adelaide Declaration defined eight. In these instances, Religious Education is the first KLA in priority and often presents as a synthesising element of what Catholic schools represent.

Characteristics

1 Responsibility of the diocesan bishop

The bishop in each diocese has primacy in responsibility for Religious Education in a diocese (See Canon Law 803-806). This is because Religious Education must be an integral part of the overall pastoral plan of a diocese. It has an authority that is not given as explicitly to other curriculum areas in a Catholic school within a diocese. Thus Religious Education curriculum documents, texts and resources are developed under the bishop’s authority. This paper indicates that in some parts of Australia some dioceses have adopted or adapted the programs of other dioceses or that diocesan staff have been authorised to work collaboratively with other dioceses in development or adaptation of resources.
This paper also notes that this authority of the bishop may be manifested in the development of diocesan vision statements, polices, guidelines, regulations, resources and quality assurance processes in Religious Education normally coordinated at the bishop’s request by specialised Catholic Education Office staff. Such manifestations appear to be linked to an overarching vision or pastoral plan of a diocese.

These manifestations appear to be normally expressed in collaborative ways where such developments are inclusive of families, parishes and schools. Many Church documents, from the Second Vatican Council onwards stress this. For example, *Catechesi Tradendae* refers to the link between, family, parish and school in the formation of the young. ii

2 Religious Education is informed by various sources

These sources include and are not limited to:

- Scripture and Tradition
- Church documents, especially the Catechism of the Catholic Church
- Various Church teachings related to methodology, such as the General Catechetical Directory
- Diocesan policies and priorities
- Government policies and initiatives (e.g. Values Education)
- National and State development in curriculum design and pedagogy (e.g. assessment + reporting)
- Educational research, including research related to Religious Education and Australian culture.

This paper notes that each state and territory continues to undergo syllabus development and curriculum change. Curriculum developments in Religious Education reflect this in order to maintain currency as one of the areas of learning. This paper indicates that developments in Religious Education approaches and resources across Australia are on a par with the rigor used in the general curriculum.

The NCEC Religious Education Committee notes that developments and discussions about a national curriculum and national standards in educational delivery are being heightened. Within all of these discussions it is clear that the Catholic schooling sector has, particularly through its commitment to Religious Education and faith formation, given leadership and witness to clearly articulated religious, moral and ethical values within which the educational process in Catholic schools occurs. The Committee suggests respectfully that the Catholic sector has much to offer to the national curriculum debate.
3 Religious Education and State and Territory curriculum

This paper notes that generally the educational approach or educational philosophy in the classroom teaching of Religious Education is reflective of that presented in the resident state or territory curriculum frameworks. This reflects contemporary understandings of learning and teaching processes and their potential to impact positively upon the Religious Education curriculum. This is of great assistance to classroom teachers as they plan, teach, assess, evaluate and report on student learning. There are varying degrees of the closeness of this alignment or connection across dioceses.

State and territory curriculum organisational structures include terms found below. Religious Education curriculum across Australia reflects this. These terms may be interpreted differently across states and territories.

- Frameworks
- Outcomes
- Syllabus
- Strands and Bands
- Essential Learnings/Achievements
- Standard of Achievement/Learning
- Progress Maps.

Religious Education curriculum organisation normally uses contemporary educational approaches, language and pedagogy that are consistent with the outcomes of current educational research and the particular state or territory. Connections are made with other areas of learning. Religious Education assessment and reporting practices are generally similar to other areas of formal learning. In some dioceses it has been observed that the Religious Education resource materials have assisted in the improvement of teacher pedagogy and furthered the engagement with state or territory curriculum orientation.

Religious Education organisation and content may vary (e.g. K-12, K-6 7-12, 1-10 11-12). This is normally dependent upon the structure of school organisation within a state or territory. It does provide a challenge to resources that are used across states or territories.

4 Diversity

Most Religious Education Curriculum Frameworks are aligned with their state or territory curriculum directions. Two approaches across Religious Education Curriculum Frameworks can be found and are named as Whole State/Territory, and Diocesan. Three qualifiers can be applied to this.

First, a variety of relationships are evident between Religious Education curriculum and state and territory frameworks. Second, some dioceses have adopted and adapted Religious Education programs of other dioceses. In instances where this is from an interstate diocese, connections are made for teachers to link pedagogy and related assessment processes to that used locally within their state or territory. Finally, some dioceses (generally the larger ones) develop their own Religious Education curriculum and resources.
A variety of RE resources are used across the country both as core texts and resources for teachers and students. These include

- Support modules or units
- Frameworks for planning
- Textbooks
- Guidelines

Overall, plurality is seen as strength and as enriching. Local contexts are valued.

5 Relationship between Religious Education and State curriculum

All areas of learning in a Catholic school are grounded in Catholic beliefs and practices and a particular understanding of the human person. Religious Education programs that meet the requirements of a state or territory do so without compromise to these beliefs, values and understanding.

As with developments in the general curriculum there is a variety of pedagogical approaches and associated assessment and reporting processes that are used in Religious Education in dioceses. These appear to be reflective of the diocesan vision, policies and expectations associated with Religious Education as well as respective state and territory educational expectations and standards.

6 Quality Religious Education resources

Religious Education foundational materials (i.e. RE policies and curriculum) now include resource materials for classroom teachers such as modules or units. These are of a high educational quality and on a par with or superior to resources in other areas of learning. Some quality text-based student materials have been developed and promulgated in some dioceses. While there have been developments there remains a paucity of well-developed Australian online learning materials for students to support diocesan approaches to Religious Education.

7 Teacher formation and student background

Diocesan authorities have implemented Religious Education accreditation processes and sponsorship programs to continue to development the competencies of Religious Education teachers. Such actions complement the curriculum development activities in Religious Education that are the orientation of this paper.

Other studies relate to the changing background of students and their families and their participation in the life of the Church. Such changing contexts provide a challenge to parishes and school communities. They are not the focus of this paper. However, they do impact upon what the Religious Education curriculum of the future may look like. They raise questions about the assumptions Religious Educators make about the prior knowledge and experience of their students as they attempt to provide learning opportunities that are rich, relevant and real. And they provide reality checks about what can be realistically expected of Religious Education in Catholic schools of today and tomorrow.

References

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