

## Strengthened connection to and pride in Indigenous culture for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students: Mural project at Casino Christian School

### **Purpose**

To strengthen connection to Indigenous culture, and strengthen relationships between school, family and community. Initially the intention was to create a mural on an external wall so that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students would feel appreciated in the school by representing their culture and histories in a tangible way. However, the focus shifted to building relationships with the community, using the mural as a vehicle to develop those relationships.

### **Target group**

All 29 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students at the school, with the 18 secondary school students more involved in the project than the 11 primary school students. The group will decide whether other members of the student body are involved in the project in the future.

### **Activities**

The project commenced with staff attending the *Connecting to Country*<sup>33</sup> program and meeting with a Bundjalung consultant to determine culturally appropriate steps in the mural project. School community stakeholders were consulted regarding imagery, which involved three staff, 29 students and approximately fifteen parents and carers. The next step will be for students to create design proposals, then a prototype of the chosen proposal will be developed and presented to the Elders for their approval. Following this the mural will be painted onto the wall.

### **Outcomes**

Staff have observed that students' feeling of belonging at the school and being connected to their culture has increased. Levels of trust between family and school are increasing. Community members have expressed satisfaction about communication with the school. There has been a greater engagement of school leadership in Indigenous culture and perspectives, and related events and activities.

### **Learnings**

We have learnt that the Bundjalung community have a vested interest in the way that we conduct our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander content and practices and want to be involved and consulted. The most important component of implementing an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander program is the relationships that are formed between the school and the community, including with students, parents, carers and Elders. For anybody else implementing a project like this, we would recommend that the school consult heavily with the local Aboriginal Elders early in the process.

*64 per cent of secondary school students have said that their experience as an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander Person at CCS has become more positive each year they have attended the school.*

*'This year was better.'*  
(Student feedback)

*'I love to talk to an Aboriginal Officer so I can tell them my life.'* (Student feedback)

*'It has been helpful having an Aboriginal Education Officer because Aboriginal people are getting more involved in the school.'*  
(Student feedback)

*'I love having an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander educator because I love doing the activities and learning about what the Bundjalung Nation did when they first arrived here in Australia.'* (Student feedback)

*'That's okay. I am a proud Aboriginal woman. You might not know the black fella ways but I'm going to teach you.'* (Family member)

<sup>33</sup> NSW Aboriginal Education Consultative Group Inc. (2020). *Connecting to Country*, <https://www.aecg.nsw.edu.au/policies-and-programs/connecting-to-country/>  
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