



FIRE Carrier Covenant



Sacred Heart College, Kyneton

11 September 2025

*We acknowledge
the Taungurung people,
the Traditional Owners
of this land.*

*We pay our respects to
their leaders and Elders
past, present and
emerging, for they hold
forever the memories,
traditions, culture and
hopes of all
Taungurung people.*





FIRE Carrier Program Covenant



We recognise the special place and culture of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples within Australia. We acknowledge that First Nations peoples have been the caretakers of the land, water and sky for more than 60,000 years. We respect their spiritual connection to Mother Earth through the Dreaming.

We understand that practical measures need to address the disadvantage experienced by First Nations Peoples in education, health, employment, and general opportunity. True Reconciliation requires national and local solutions achieved through positive and purposeful partnerships not just for today but for tomorrow. We work for Reconciliation, in partnership with those who believe that there can be an alternative to the present order.

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

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

A School Covenant declares the school's commitment to stand in solidarity with First Nations peoples on the path to meaningful reconciliation. They recognise the special contributions that First Nations people and their culture make and acknowledge the rightful position that they should hold within Australian society. Covenants emphasise the ethos and faith belief of Catholic schools and the social justice responses they are committed to make as part of their Christian identity. It is broken up into the three core values of Spirituality; Practical Reconciliation and Justice; and Cultural Recognition and Awareness. Completing a Covenant is an important first step taken by FIRE Carrier schools as part of their commitment to the program and is reflected in practical goals and actions which they strive to achieve in the year ahead.



Our School



Sacred Heart College is a Catholic co-educational secondary school in Kyneton, established in 1889 by the Sisters of Mercy. From its earliest days, the College has carried forward the vision of Catherine McAuley, founder of the Mercy congregation, whose call to serve the poor, the marginalised, and the voiceless continues to shape our school's identity. Today, our College is guided by the Mercy values of respect, compassion, hospitality, justice, service, and courage, which animate our daily life and form the foundation of our mission. In 2025, under the theme "Pilgrims of Hope", inspired by the Jubilee Year, we seek to walk with others in faith, justice, and love, ensuring that our learning community remains outward-looking, inclusive, and grounded in Gospel values.

Sacred Heart College currently educates approximately 890 students, supported by over 100 dedicated teaching and non-teaching staff who work together to nurture the learning, wellbeing, and faith development of young people across the Macedon Ranges region. Our College is located on the unceded lands of the Taungurung people, and we acknowledge them as the Traditional Custodians of the Land on which our school stands, paying our respects to Elders past and present. We also acknowledge the Dja Dja Wurrung and Wurundjeri peoples, from which many of our students travel each day. The Registered Aboriginal Party for our site is the Taungurung Land and Waters Council,

whose custodianship and leadership we value and respect.

For us, reconciliation means recognising the truth of our shared history, acknowledging the continuing impact of colonisation, celebrating the strength and resilience of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, and walking together in a spirit of justice, healing, and respect. Reconciliation is both a challenge and a gift: a challenge to face difficult truths with honesty and humility, and a gift that invites us into deeper relationships of solidarity and hope. Our commitment to reconciliation is lived through prayer, learning, relationships, and emerging partnerships that help shape the culture of our College.

We are proud to be developing local connections with the Taungurung community, and we have invited our First Nations students to contribute their voices to this Covenant. Beyond our local context, Sacred Heart College continues to grow in understanding through cultural immersion experiences. These include our long-standing partnership with the Jarlmadangah community in the Kimberley, immersion experiences on Country at Lake Mungo, and new opportunities with Red Earth that will allow students and staff to experience the depth and diversity of First Nations cultures. Together, these relationships remind us that reconciliation is an ongoing journey, calling us to listen, to learn, and to act with courage and compassion.



Our Covenant



The coordination of the FIRE Carrier Program currently sits with the Director of Faith and Mission, a member of the College Leadership Team.

This ensures that reconciliation is understood as a core part of our Catholic and Mercy identity and is fully supported by the College Principal and the College Leadership Team.

At present, there is an open invitation for staff to contribute ideas and energy to the program as it develops, with the long-term goal of embedding FIRE Carrier and reconciliation responsibilities into formal leadership portfolios.

Students are invited to participate through expressions of interest, especially those with a strong sense of justice, a passion for reconciliation, or experience in cultural immersions. Representation currently includes students across a range of year levels. Over time, Sacred Heart College intends to formalise FIRE Carrier student leadership roles within the wider leadership structure, particularly for Years 10–12, alongside existing leadership opportunities in faith and justice. Importantly, First Nations students are invited to contribute and to take leadership roles within the program, so that their voices, perspectives, and priorities are present at every stage.

The development of our Reconciliation Covenant has been led by the Director of Faith and Mission, drawing on contributions from staff and students who

have expressed interest in the FIRE Carrier Program. First Nations students within our school community have also been personally invited to provide input into the drafting process. As our relationships with local Aboriginal communities deepen, we hope to extend this invitation to First Nations families and the Taungurung Land and Waters Council, ensuring the Covenant reflects shared voices and perspectives.

Our Covenant will be reviewed annually in the lead-up to our Makarrata Assembly to ensure it remains a living and relevant commitment. The review process will be guided by the Director of Faith and Mission in consultation with students, staff, and—over time—First Nations families and local community partners. The Covenant will then be publicly renewed at the Makarrata Assembly, a whole-school gathering dedicated to truth-telling, acknowledgment of past and ongoing injustices, and recommitment to reconciliation and healing. At this Assembly, new FIRE Carriers will be commissioned, and continuing FIRE Carriers recommissioned. It is envisioned that staff and students involved in the FIRE Carrier Program will play a leading role in organising and animating the Assembly, making it both a moment of reflection and a visible sign of our shared commitment to reconciliation in the Macedon Ranges.



Our Short-term and Long-term goals



6 Months	12 Months	2 years
Update school address formats (email signatures, website, newsletters) to include "Taungurung Country."	Begin development of a Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP).	Embed FIRE Carrier roles in formal staff and student leadership structures.
Establish a First Nations focus in the Chapel	Identify and prepare a space for a FIRE Carrier ceremony area.	Develop a First Nations Garden including native plants and outdoor learning space.
Display books by First Nations authors in the library.	Offer on-Country staff immersion (e.g. Wawa Biik) as part of annual PL.	Install bilingual signage around the school with Taungurung language (with permission).
Staff and student education on respectful practices (do's and don'ts around First Nations culture).	Use First Nations music, stories, and art regularly in assemblies and prayer.	Explore pathways for a First Nations staff appointment or designated role.
Make Acknowledgment of Country more meaningful (teaching resources so students understand its importance).	Continue to grow immersion experiences	
Introduce First Nations prayers in daily messages (FIRE Carrier Fridays?).	Begin audit of curriculum resources (First Nations perspectives	



Core Values



Spirituality

The Campfire symbol represents the core value of spirituality. The campfire is where people meet and stories are told. A time to learn about and celebrate Aboriginal spirituality including their Catholic Identity. It is a time to connect and care for Country.

Focus Areas:

Understanding First Nations' Spirituality and Identity

Including First Nations prayer, art, music and materials

Honouring stewardship and connection to Country (Land, Water, Sky and community)

Action	Responsibility	Timeline	Suggested Activities/Resources
Introduce a weekly First Nations prayer	Director of Faith & Mission, RE Learning Leader, Student FIRE Carriers	Start Term 1, 2026	Aboriginal Catholic Ministry, Common Grace Resources
Create a First Nations sacred space in the Chapel	Director of Faith & Mission, RE Learning Leader, Student FIRE Carriers	By end of 2026	Aboriginal Catholic Ministry, artwork by First Nations artists.
Use artwork, prayer, and music to tell First Nations stories in prayer and liturgy.	Director of Faith & Mission, RE Learning Leader, Director of Music, Choir and Musicians, Student FIRE Carriers	Ongoing 2026–2027	Aboriginal Catholic Ministry, Common Grace Resources, artwork by First Nations artists.



Cultural Recognition & Awareness

The Message Stick symbol signifies Cultural Recognition and Awareness. The Message Stick is a wooden stick that is passed between clans and language groups to transmit messages, invitations and information.

Focus Areas:

Recognising cultural perspectives

Demonstrate cultural awareness and understanding

First Nations culture is visible and celebrated

Ongoing Staff Professional Learning

First Nations Perspectives in the Curriculum

Action	Responsibility	Timeline	Suggested Activities / Resources
Update email signatures and website to include "Taungurung Country".	Principal, Director of Faith & Mission, Communications Team	By June 2026	
Include key dates like Mabo Day, NAIDOC Week, Reconciliation Week in the school calendar and events.	Director of Faith and Mission	August-September of preceding year	
Audit curriculum resources	Deputy Principal – Learning & Teaching, Learning Leaders, Teachers	December 2027	VAEAI Koorie Education resources, narragunnawali.org.au
Staff and student education on respectful practices (do's and don'ts around First Nations culture).	College Leadership Team, Staff	Ongoing – June 2026	VAEAI, Reconciliation Australia, TLWC



Practical Reconciliation & Justice

The Journey symbol signifies the journey towards Reconciliation. People moved from one place to another and learnt along the way. They traveled to come together with others for celebrations and trading.

Focus Areas:

Walk the Journey together,
Put Learnings into Practice
Celebrating First Nation Peoples and significant days
Awareness of Social Justice issues
Walking in solidarity with First Nations Peoples
Building relationships with First Nations Peoples

Action	Responsibility	Timeline	Suggested Activities / Resources
Begin developing a Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP).	Director of Faith & Mission, Principal, Student FIRE Carriers	By September 2026	https://www.reconciliation.org.au/reconciliation-action-plans/develop-your-rap/
Attend local Dhum Gaab morning tea hosted by Taungurung Land and Water Council when possible.	College Leadership Team	From Term 4, 2025, ongoing	TLWC
Recognize significant days through prayer, encounter and action (Sorry Day, National Apology, NAIDOC).	School Community	From Term 1 2026	

The FIRE Carrier Project is an initiative of the Aboriginal Catholic Ministry and the Opening the Doors Foundation to promote and assist Reconciliation through Education in Victorian Schools. Please respect Intellectual Property of this document and the FIRE Carrier Program.©



Artwork Design

Our artwork and acknowledgement of country includes elements of the artwork titled Mercy, created by artist Aimee McCartney, a Taungurung, Wotjobaluk, Wemba Wemba and Boon Wurrung woman.

The artwork was commissioned by the College in 2023 and symbolises Sacred Heart College Kyneton's ongoing responsibility to nourish Christian values within the students, through the lens of a rich Mercy tradition.