



William Clarke College- Reconciliation Strategy and Darug Culture and Language Program

William Clarke College has made significant progress in the last two years towards a curriculum and campus that respectfully celebrates and recognises our local indigenous community (the Darug people) and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, cultures, and histories more broadly.

Reconciliation Strategy

In 2019, the College embarked on the process of establishing its first Reconciliation Strategy Team, comprising staff and parents/carers, as well as our first Reconciliation Strategy. This strategy outlines a series of priorities that seek to further embed the teaching of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives within the curriculum. Importantly, these priorities also address the desire to further support staff and students who identify as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander and seek to represent First Nations' cultures more prominently about the campus.

Engagement and Consultation with the Darug Community

The College has established meaningful and respectful relationships with many Darug community members as we have sought to further our contributions in this area. The College is represented on the local Aboriginal Education Consultative Group and regularly seeks input and feedback from community members regarding new initiatives and curriculum delivery.

Darug Culture and Language Program

In developing student and staff knowledge of the history of the local area, the College has implemented the Darug Culture and Language Program for our Year 8 cohort. This is a unique program as students participate in four intensive weeks of learning throughout the year. At its foundation, the program seeks to: develop students' awareness and knowledge of languages other than English through their learning of the Dharug language; encourage students in their development of empathy as they learn about the challenging history of the area, including the Marella Mission that was located not far from the campus; and encourage students to make progress in their thinking and actions concerning reconciliation.

This program has been designed in close consultation with the Darug community. Community members contribute to language resources and cultural incursions and excursions. Throughout the program, students are encouraged to learn on Country as much as possible, utilising outdoor areas and natural resources to aid their learning. Importantly, the community are the first to teach the language to the students. This teaching is then further facilitated by College staff, who undertake this learning journey with students.

It is hoped that this program will continue to grow and provide an example to other schools for successful implementation of a Stage 4 indigenous language and culture program. There is also potential in coming years to have Darug community members contribute more to the day-to-day teaching of the program.



Additional Contributions and Recognitions

Further to this program, students and staff from preparatory to Year 12 participate annually in NAIDOC or Reconciliation Week events. These weeks are an opportunity for the College to learn together and actively demonstrate their leaning throughout the campus.

In 2020, all students and staff contributed to a large red handprint, signifying their recognition of the traditional custodians of the land on which the campus sits. In 2021 students and staff participated in a Reconciliation walk throughout campus and through the community, symbolically moving forward towards reconciliation.

The College is also taking steps to introduce more Dharug language across the campus, including the naming of some buildings.

Opportunities are regularly investigated as to where teachers may further embed practices that support the teaching of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' cultures and histories. Such opportunities may include:

- Cosmetology- This is a new explore course introduced in 2022 at the College. This may present an opportunity to explore indigenous herbs and remedies as part of the course.
- Food Technology- Students may cook using indigenous ingredients and methods. This could be facilitated onsite through a fire pit and provided for through campus garden plots.
- Agricultural and Gardening Club- This is a new co-curricular opportunity for students, whereby students are responsible for maintaining plot gardens onsite. There is opportunity here for students to investigate and maintain aspects of Country and support the learning of students in Food Technology, as they tend the crops.
- Year 8 Geography- As students progress through the Darug Culture and Language Program, students may also undertake a local geography study, including excursions to local reserves that encourage them to continue their learning about what it means to care for Country.
- Visual Arts- Initial discussions have been had with local Aboriginal artists to assist with workshops that encourage students to further explore traditional art practices.
- Meeting and learning spaces across campus- To further the learning of students in the Darug Culture and Language course, the College is investigating opportunities to design further breakout learning spaces for students and staff where practices such as meeting circles and on Country learning can be leveraged. Indigenous dance incursions could be undertaken here to more respectfully and authentically encourage students in this area. These areas could also be utilised across the grades to continue embedding practices established in Year 8 and encouraging students in their awareness and appreciation of indigenous cultures.