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**Subject: Pope Francis greeting to indigenous students**

Bishop Michael McCarthy conveyed personal well wishes from Pope Francis to Indigenous students in Catholic colleges in the Diocese of Rockhampton following a meeting with the Pontiff during the Australian Catholic Bishops' Ad Limina visit to the Vatican recently.

Bishop Michael said he told Pope Francis that he had met with young Indigenous students of the Diocese at their annual Leadership Camp and had asked students what he should say to the Holy Father during his meeting.

"You said, say G'Day! And I did this morning and he greeted you back and wished you all the best," Bishop Michael said in a message back to the students.

Indigenous Education Coordinator for Catholic Education, Bradley Jarro said receiving a personalised message from the Pope was a true blessing that students would cherish and a delightful surprise outcome from Bishop Michael's visit to the Leadership gathering.

Twenty-five Year 12 students and over 40 Year 11 students from Catholic schools across the Diocese participated in the Leadership camps with sessions on culture, leadership, identity, mental health first aid, academic progress, transitions and traditional games, dance and recreational activities.

Mr Jarro said the camps provided an opportunity for Year 11 and 12 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students to come together, form positive connections and realise they are part of a much larger group of indigenous youth in our Catholic schools.

"In most of our schools these students make up such a small part of the whole school population, so to give them time together is very worthwhile to grow their cultural identity and to appreciate the diversity of students who identify as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander," Mr Jarro said.

"A unique greeting from Pope Francis undoubtedly emphasises our positive messages and adds an extra dimension to promoting to our students not only a sense of belonging to a cultural community, but to a Catholic community as well," Mr Jarro said.

Camp presenters included Bishop Michael, representatives from the University of Queensland and Queensland Health, community Elders, and members of Catholic Education's Indigenous Education Support Team.

"The camps allow us to have our students in the upper year levels together in one spot where we can provide a consistent message and programs specific to their needs as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students in our Catholic Colleges," Mr Jarro said.

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