

BCE media release



BCE Media Release – Cairns and Brisbane Diocese shape a brighter future for Queensland students

Our Lady of the Sacred Heart, Waiben (Thursday Island), St Finbarr’s Catholic Primary School, Ashgrove, and St Thomas More College, Sunnybank, have forged an innovative City-Country Partnership enhancing science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) education.

As part of the program, students and staff from the three schools will connect in person and online throughout 2025 to gain valuable insights and inspiration, fostering their learning and career aspirations in STEM fields.

The partnership will be shaped by First Nations perspectives in STEM and the guidance of the Kaurareg Nation and Zenadth Kes Elders.

Reciprocal learning

Our Lady of the Sacred Heart (Cairns Diocese) Principal David Graham said the partnership was a “brilliant opportunity to share the rich cultural knowledge of the students at Waiben with their city peers”.

“As the northernmost school in the Diocese of Cairns, our location offers unique opportunities to connect beyond the classroom,” he said.

“My students are eager to collaborate with their peers at St Finbarr’s School, uniting as partners throughout Terms 2 and 3 on STEM projects aimed at making a tangible impact.

“There is great excitement within our community about the potential of supporting our students in being change agents and using STEM as a way to make a meaningful impact within the Torres Strait.

“The innovative solutions they develop will be showcased at Brisbane Catholic Education’s STEM MAD Showcase in Brisbane later this year.”

St Finbarr’s School Principal Catherine Connors said the partnership allows “our students to develop a deeper understanding of First Nations perspectives in STEM and across the curriculum”.

“This partnership will allow our students to develop authentic relationships with peers who can share knowledge about Country and culture with them in a meaningful way,” she said.

“It will help city students develop a ‘heart’ understanding of the importance of this learning, rather than just a ‘head’ understanding.”

St Thomas More College Principal Leslie Conroy believes that education is about more than just knowledge—it’s about empowering students to use what they’ve learned to make a meaningful impact in the world.

“For our students, the opportunity to learn from Elders and take part in community cultural celebrations is truly invaluable,” he said.

School exchange

As part of the partnership, students from St Finbarr's School and St Thomas More College will embark on a special journey to Our Lady of the Sacred Heart, on Thursday Island where they'll learn from Elders, connect with local students, engage in Torres Strait Islander STEM knowledge and immerse themselves in the vibrant Waiben community.

These unique experiences will give city-based students a deeper understanding of First Nations perspectives while working together on hands-on, student-led STEM projects that bridge knowledge and culture.

Mayrah Dreise, Senior Manager for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education in BCE, said "partnerships between city, regional and remote schools is a collaborative effort among educators, who, though these partnerships, develop their cultural capabilities which support teachers' ability to embed First Nations perspectives within the classroom, enhancing the learning of all students".

Peer mentoring

St Thomas More students will mentor primary students from both schools, offering insights and practical tips for a smooth transition to secondary school.

Secondary students will provide regular presentations about career options, inspiring students to pursue STEM careers and make an impact within their communities.

Empowering students

David adds "this opportunity inspires our students to dream big about their careers while empowering them to use their talents for the benefit of the Torres Strait community."

The partnership is supported by the Yadhya Muru Foundation and aligns with the Mpartnwe (Alice Springs) Education Declaration, which envisions a world-class education system that supports every student, regardless of their location or learning challenges.

For more information about St Finbarr's School, Ashgrove or to enrol [click here](#).

For more information about St Thomas More College, Sunnybank or to enrol [click here](#).

For more information about Our Lady of the Sacred Heart, Waiben or to enrol [click here](#).