

Religious Education Reference Group: Update

Important links

- [RE Reference Group Terms of Reference](#)
- [Previous Reference Group Updates](#)
- [The RE Curriculum Report](#)

To Know and to Love

Update on the work of the Religious Education Curriculum

Meeting #6 of the Religious Education Reference Group

Wednesday 28 May 2025
National Reconciliation Week

The sixth meeting of the Religious Education Reference Group was held during National Reconciliation Week. The meeting opened with an Acknowledgement of Country and prayer led by **Janina Starkey**, grounding the group in the spirit of reconciliation and the Church's mission to walk together in truth and love.



[Creation and the Universe](#), from MSA 2021
Sharon Williams (Santa Teresa, NT)

“Then the righteous will answer him, “Lord, when was it that we saw you hungry and gave you food, or thirsty and gave you something to drink” ... And the king will answer them, “Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me.” (Matt 25:37,40, NRSVCE)
For our Catholic Communities in Australia and around the world: That we may grow like the mighty tree — roots deep in faith, branches wide in welcome, sheltering all with strength, vision, and hope. (NATSICC, 2025)

Prof Br David Hall FMS welcomed members and acknowledged the important work of the reference group which has the task of guiding a Religious Education curriculum that will support the formation of young people to build a civilisation of love. The group was invited to consider how the curriculum might respond to the plurality of society and classrooms, through the lens of a Catholic worldview, ensuring we do not dilute the gospel message that is the root of the Catholic tradition.

In this meeting the group discussed the following:

Dr Beth Nolen expanded on the work presented in the last meeting on the Trial-based Learning Teams (TLTs), a new model for curriculum trialling that emphasises capacity building and pedagogical development. These teams, led by trained Religious Education Leaders, will engage in professional learning before and after trialling units in schools. The TLTs are designed not only

to provide feedback on how the curriculum content was taught, but also to foster a culture of excellence in Religious Education through shared understanding and reflective practice.

Dr Nigel Zimmermann presented a draft engagement plan for the curriculum development process. The group discussed the importance of engaging principals and deputy principals through network days, and the need to strengthen relationships between schools and parishes, particularly by involving local priests and clergy in engaging with the curriculum. There was strong support for involving a broader range of stakeholders, including Eastern Catholic communities, parents and carers, and School Advisory Councils. The group affirmed that the RE curriculum can be a powerful means of drawing together the communities of the Archdiocese of Melbourne.

The reference group meeting broke off into three smaller groups to discuss units of work from Foundation, Year 7, and Year 8 that were presented. Some summary of the discussion is noted below.

Foundation

Marsha Van Cuylenburg presented units of work on Lent and Easter which align with the Liturgical Calendar in the first year of school. A focus in the unit on Lent of turning towards Jesus was appreciated, emphasising a positive framing of Lent as a time of transformation and away from the narrative of 'giving things up'. In the unit on Holy Week and Easter members of the reference group appreciated the integration of liturgical elements. There was a desire to see a stronger emphasis on the theological depth of Easter, particularly the joy of the resurrection. The group discussed the challenges of teaching Easter across school holidays and suggested ways to extend the celebration into Term 2.

Year 7

Prof Kath Engebretson presented units of working continuing on the theme of salvation history, including the temple and the prophets. The inclusion of teacher reflection prompts was welcomed as a valuable support for theological and personal formation, as were the visual elements of the temple which were included in the unit as a way of engaging students with the rich history of the People of God. The unit on the prophets was recognised for its rich content and there was strong support for including the story of Jonah, which was seen as both theologically rich and engaging for students. The group discussed the importance of introducing prophetic themes such as justice and repentance, and the potential for creative assessments that connect biblical wisdom to contemporary issues.

Year 8

James O'Brien presented a unit of work centring on Jesus Christ's call in the New Testament to the disciples to join in his mission. The group engaged in a deep theological reflection on Mary as the first disciple. Members explored the complexity of Mary's discipleship and the importance of presenting her role clearly and meaningfully to students. The discussion touched on Marian theology, the significance of the Annunciation and Visitation, and the development of Marian dogma. There was a strong desire to integrate popular devotions, such as the Rosary, in ways that connect them to Jesus' life and mission. The group affirmed that discipleship should be presented as a journey of faith, marked by risk, sacrifice, and personal response.

References

National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Catholic Council 2025, *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Sunday Resource Booklet*, accessed 17 June 2025, https://www.natsicc.org.au/assets/natsicc-2025-booklet_digital.pdf

New Revised Standard Version Bible: Catholic Edition, copyright © 1989, 1993 the Division of Christian Education of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the United States of America. Used by permission. All rights reserved.