

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 #18 of the Religious Education Reference Group

Friday 22 May 2026

The eighteenth meeting of the Religious Education Reference Group was held in late May, 2026. **Rosalba Squarci** opened the meeting with an Acknowledgement of Country, recognising the traditional custodians of the lands across the Kulin Nation. Prayer followed, reflecting on the life of St Rita of Cascia, with a focus on perseverance, faith in times of difficulty, and the importance of prayer in discerning vocation and mission.

Heavenly Father, source of all love and mercy, You have given us Saint Rita as a beacon of hope in times of despair. Through her prayers, You work miracles that surpass all human understanding and limitation ... let Your power be made perfect in our weakness, proving to the world that You never abandon those who place their trust in You. St Rita of Cascia, pray for us.



Prof Br David Hall framed Religious Education as central to the mission of Catholic schooling, extending beyond a discrete curriculum area to encompass formation, meaning making, and encounter. The discussion highlighted the contemporary context in which many students and families are distanced from Church life, positioning Religious Education as a key avenue for evangelisation and engagement. At the same time, the diversity of student backgrounds requires a balanced approach that supports those with little faith experience, those exploring belief, and those seeking deeper formation.

Emphasis was placed on ensuring that curriculum design moves beyond content delivery toward authentic engagement, connecting faith with students' lived experiences and presenting Christianity as a coherent vision of human identity and purpose. The ongoing challenge remains to balance depth, clarity, and accessibility across diverse learner needs.

Pedagogy and Assessment Developments

A/Prof Christine Robinson and **Dr Beth Nolen** updated the reference group on the work within the Pedagogy Advisory Group, which continues to progress through a refined structure, enabling ongoing feedback and iterative improvement. Drafting is informed by contemporary research,

including neuroscience and child development, with the aim of articulating clear and consistent pedagogical principles.

In parallel, assessment in Religious Education continues to be an area of active development. There is a clear direction toward moving beyond knowledge recall and supporting deeper thinking, interpretation, and meaning making. Assessment will focus on observable learning, knowledge, understanding, and engagement, while recognising that faith itself is not assessed.

This remains a complex and evolving area, with further refinement and consultation planned to ensure approaches are both educationally robust and practical for teachers.

Senior Secondary Religious Education

Prof Kath Engebretson updated the reference group on the work of the Senior Secondary Advisory Group (Years 11–12), including identifying significant variation across schools and a lack of consistent structure. A proposed direction includes the development of a coherent school-based Religious Education course for students not undertaking VCE religion studies, with indicative time allocations and flexibility for different pathways.

The emerging vision emphasises vocational discernment, identity, and purpose, ensuring Religious Education remains relevant to the questions and life changes experienced by young adults. Further work will include gathering system data and exploring with broader national and diocesan approaches.

Curriculum Writing

Year 2 – Easter Season in the Church

Adrian Mancini presented a unit called Easter Season in the Church, which provides a coherent and well-sequenced exploration of the liturgical season. The unit moves through the liturgical calendar, the Emmaus narrative, and the Good Shepherd, supporting students to understand Easter as an ongoing journey rather than a single event. The Emmaus story was highlighted as especially effective in exploring recognition, renewal, and encounter with Christ. Suggestions included strengthening explicit connections between Lent and Easter, increasing experiential learning opportunities, and ensuring consistent theological language throughout.

Year 2 – Baptism and Belonging

Marsha Van Cuylenburg presented a unit called Baptism and Belonging, introducing students to sacramental theology as an encounter with God. The unit establishes important foundations through key concepts such as grace, mystery, and spiritual life. Feedback recognised both the importance and complexity of these concepts, noting the need for careful scaffolding. Emphasis was placed on supporting teachers with strong theological understanding to avoid oversimplification, while allowing space for student curiosity and gradual development of understanding.

Year 9 – Bread of Life and Year 9 – What Happens at Mass?

Prof Kath Engebretson presented two units called *Bread of Life* and *What Happens at Mass?* These explore Eucharistic themes through Scripture and symbolic language. The unit complements learning about the Mass by deepening theological understanding and inviting reflection on identity and community. Feedback affirmed the strong use of narrative and symbolism, while recommending clearer progression from story to explanation and application. It also emphasised the need for clearer articulation of central theological concepts, including Real Presence and the sacrificial nature of the Mass. Suggestions included reducing historical detail in favour of deeper exploration of meaning, strengthening experiential learning opportunities, and ensuring accessibility for students from diverse backgrounds.