

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

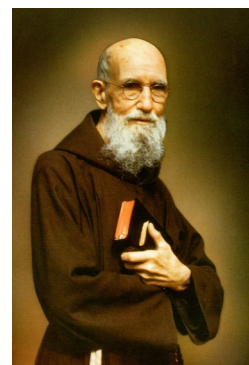
Update on the work of the Religious Education Curriculum

Meeting #17 of the Religious Education Reference Group

Friday 24 April 2026

The seventeenth meeting of the Religious Education Reference Group was held in late April, 2026. The meeting continued to open with shared prayer and acknowledgement of country, prepared by **Vanessa Shaw**. Vanessa centred prayer on opening doorways into God's life, and the curriculum, using the example of Blessed Solanus Casey.

He deeply desired to become a priest, but struggled academically and was unable to follow the usual pathway. He was eventually ordained, though with limitations, and was given a humble role as a porter—a doorkeeper. Yet that doorway became the centre of his ministry. People came to him with their needs, and he listened, welcomed, and guided them. What seemed like a limitation became a different pathway—and in time, the Church recognised the depth of his holiness through beatification.



Prof Br David Hall FMS offered reflections on emerging national considerations, particularly the growing focus on addressing anti-Semitism in schools, with collaborative work involving UNESCO resources and pilot programs occurring in New South Wales. The group affirmed the importance of exploring how this learning may be thoughtfully integrated within the RE curriculum, alongside a renewed emphasis on the Judeo-Christian foundations of the tradition.

Br David also opened a theological reflection around the concept of hospitality, encouraging a deeper understanding not simply as service provision but as a reciprocal relationship grounded in dignity. This insight offers meaningful possibilities for shaping how schools engage with families and communities, as well as potential integration within future curriculum units.

The main points of the meetings are described below.

Theory of Religious Education

Professor Kath Engebretson shared the near-final draft of the RE Theory document, grounded in three interrelated dimensions: Catholic worldview and culture, the school as an ecclesial community, and classroom Religious Education. The discussion was affirming, with suggestions included explicitly incorporating the classical transcendentals, truth, goodness, and beauty, as an overarching framework.

The group strongly supported consultation with teachers, RELs, and Religious Institute representatives to ensure the document remains both theologically rich and accessible.

Year 7 – Belonging

Professor Kath Engebretson discussed feedback from trial schools which provided valuable insights into the Year 7 Belonging unit. While originally designed as a short introductory sequence, some schools extended it significantly, with occasional drift into broader wellbeing or pastoral content.

There was strong support for retaining the unit, recognising its importance in welcoming students, particularly those from non-Catholic backgrounds, and establishing a clear sense of identity and inclusion within Religious Education. The group agreed to retain and refine the unit with recommendations included removing elements that diluted core RE content, strengthening its Catholic grounding, and considering its placement within the early sequence of Year 7 learning.

Assessment in Religious Education

Initial drafts of both an assessment policy and an F–2 developmental framework were presented and generated thoughtful discussion. Members affirmed the importance of aligning assessment with contemporary educational practice while remaining faithful to the goals of Catholic education.

There was broad recognition that assessment in Religious Education is a complex area requiring further refinement, particularly in balancing knowledge, understanding, and the lived dimension of faith. The feedback highlighted the need for clarity, simplicity, and strong alignment with system expectations. Further work will continue in this area, with ongoing development and consultation planned to ensure assessment approaches are both meaningful for students and practical for teachers.

Year 9 – Baptism: Sacrament of Initiation

Mr James O'Brien presented a Year 9 Baptism unit that was strongly affirmed for its coherent and engaging design. Beginning with students' everyday experiences of water, the unit traces a rich theological journey through Scripture, linking creation, Exodus, and the Baptism of Jesus, before leading into deeper sacramental understanding. The use of water as a unifying motif was particularly praised, providing a clear and consistent thread across experience, Scripture, and theology. The progression of learning, from experience to reflection, was seen as logical and effective, offering strong potential for deep conceptual understanding.

Feedback highlighted opportunities to strengthen theological clarity, particularly around Baptism as a sacrament of grace and transformation rather than simply a symbol. The importance of inclusivity was also emphasised, ensuring learning is accessible for all students regardless of personal sacramental experience. Suggestions included expanding opportunities for personal connection, exploring roles such as priest, prophet, and king, and incorporating references to Eastern Catholic practices.

Overall, the unit was recognised as a rich and promising foundation for helping students understand Baptism as both a profound theological reality and a meaningful part of Christian identity.