2025 ANNUAL REPORT



Catholic Education
NORTHERN TERRITORY
Faith in their future

Photo: Our Lady of the Sacred Heart Thamarrurr Catholic College - Wadeye, Port Keats

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Letter to the Bishop
The Most Rev Charles Gauci, Bishop of Darwin

The Most Rev Charles Gauci
Bishop of Darwin
GPO Box 476
Darwin NT 0801

Dear Bishop Gauci

On behalf of the Catholic Education Council and Catholic Education Northern Territory (CENT), I present our 2025 Annual Report. Guided by our liturgical theme as *Pilgrims of Hope*, 2025 marked the successful conclusion of our *Towards 2026* strategic plan—a year grounded in faith, progress, and the establishment of firm foundations for our future.

Our system celebrated its third consecutive year of growth, reaching 5,343 students—a 13% increase over three years. While this growth reflects the trust families place in Catholic education, it requires ongoing planning for new facilities alongside continued advocacy for fair operational and capital funding.

Academic achievement advanced across all levels. Driven by our Learning Alliance initiative, five CENT schools—Our Lady of the Sacred Heart Alice Springs, St John's Catholic College, Mother Teresa Catholic Primary School, Holy Spirit Catholic Primary School, and O'Loughlin Catholic College—were recognised by ACARA as "Schools Making a Difference" for exceptional learning growth. Additionally, CENT became the only Catholic jurisdiction in Australia to meet 2030 Federal Better Fairer Schools Agreement targets early for Year 9 Reading and student support reduction.

In our Aboriginal Catholic Community Schools, Catholic Aboriginal Leadership Teams continued to drive strong cultural connections, while Quality Education Support Team initiatives expanded senior pathways and curriculum design.

Strategic direction also moved forward through the development of the *Towards 2029* plan, the *Horizons 2030 and Beyond* vision, insights from *Tell Them From Me* surveys, and the appointment of a dedicated Leader of Integrity and Safeguarding. Following declining numbers and rising costs, the decision was made to close the St John's Catholic College boarding facility, with all students supported into alternative placements for 2026.

This report reflects our ongoing commitment to governance, care, collaboration, and excellence. We remain deeply grateful for your spiritual leadership and for the devotion of our staff across the Territory.





Anthony Burton
Chair
Catholic Education Council of the Northern Territory
Diocese of Darwin





Paul Greaves
Ex Officio
Catholic Education Northern Territory
Diocese of Darwin



Director's Report
Paul Greaves, Director Catholic Education NT

We present this 2025 Annual Report for Catholic Education Northern Territory (CENT) with a sense of progress and achievement. Our liturgical theme for the year was based around the late Pope Francis's challenge to us all to be 'Pilgrims of Hope'. Just as pilgrims treasure memories of how their journey has formed them, this report showcases CENT's 2025 journey as anchored in faith. We have worked to live out our Mission Statement:

Through servant leadership, we witness Gospel values in a faith community; integrating life and learning in a culture of care, collaboration and excellence.

The report provides detail and insight into a broad range of activities for what was the last year of our 'Towards 2026' strategic document. Central are two critical future-focused initiatives. The first was work which occurred in 2025 to formulate CENT's new strategic document 'Towards 2029'. The second was to finalise, launch and engage with 'Horizons 2030 and Beyond', a document which considers how we can strengthen our future as a system of schools that are Catholic in identity. 2025 was certainly a year in which firm foundations continued to be established for a strong future for CENT.

A significant point of encouragement, and an enabler of a strong future, is in our 2025 enrolment growth. Catholic and a number of other non-government faith-based schools offer a choice to families seeking a faith-based education for their children. In 2025, we again saw enrolment growth in CENT schools, which shows that more and more families are exercising this choice.

At 5343 students for the August census, this figure was a third consecutive year of growth with a 13% increase in enrolment over this time. While so far we have generally been able to accommodate these extra students in existing facilities, continued increases will necessitate the planning and building of new classrooms and facilities in a number of schools.

Such growth will need to be funded, and in 2025 NT non-government schools continue to face financial challenges related to levels of funding and the distribution models for Federal and NT Government contributions. Amplifying our challenges was the need in 2025 to match the wages being paid by the NT Government to public school teachers. Western Australia and the NT also continue to be the only jurisdictions in Australia where there is no state or territory support for capital funding of non-government schools. Our concerns related to these matters were raised with government in 2025, and work will continue to lobby for fair and equitable funding for Catholic and other non-government schools in the NT.

Our CENT Aboriginal Catholic Community Schools (ACCS) continued to flourish in 2025. Some experienced enrolment growth and improved attendance, and in all schools the Catholic Aboriginal Leadership Teams (CALT) continue to educate and support other school staff in providing cultural connections and fostering communication and relationships with community. Our Catholic Aboriginal Leadership Teams continue to be a feature we point to when describing the unique NT context of our educational landscape.

Also contributing to educational outcomes in 2025 in remote communities was the work by our Quality Education Support Team (QEST) to promote and enable senior pathways and to support and resource unit planning and assessment.

At a whole of system level, our Learning Alliance work continued in 2025 with the hope that through shared beliefs and understandings around pedagogy and assessment and with data-informed insights and decision-making, we can build student engagement and strengthen educational outcomes. While our Learning Alliance work only commenced in 2024, there are early indications positive progress is being made. In a number of areas in NAPLAN across a number of year levels, CENT averages have moved closer to national averages. In relation to Better Fairer Schools Agreement targets set by the Federal Government CENT was the only Catholic jurisdiction in Australia to already achieve the 2030 target of moving 10% of students into the 'Strong and Exceeding' proficiencies (Year 9 Reading) as compared to 2023 NAPLAN results. CENT also achieved this 2030 target of reducing by 10% the number of students in the 'Needs Additional Support' proficiency (Year 7 Numeracy, Year 7 Reading, and Year 9 Reading).

In relation to NAPLAN results, the Australian Curriculum Assessment Reporting Authority (ACARA) offers analysis that cuts through the noise generated by league tables which may appear in the press.

Each year ACARA lists the top 25 schools in each state and territory where student growth in learning is significantly above expectations when considering 2024 and 2025 NAPLAN data. In ACARA's own terms, these are 'Schools Making a Difference'. It is with pride and gratitude that we celebrate the fact five of our CENT schools were on this list for the NT. In 2023 we had only one school included on this list. The schools are:

- Our Lady of the Sacred Heart Alice Springs
- St John's Catholic College
- Mother Teresa Catholic Primary School
- Holy Spirit Catholic Primary School
- O'Loughlin Catholic College

These are very affirming results for these schools, and we rightly acknowledge and celebrate their achievements. A system-level initiative which has continued into 2025 was our commitment to stakeholder engagement through our 'Tell Them From Me' (TTFM) survey instrument. Data and insights collected through this process allow us to identify challenges and celebrate progress across a range of indicators such as Catholic Identity, student and staff wellbeing, academic engagement and safety. This feedback has also been critical in assisting the formation of our strategic documents and in having opportunities to celebrate successes and progress.

The difficult decision to close the boarding facility at St John's Catholic College was made in 2025. Declining student numbers, uncertainty regarding government funding, escalating costs and the need for capital works beyond the financial scope of CENT all contributed to the Catholic Education Council NT recommending the closure to the Bishop. Through close work and consultation with families and students, all students were found alternative placements or pathways for the 2026 school year.

CENT's commitment to safeguarding was enhanced in 2025 with the appointment of a 'Leader of Safeguarding'. This permanent position will coordinate and support CENT's activities in relation to areas such as safeguarding policies and procedures, training of staff, OCHRE Card monitoring, investigations and working with external agencies.

Our 2025 story reflects a continued desire to build and enhance the culture of care, collaboration and excellence we aspire to. The remainder of this report shares many other aspects of our 2025 journey as 'Pilgrims of Hope', which lay foundations for all we seek to achieve in 2026.



Photo:Holy Family Catholic Primary School – Karama



What we Do at CENT

Photo: Our Lady of the Sacred Heart Catholic College – Alice Springs

What We Do

Catholic Education Northern Territory (CENT) is a vibrant network of 18 schools deeply rooted in Christian values and the rich history and traditions of Australia's Top End. Our schools have dedicated themselves to educating children and strengthening families across the Northern Territory for over a century.

Transformative leadership guides our contemporary learning communities, which embrace a culturally diverse student body. CENT schools are welcoming, inclusive spaces that foster community and provide opportunities for both students and educators to thrive.

We are committed to delivering outstanding education at every stage of the learning journey—from Early Learning Centres and Transition programs through to Secondary education. Our focus is on equipping students with the skills, mindset, and compassion needed to make a positive impact in our global community.

Across our 18 schools, we cultivate dynamic environments of learning, discovery, and innovation, preparing students to contribute meaningfully to the world around them.

Our Values:

LOVE
WISDOM
COMPASSION
COURAGE
JUSTICE

"Wisdom leads to Justice, which is expressed in Courage, Compassion and Love"

OUR VISSION

Inspired by the Gospel of Jesus Christ, we commit to educational excellence, equity and fullness of life for all.

OUR MISSION

Through servant leadership, we witness Gospel values in a faith community; integrating life and learning in a culture of care, collaboration and excellence.

Acknowledgement of Country

Catholic Education Northern Territory acknowledges the Traditional Owners of Country throughout Australia and recognise the continuing connections to lands, waters and communities. We pay our respects to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures; and to elders past, present and emerging.



Photo: St Francis of Assisi Catholic Primary School - Humpty Doo



Our CENT Schools Map

Photo: Ltyentye Apurte Catholic School - Santa Teresa, Alice Springs

E Early Learning Centre
O Outside School Hours Care
P Pre-School

18 Schools & Colleges

9 Communities

5,343 Students Enrolled

1 Darwin

Holy Family Catholic Primary School
Karama | 248 students E O

Holy Spirit Catholic Primary School
Wanguri | 243 students E O

St Mary's Catholic Primary School
Darwin City | 180 students E O

St Paul's Catholic Primary School
Nightcliff | 221 students E O

O'Loughlin Catholic College
Karama | 599 students

St John's Catholic College
Darwin City | 287 students

2 Palmerston

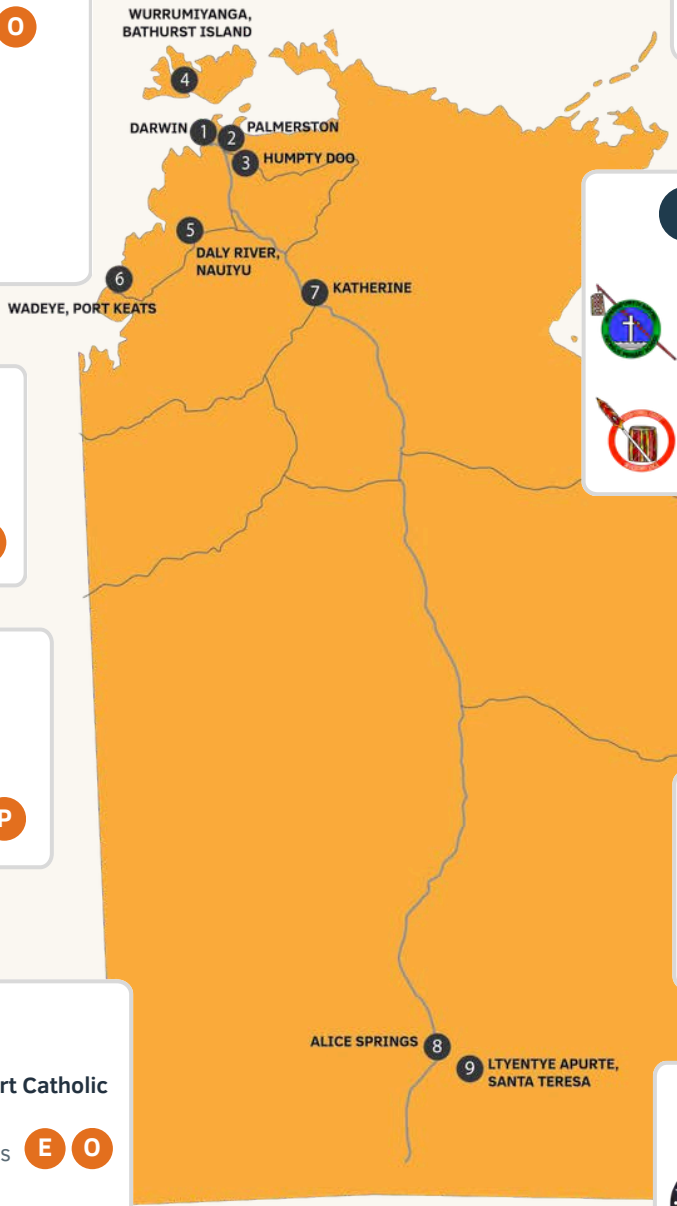
Sacred Heart Catholic Primary School
Woodroffe | 165 students E O

Mother Teresa Catholic Primary School
Zuccoli | 379 students E O

MacKillop Catholic College
Johnston | 795 students

3 Humpty Doo

St Francis of Assisi Catholic Primary School
Humpty Doo | 107 students E O



4 Wurrumiyanga, Bathurst Island

Murrupurtiyanuwu Catholic Primary School
Wurrumiyanga | 167 students

Xavier Catholic College P
Wurrumiyanga | 92 students

5 Daly River, Nauiyu

St Francis Xavier Catholic School
Nauiyu | 78 students P

6 Wadeye, Port Keats

OLSH Thamarrurr Catholic College
Wadeye | 467 students P

7 Katherine

St Joseph's Catholic College
Katherine | 299 students E O

8 Alice Springs

Our Lady of the Sacred Heart Catholic College
Alice Springs | 823 students E O

St Joseph's Catholic Flexible Learning Centre
Alice Springs | 82 students

9 Santa Teresa

Ltyentye Apurte Catholic School
Santa Teresa | 111 students E O



Governance Catholic Education Council of the Northern Territory

Photo: Australian Catholic Youth Festival, Melbourne (Melbourne Archbishop Peter Comensoli blessing the WYD Cross and Icon being held by students from OCC and MCC prior to the pilgrimage walk.

The Catholic Education Council

The Catholic Education Council of the NT (CEC NT), established by the Bishop of Darwin, is the key advisory and consultative body on all matters relating to education within the Diocese and reports to the Bishop.

Members of the CEC NT assist the Bishop in the exercise of his ecclesiastical, educational and legal authority and responsibility for Catholic Education in accordance with the provisions of Canon Law (Canon 803 #1; 806 #2) and the Catholic Church in the Northern Territory Act 1979 (as amended).

The objectives and functions of the Council are to serve the Church and the community by assisting in the over-sighting and promotion of Catholic education in the Northern Territory.

This is done in conjunction with the Catholic Education Office, hereinafter referred to as 'CEO', in accordance with the authority entrusted to the Council by the Bishop of Darwin.

Services to Catholic education in the Diocese of Darwin are provided by the Catholic Education Office and guided by the Council.

While both these bodies have their own specific role and function, they complement each other in striving to preserve and strengthen an effective Catholic Education System in the Diocese of Darwin.

Relationships between the CEC NT and the CEO will be informed by a spirit of cooperation and openness, each body mindful of its proper role:

- To foster unity of purpose and to enhance the coordination on matters of common concern amongst all involved in Catholic education in the Northern Territory.
- To ensure all policies embody the Catholic ethos, building a community of faith and encouraging learning for life.
- To recommend policy on matters relating to Catholic education to the Bishop.
- To recommend guidelines in order to assist in the overall religious education of Catholics in the Diocese.
- To provide a link between Catholic Education in the Northern Territory (CENT), the National Catholic Education Commission (NCEC) and other relevant ecclesiastic bodies at the state, national and international level.
- To advise on dealings with Governments, public authorities and other funding providers regarding the philosophy and the needs of Catholic education.
- To provide guidance and support for individuals and groups responsible for the provision and management of Catholic education in the Northern Territory, including the CEO, principals, school leadership, parish priests and Advisory School Boards.
- In collaboration with relevant stakeholders to make recommendations regarding any major alterations in the provision of Catholic education in the Diocese such as the extension, reorganization, establishment and closure of education facilities.
- To recommend the allocation of funds provided by the Northern Territory Government, the Australian Government, and other funding providers.
- To oversee the budget and financial management of Catholic Education in the Northern Territory.



Photo: St Joseph's Catholic College – Katherine



Catholic Education Council Membership

Photo: Murrupurtiyanuwu Catholic Primary School - Wurrumiyanga, Bathurst Island

Catholic Education Council Membership

Council members from the Northern Territory are appointed by the Bishop. Members represent the interests of students, parents, priests, religious, principals, teachers, Aboriginal communities and students with special needs in the Diocese.

Members should be knowledgeable and committed to Catholic Education in the Northern Territory. Members are selected based on skills, experience and mission attributes. All members are expected to contribute, according to their knowledge and expertise to fully engage in dialogue and decision-making process.

Council meetings held in 2025

10

- 24 Jan
- 28 Mar
- 02 May
- 12 May
- 04 June
- 04 July
- 01 Aug
- 23 Sept
- 24 Oct
- 05 Dec

President & Executive Officers

Bishop Charles Gauci — President

Mr Anthony Burton — Chair, Prev Parent

Mr Paul Greaves — Director of Catholic Education / Ex Officio

Ms Clalia Mar — Deputy Chair & Diocese Chancellor

Ex Officio Members

Paul Greaves (2023) — Director

Annalea McCurry — Deputy Director Teaching & Learning

Mr Dirk Botha — Deputy Director School Services

Ann Charles — Leader of Catholic Identity

Ms Alexa Gutenberger — Chief Financial Officer

Shane Donohue — School Improvement Partner

Jennifer Edstein-Boyes — School Improvement Partner

Ordinary Members

Ms Megan Evans — Principal (O'Loughlin Catholic College)

Fr Leo Wearden MSC PP — Priest

Fr Prakash Menezes SVD — Priest

Ms Stacy Parker — Aboriginal Representation

Jacqueline Conboy — Principal (OLSH Thamarrurr)

Mr Peter Caldwell — Community Member

Cynthia Page — CALT Representation

Donna Cartwright — Parent Representative

David Gomez — Community Member

Innocent Madamombe — Parent Representative



Photo: St Mary's Catholic Primary School – Darwin

Focus Discussions 2025

- St John's Catholic College Boarding
- Towards 2029 Strategic Plan
- Horizons report
- 2025 AIP Priorities
- Funding model for Non-Government Schools
- EBA
- Transition to Approved Authority
- Year of Jubilee 2025
- Non-Government School registration standards
- Tell Them From Me - Parent Survey
- Disability Standards for Education



Council Standing Committees

Photo: Xavier Catholic College – Wurrumiyanga, Bathurst Island

Catholic Education Office

Catholic Education Office works in partnership with Catholic schools, families, parishes and the wider community to serve and lead Catholic Education in the Northern Territory, for the achievement of excellence and equity in education, inspired through the Gospel of Jesus. The CEO provides a range of services and support to enhance the quality of education available to students in the following Key Areas of the School Improvement and Renewal Framework (SIRF):

Catholic Identity

Teaching & Learning

Finance, Facilities & Resources

Pastoral Care & Wellbeing

The Catholic Education Office is responsible to the Bishop of Darwin for:

- Policy advice;
- Disseminating information about approved educational,
- pastoral care and administrative policies to schools;
- Fostering policy implementation and evaluating their effects in Catholic schools; and
- Reporting to the Catholic Education Council of the Northern Territory (CEC NT).

CEC Constitution

Catholic Identity Standing Committee

The Catholic Identity Standing Committee is responsible for advising the Council on policy development, rep Religious Education and curriculum programmes and making recommendations in relation to Catholic Identity, Mission and Faith Formation.

Members

Fr Leo Wearden — CEC Member/ Parish Priest Wadeye - CIM Standing Committee - Chair

Ann Charles— Catholic Education Office, Leader Catholic Identity & Mission - Ex Officio and Operational Support

David Reilly — Community Representative, CECNT

Lucas Hurley — MacKillop Catholic College - Principal Representative

Catherine Moore — Catholic Education Office, Religious Education Officer

Denise Simon — Deputy Principal - OLSH Alice Springs

Andrew Morton — Ltyentye Apurte Catholic School - Principal Representative

Peter Baldry— St Francis Xavier Catholic School - Principal Representative

Terms of Reference

Photo: St Joseph's Catholic College – Katherine



Teaching and Learning Standing Committee

The Teaching & Learning (T&L) Standing Committee is responsible for advising the Catholic Education Council on policy development and reporting on the implementation of policies based on principles of Catholic teaching and practice, to serve the educational ministry of the Diocese as per the Standing Committee Terms of Reference.

Members

Anthony Burton — Chair

Annalea McCurry — Catholic Education Office, Deputy Director Teaching and Learning - Ex Officio and Operational Support

Candice Slingerland — Catholic Education Office, Leader Teaching & Learning - Non member

Megan Evans — O'Loughlin Catholic College - Principal Representative

Claire DeKuyer — Teacher Representative, St Mary's Catholic Primary School

Jennifer Edstein-Boyes— Catholic Education Office, School Improvement Partners - Deputy Chairperson

Jo Knight — St Paul's Catholic Primary School, Principal Representative

Shannon Feldtman (Whilst Jo on leave) — St Paul's Catholic Primary School, Acting Principal Representative

Adriaan DuPlessis— Catholic Education Office, Leader Inclusion Support Services - Non member

Lisa LeGros — Catholic Education Office, Leader Education & Care Services - Non member

Gabriel Rulewski— Curriculum Coordinator, MCPS

Amanda Puetz — Catholic Education Office, Administration Officer - Non member

Siobhan Shaikh — Parent Representative, St Mary's Catholic Primary School

Terms of Reference

Finance Facilities & Resources Standing Committee

The Finance, Facilities & Resources (FF&R) Standing Committee is responsible for advising the Council on policy development and implementation of approved policies and making recommendations for approval on issues relating to resources, finance and planning at school and system levels as per the Standing Committee's Terms of Reference.

Members

Peter Caldwell — Catholic Education Council NT Member - Chair

Paul Greaves — Catholic Education Office, Director of Catholic Education NT

Anne Coulter — Darwin Diocesan Office, Darwin Diocesan Development Fund

Nigel McPhee — (CESA)

Dirk Botha — Catholic Education Office, (Executive Officer)

Alexa Gutenberger — Chief Financial Officer

Stephen Versteegh — Sacred Heart Catholic Primary School Principal's Representative

Cameron Hughes — St John's Catholic College Principals' Representative

Terms of Reference



Photo: O'Loughlin Catholic College – Karama

Pastoral Care and Wellbeing Standing Committee

The Pastoral Care and Wellbeing Standing Committee is responsible for investigating, providing advice, and making recommendations to the Council on matters regarding Pastoral Care and Wellbeing including policies, processes and practices that contribute to curriculum, assessment and reporting in schools as per the Standing Committee's Terms of Reference.

Members

Clalia Mar — Chair - CEC Member

Shane Donohue — Catholic Education Office - School Improvement Partners -Ex Officio Operational Support

Christine Sutherland — Catholic Education Office - Leader PCW&B - Deputy Chairperson

Sunniva Antonucci — St Joseph's Catholic College - Principal

Jennifer Rudyard — Holy Family Catholic Primary School - Principal's Representative

Kellie McGinlay — Murrupurtiyanuwu Catholic Primary - Principal

Tasha Roe — Catholic Education Office - Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnership

Cynthia Page — Catholic Education Office - EO - Remote Curriculum/ CALT Member

Lisa LeGros — Catholic Education Office - Leader Early Learning Education

Joe Crucitti (on parental leave)— Catholic Education Office - Senior Psycologist

Susanne Meyers (filling in while Joel is on leave)— Catholic Education Office - Senior Psycologist

Anthony Clifford — Catholic Education Office - Head of Integrity and Safe Guarding

Lucy Campbell — Catholic Education Office - EA

Terms of Reference



Photo: St Francis of Assisi Catholic Primary School – Humpty Doo



Statistical Snapshot - School and Staff Profile

Photo: Holy Family Catholic Primary School - Karama

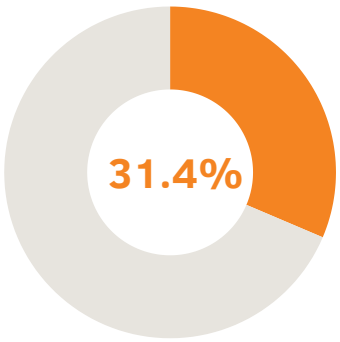
Our Students

In 2025, Catholic Education Northern Territory educated 5,343 students across 18 schools. Of these students, 31.4% identified as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander, and 1,332 students were supported through the Nationally Consistent Collection of Data (NCCD). Enrolments grew by 3.7% in 2025, continuing the positive growth trend of recent years.

5,343
Students

18
Schools

Student Profile & Growth



of students identified as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander

1,332
students supported through the Nationally Consistent Collection of Data (NCCD)

+3.7%
growth in enrolments during 2025



Photo: Holy Family Catholic Primary School - Karama

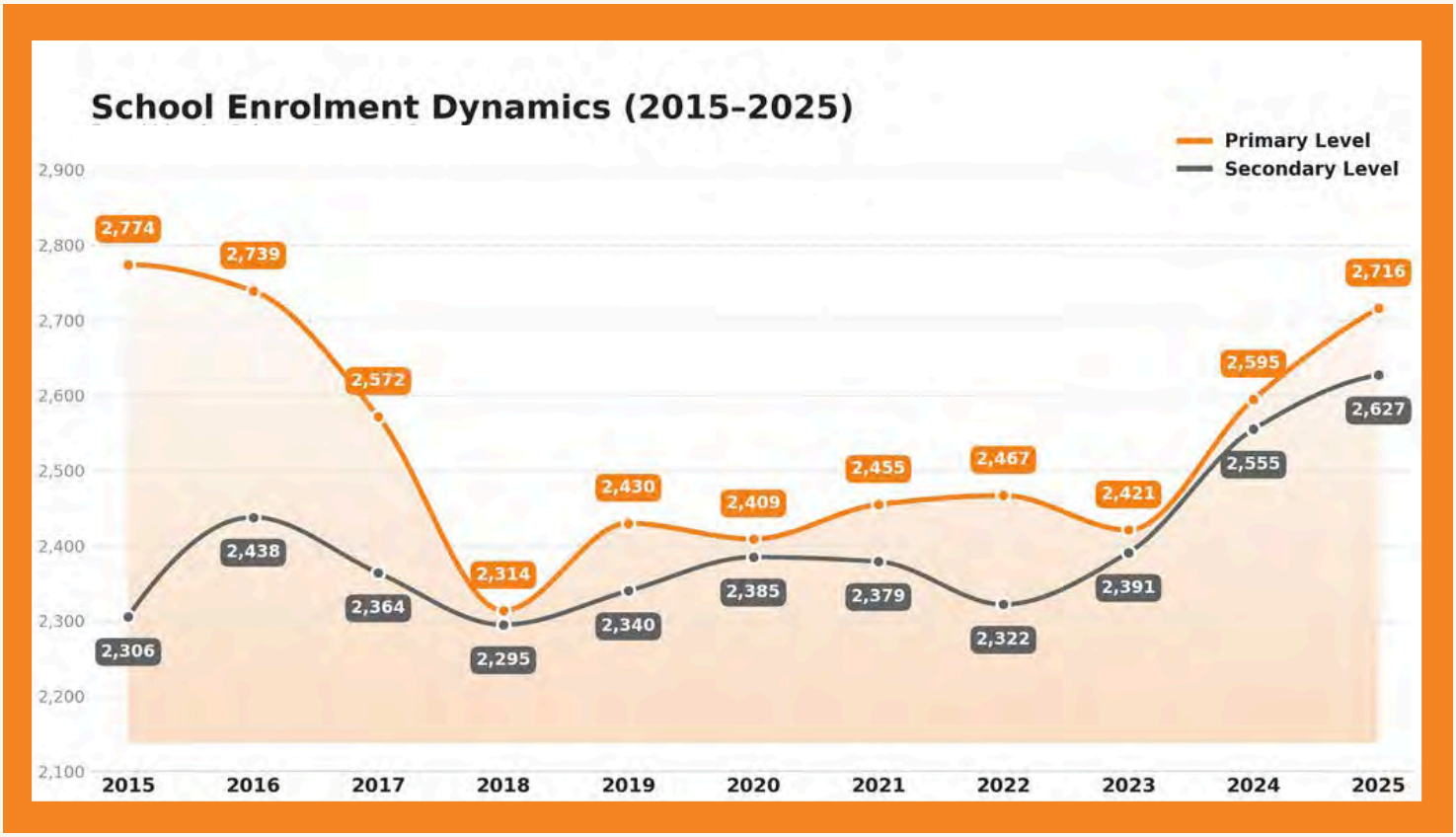
School Enrolment

In 2025, Catholic Education Northern Territory educated 5,343 students across 18 schools — the highest enrolment in more than a decade.

After a period of decline from 2016 to 2018, enrolments began to recover and then strengthened markedly from 2023. Growth of 3.7% in 2025 followed a strong lift in 2024, taking the system above its previous peak of 5,177 students in 2016.

Both primary and secondary enrolments contributed to this growth. Primary numbers rose to 2,716 and secondary to 2,627, reflecting renewed confidence among families across urban, regional and remote communities.





Staff Profile 2025

Across our schools and office, 1,070 staff brought this mission to life. Of these, 474 were teaching staff and 596 were non-teaching staff. 206 staff (19.3%) identified as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander. The system-wide student-to-teacher ratio was 12:1.

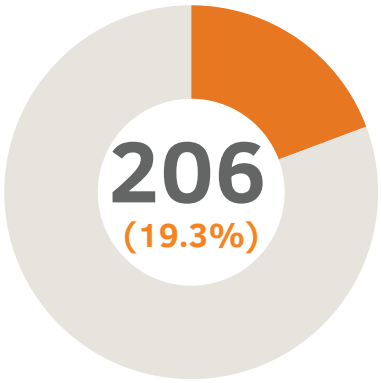
These figures reflect the dedicated people who serve students and families in urban, regional and remote communities across the Northern Territory.

1,070
Staff

18
Schools

Staff Profile





Staff identified as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander

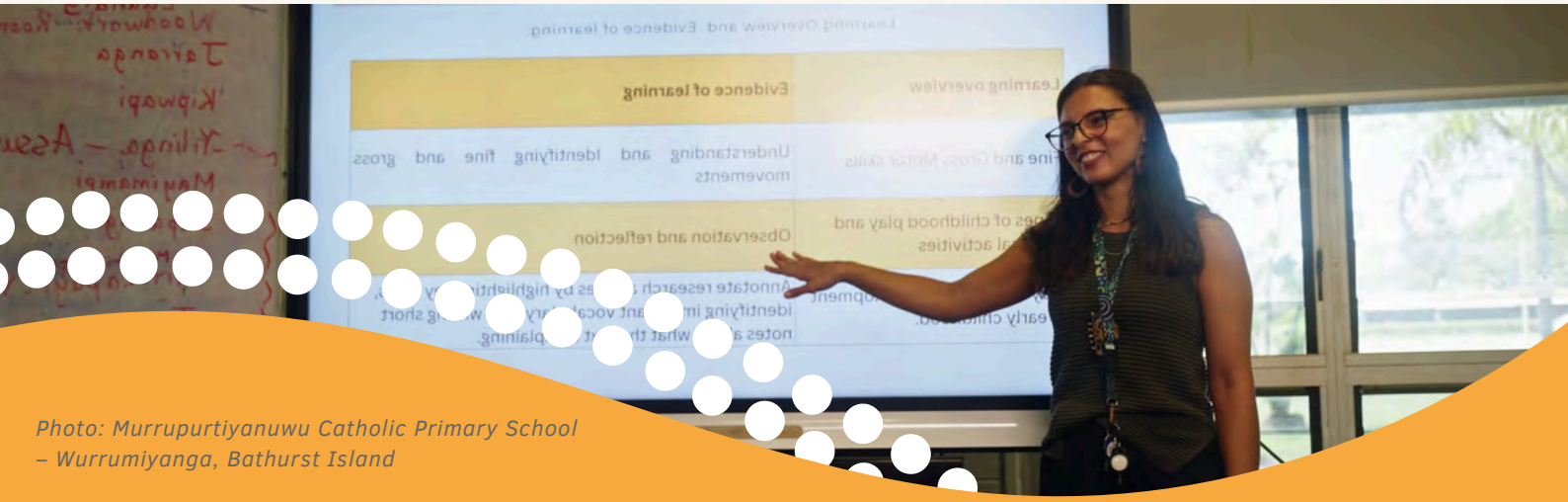


Photo: Murrupurtiyanuwu Catholic Primary School – Wurrumiyanga, Bathurst Island

2025 Highlights

A year of purpose, growth and hope across Catholic Education in the Northern Territory.

Faith and Formation

Staff journeyed as Pilgrims of Hope across the Territory, while students and staff represented CENT at the Australian Catholic Youth Festival in Melbourne, leading the procession through St Patrick's Cathedral and receiving the World Youth Day Cross and Icon.





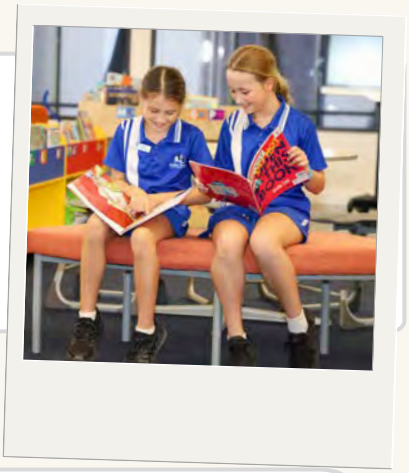


Senior Pathways in Aboriginal Catholic Community Schools

For the first time, two Aboriginal Catholic Community Schools independently delivered SACE subjects. Sixty-four students are now studying senior secondary pathways in their communities.

Growing Student Learning

NAPLAN results showed encouraging progress across the system. Following the implementation of systematic synthetic phonics, spelling results demonstrated substantial cohort growth. Improvements were also seen in Year 3 Reading and Year 7 Writing, with more students reaching the highest proficiency levels and fewer requiring additional support.





Supporting Every Learner

Trauma Informed Practice was rolled out system-wide, and a new Inclusion Support Process Guide brought greater consistency to how schools support students with additional needs. Early years programs, including You Can Share With Me, continued to nurture belonging and kindness.

2025 Highlights

A year of purpose, growth and hope across Catholic Education in the Northern Territory.

Strengthening Systems

Toddle was introduced as the new Learning Management System, and key digital integrations improved consistency and quality in teaching and learning across the system.



Investing in Our People

The 2025–2027 Enterprise Agreement was finalised, delivering improved wages and conditions. Responsible financial stewardship, including a strong surplus, is helping the system meet these increased costs while continuing to invest in staff and schools.



Community and Outreach

Catholic Education NT was present at the Darwin and Alice Springs shows, while refreshed digital campaigns and school websites helped share the story of our schools with families across the Territory.



Photo: Ltyentye Apurte Catholic School - Santa Teresa, Alice Springs



Strategic Plan: Towards 2026

Photo: 2025 Orientation Mass at St Mary's Star of the Sea Cathedral

Towards 2026: Strategic Plan

Educational Excellence Priorities, Forward

As always, Christians imitate Jesus, our first Teacher. He is the educator of all educators. The Catholic Education Northern Territory (CENT) Towards 2026 Strategic Plan is inspired by the Gospel of Jesus Christ in articulating a vision of educational excellence for every student in every school entrusted to our care. The plan is the product of collegiality, reflection, and analysis of past practice by the CENT Leadership team and schools. Inspired by our vision, mission, and values, it is unequivocal in its aspiration to elevate learning, formation, and achievement of young people. In conjunction with CENT Frameworks, it provides a clear roadmap for all those in Catholic Education Northern Territory to ensure we are moving forward together, directly connecting our educational mastery and leadership to the learning and wellbeing of the child in the classroom.

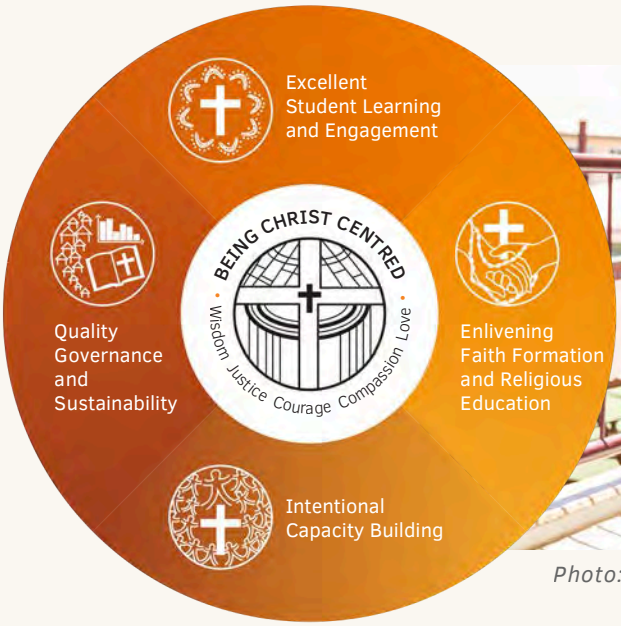




Photo: Our Lady of the Sacred Heart Catholic College – Alice Springs

Excellent Student Learning and Engagement

Continuous improvement for growth in teaching, learning, pastoral care and wellbeing through evidence informed pedagogy and practices.

STRATEGIC DIRECTIONS

- Facilitating learning opportunities that integrate faith, culture and life experiences.
- Promoting and facilitating evidence-informed teaching, learning assessment policies and practices.
- Embedding teaching, learning and wellbeing framework principles and practices.
- Applying common data sets and targets to inform progress and determine directions.

Intentional Capacity Building

Empowering and enabling staffthrough quality professional learning and formation.

STRATEGIC DIRECTIONS

- Applying the leadership framework to support discernment and inform decision making.
- Providing sustainable programs, formation and pathways to grow leadership and professional capacity.
- Building capacity in the collection, interpretation and analysis of data to inform future directions.

Enlivening Faith Formation and Religious Education

Nurturing authentic expression of Catholic Mission and identity.

STRATEGIC DIRECTIONS

- Creating faith formation opportunities for our people that are intentional, ongoing, purposeful and contextually aligned to CENT frameworks.
- Enhancing the classroom teaching, assessment and reporting of Religious Education using the Journey in Faith Curriculum and contemporary pedagogy in schools.
- Fostering dialogue and partnerships with families, parishes, diocesan and community stakeholders.

Quality Governance and Sustainability

Enabling good governance through co-responsible networks and partnerships.

STRATEGIC DIRECTIONS

- Partnering with key stakeholders in the transparent and effective stewardship of resources aligned to the CENT and related policies, processes and practices.
- Facilitating networking opportunities and partnerships that are inclusive, culturally responsive, purposeful and aligned with system priorities.
- Ensuring System sustainability by managing risk and equitably distributing resources in a culture of care and co-responsibility.

Priority 1

Excellent Student Learning and Engagement



Photo: Our Lady of the Sacred Heart Thamarrurr Catholic College – Wadeye, Port Keats

In 2025, Catholic Education Northern Territory continued to place Christ at the centre of teaching and learning, ensuring every student — whether in an urban classroom or a remote community school — experiences education that is culturally rich, evidence-informed and full of possibility.

A significant step forward was the creation of the Education Officer: NTCET position. This role has brought greater alignment and support to senior secondary pathways, with a particular focus on Aboriginal Catholic Community Schools. For the first time, two Aboriginal Catholic Community Schools are independently delivering SACE subjects. Sixty-four students are now studying senior secondary pathways in their communities, with more schools expressing interest for 2026.

The Quality Education Support Team continued its important work with ACCS to develop multi-age Middle Years (Years 7–9) units to support planning and assessment, carefully aligned with the Australian Curriculum v9 and the NT Indigenous Language and Culture Curriculum. Through scaffolding and modelling, teachers in remote schools are being supported to plan, teach and assess in ways that are both culturally responsive and educationally rigorous.

In the early years, the *"You Can Share With Me"* initiative was developed as a specialised preschool program rooted in the values of sharing, inclusivity and kindness. The program will be rolled out across all Education and Care services before transitioning into primary schools. Early years teams also strengthened the use of data through Xplor Playground Learning Analysis and the ECEC Early Years Dashboard, enabling more responsive planning for each child.

Inclusion and Student Wellbeing

Catholic Education NT continued to strengthen inclusive practice, ensuring that every student is known, supported and able to flourish.

The Inclusion Support Process Guide was developed and implemented, bringing greater consistency across all schools. Trauma-informed practice professional learning was implemented across the system through the delivery of 22 school-based suites and seven professional learning sessions for CENT staff and professional networks. This has provided a shared understanding of evidence-informed practice to create safe and supportive learning environments for students. Dedicated speech pathology, occupational therapy and psychology support were allocated to ACCS schools, and the *Cool Kids Project* provided small-group support to help students reduce anxiety and build lifelong coping strategies.

Safeguarding continued to deliver the Keeping Safe: Child Protection Curriculum to teachers and support staff, ensuring all staff are accredited. This curriculum strengthens students' understanding of respectful relationships and their ability to recognise and respond to harm, thereby creating a safer and more protective learning environment for every child.

In response to growing multicultural enrolments, school leaders participated in cultural awareness workshops and shared resources designed to support families navigating Australian life and school culture. This work helps reduce misunderstanding and creates a more welcoming environment for immigrant families.

Pastoral Care, Wellbeing and Behaviour coordinators also completed contextualised anti-bullying plans for their schools, aligning with the national Rapid Review into Anti-Bullying and strengthening consistent approaches across the system.

NAPLAN 2025

Overall Diocese - Spelling 2023-2025 Year 3 - Year 5 results

Following the implementation of systematic synthetic phonics across the Diocese, spelling results have shown substantial growth. This graph tracks the cohort progress of Year 3 students (2023) through to Year 5 (2025) within the NAPLAN spelling domain.



Photo: Our Lady of the Sacred Heart Thamarrurr Catholic College – Wadeye, Port Keats

Reading - Year 3

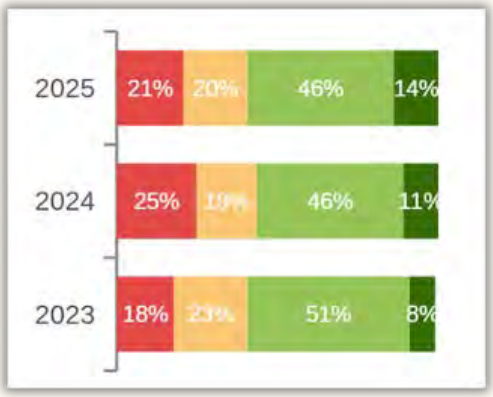
Over the past three years, the proportion of Year 3 students achieving the 'Exceeding' proficiency standard has increased, while the number of students in the 'Developing' or 'Needs Additional Support' bands has decreased.

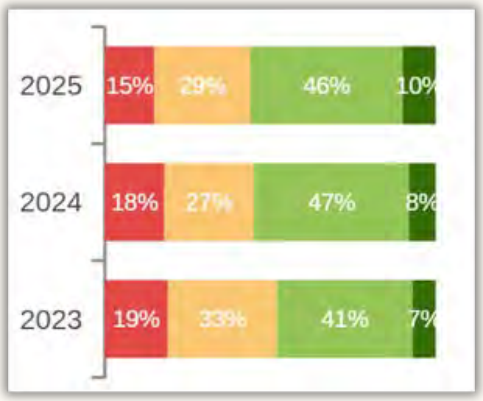
Writing Year 7

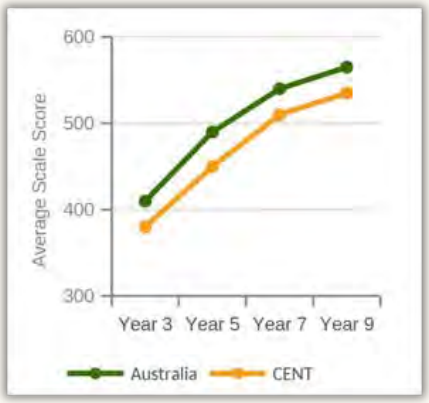
Over the past three years, the number of Year 7 students reaching the 'Exceeding' proficiency standard has increased, while the proportion of students requiring additional support continues to decrease.

CENT scale score trends compared with Australia

Overall, CENT scale scores across all five test domains maintain a trajectory consistent with Australian national results across all four year levels (Years 3, 5, 7, and 9).







Priority 2

Intentional Capacity Building



Photo: St Joseph's Catholic College – Katherine

Empowering and enabling staff through quality professional learning and formation remained a strong focus throughout 2025.

The Quality Education Support Team's Provisionally New Network supported more than 60 graduate and provisionally registered teachers, helping them move confidently towards full registration while developing the skills needed to teach effectively in the Northern Territory.

The Cultural Enrichment Program, delivered three times across the year by Aboriginal staff, provided formation for new CENT staff, Darwin Diocese clergy and the NET group. The termly Aboriginal and Islander Education Workers (AIEW) network continued to empower AIEWs to lead, supporting them to deliver professional development and cultural lessons with confidence. The Catholic Aboriginal Leadership Team (CALT) further advanced this work through an immersive On Country visit to Wadeye, deepening members' capacity for systemic advocacy, cultural leadership and self-determination.



Photo:Our Lady of the Sacred Heart Catholic College – Alice Springs

Support for early childhood leaders continued through the Sexton Consulting "Developing Early Years Leaders" initiative, building leadership capacity and workforce sustainability.

The establishment of the Head of Integrity and Safeguarding position has strengthened leadership and oversight of safeguarding across the system.

Ongoing management of the Case Management Spreadsheet is providing valuable data to identify risk and inform future training, while the Working With Children clearance audit process continues to ensure full compliance with legislative requirements.

Following research into principal well-being, a consultation group was established with the Northern Territory Catholic Principals Association. Confidential focus groups with school leaders provided authentic feedback that is now informing stronger support for leadership wellbeing. As part of this work, a Community Code of Conduct was developed that clearly outlines expectations for respectful and safe behaviour for all members of the school community.

Early in 2025, school leaders participated in the "School Leaders and the Law" program, strengthening their understanding of governance, risk and compliance.

Deputy Principal Network days continued to provide targeted professional learning in financial management, curriculum, people management and governance.

All staff across Catholic Education Northern Territory completed the Tell Them From Me staff perception survey. Results showed positive shifts, including increased collaboration, improved satisfaction with communication, and a stronger sense of belonging among staff.

The successful finalisation of the 2025–2027 Enterprise Agreement delivered improved wages, leave provisions and professional support. Streamlined recruitment and onboarding, the introduction of Flare Benefits, and targeted training further strengthened the conditions and capability of staff across the system.



Photo: O'Loughlin Catholic College – Karama

Priority 2

Intentional Capacity Building



Photo: St John's Catholic College – Darwin

Photo: CALT group photo, On Country visit to Wadeye



Photo: CALT visit to St Francis of Assisi Catholic Primary School



Photo: Termly AIEW network continued in 2025

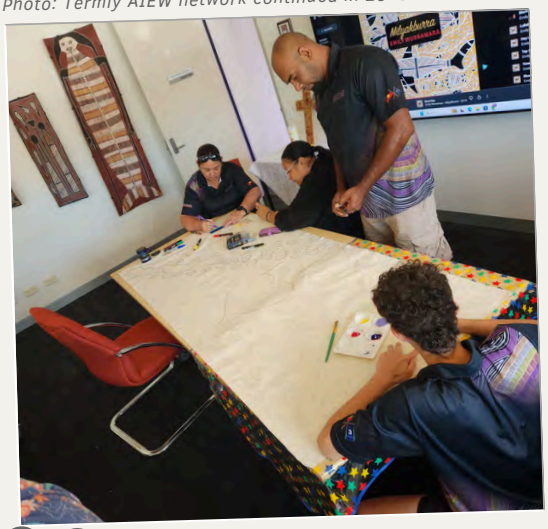




Photo: CALT visit to St Mary's Catholic Primary School

Priority 3

Enlivening Faith Formation and Religious Education



Photo: Australian Catholic Youth Festival (ACYF)

In the spirit of the Jubilee Year 2025, the Catholic Identity and Mission Team invited staff across the Territory to journey as Pilgrims of Hope – Opening the Doors of Your Heart. From urban schools to remote communities, the team travelled thousands of kilometres, gathering people through storytelling, scripture, deep listening and creative expression.

The Journey in Faith Religious Education curriculum continued to be refined and migrated onto the Toddle platform. All Made in the Image of God units were reviewed and streamlined, supported by intensive training for Assistant Principals Religious Education and Religious Education Coordinators.

Partnerships across the Diocese were strengthened through formation offered to clergy, Diocesan Office staff and the Aboriginal Diocesan Pastoral Council. Schools and the Catholic Education Office actively participated in Caritas' Project Compassion. A highlight of the year was the opportunity for students and staff to attend the Australian Catholic Youth Festival in Melbourne, where students led the procession through St Patrick's Cathedral and received the World Youth Day Cross and Icon.

In our Early Years services, the Godly Play program continued to deepen children's encounter with faith. Teachers and educators took part in an intensive three-day workshop with Sr. Nuria, growing in confidence and skill. Children have responded with remarkable enthusiasm — engaging deeply with the stories and looking forward to the celebration of faith that concludes each session.



Photo: Australian Catholic Youth Festival (ACYF)



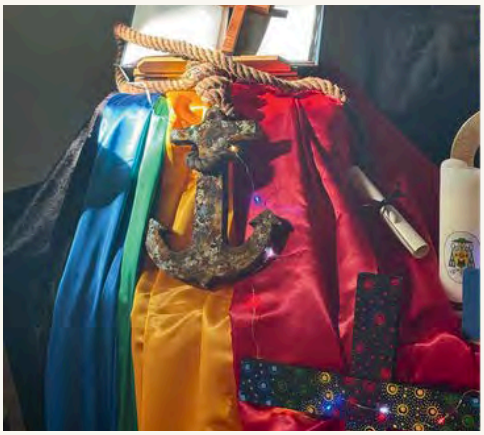
Photo: Australian Catholic Youth Festival (ACYF)






HOPE












Messages
OF
HOPE


HOPE




Catholic Education
JUBILEE 2025
PILGRIMS OF HOPE
STAFF FORMATION
HOPE
HOPE


EVERYTHING.
Luke 4: 16-21
HOPE


PILGRIMS OF HOPE
AHENTYE-
ANEME


HOPE






HOPE









Priority 4

Quality Governance and Sustainability



Photo: Murrupurtiyanuwu Catholic Primary School – Wurrumiyanga, Bathurst Island

School Services continued to strengthen the systems, people and processes that enable Catholic Education Northern Territory to serve schools with care and integrity.

A major achievement was the finalisation of the 2025–2027 Enterprise Agreement. Recruitment and onboarding processes were streamlined, and CENT's registration as an immigration sponsor under the Designated Area Migration Agreement now enables the system to respond more effectively to workforce needs. The launch of Flare Benefits further supported staff wellbeing.

Digital systems were strengthened through the rollout of Toddle and Digistorm, real-time attendance integration, improved online enrolments and clearer family billing statements. Behind the scenes, the Applications team's expertise continued to strengthen system integrations and data reliability, providing schools with more accurate and timely information to support teaching, learning and decision-making.

Business Intelligence dashboards are giving educators better insights to support student learning. Cybersecurity remained a priority, and legacy systems were decommissioned.

Work Health and Safety saw continued improvement. While overall reporting increased — reflecting a healthy culture of transparency — injury-related reports decreased by 7%. Training and systems such as 1Place and Chemwatch continued to evolve.

Across the system, the Marketing and Communications team also delivered strong outreach throughout the year, participating in the Darwin and Alice Springs shows and delivering refreshed digital campaigns locally, interstate and internationally and leveraging the HILDA report to drive home the benefits of a Catholic Education.

Safeguarding processes continued to mature in 2025. A central glossary was established to ensure consistency across policy and procedure settings. The Safeguarding team regularly contributes to networking days, providing contemporary advice and guidance, and the Safeguarding Risk Management Plan continues to be reviewed and updated to remain current and effective.

A significant partnership was formed with Macquarie University to trial the national My Mind Check tool at Murrupurtiyanuwu Catholic Primary School on the Tiwi Islands. This culturally responsive collaboration aims to make a valuable wellbeing resource more accessible for Aboriginal students and communities.



Photo: St Mary's Star of the Sea Cathedral, Darwin City



Photo: Bishop Charles

Finance and Infrastructure

Catholic Education NT is the approved authority for all 18 Catholic schools in the Northern Territory.

The Schooling Resource Standard (based on the Australian Education Act 2013) and bilateral agreement between the Commonwealth and NT Government determine the funding of non-government schools. Catholic Education receives 80% of its funding from Commonwealth Government and 15.09%* of its funding from the Northern Territory Government.

The funding is reduced by the 'capacity to contribute' amount, which applies to all non-government schools. It takes into account the ability of the school community to contribute and is calculated using the 'Direct Measure of Income'. The funding for remote Indigenous schools is not adjusted for the 'capacity to contribute', providing those schools with full Commonwealth and NT funding based on the same percentage split (80%/15.09%).

The Commonwealth government contributed $135 million and the NT Government contributed $23 million, to provide a total of $158 million in recurrent funding. The recurrent grant funding includes various loadings for disability, location, etc.

Catholic Education charged a total of $17 million in school and tuition fees across the 12 urban schools and provided 10% in discounts to ensure all children that seek Catholic Education have access to such.

All our remote schools in Indigenous communities do not collect fees.



Photo: Mother Teresa Catholic Primary School – Palmerston

Remuneration expenses are, with 62%, the largest expense, followed by Building and Ground expenses with 7% of the overall expenses.

The overall surplus for 2025 totalled $24 million, representing an 11% net margin.

2025 savings will be critical to match the increased future wage demands of the new Employee Bargaining Agreement, which aimed to match the NT Department of Education's Teacher wage offering. The NT Government utilised the "special case" funding increase from the Commonwealth Government as part of the Bilateral Agreement to increase teacher wages to the point where NT public school teachers will be the best paid in Australia. Catholic Education must fund the wage increases from reserves until the NT Government is also financing non-government schools to the full 100% in 2029.

More generally, surpluses and reserves assist our financing and investing cash flow needs. It allows us to service the loans for Catholic Education's most recently built schools and build cash reserves for our ageing asset base. Capital infrastructure improvements have to be financed through Catholic School reserves generated from family income, as recurrent federal and NT school funding is restricted for such use. In 2025, the total spent on capital infrastructure improvements across the system was over $16 million.

For further information about our school's financial records, please refer to *www.myschool.edu.au*. A full set of financial statements can be viewed through the Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission (ACNC) for each of the individual schools and Catholic Education as an approved authority (www.acnc.gov.au).

* The 15.09% NT Government contribution is a system-wide contribution across all non-government schools. This means that all non-government schools in total receive an NT Government funding contribution of 15.09%; however, this might vary for individual schools.

The Capital Infrastructure Team, overseen by the Chief Financial Officer, planned and worked with various schools and consultants on the design and construction of multiple capital infrastructure projects, with some seeing completion into 2026. In 2025, the total amount spent on capital infrastructure was over $16 million, with over $5 million spent on repairs and maintenance. The projects varied from upgrading of teacher housing in Remote Communities, to classroom, hall, and ablution block upgrades.

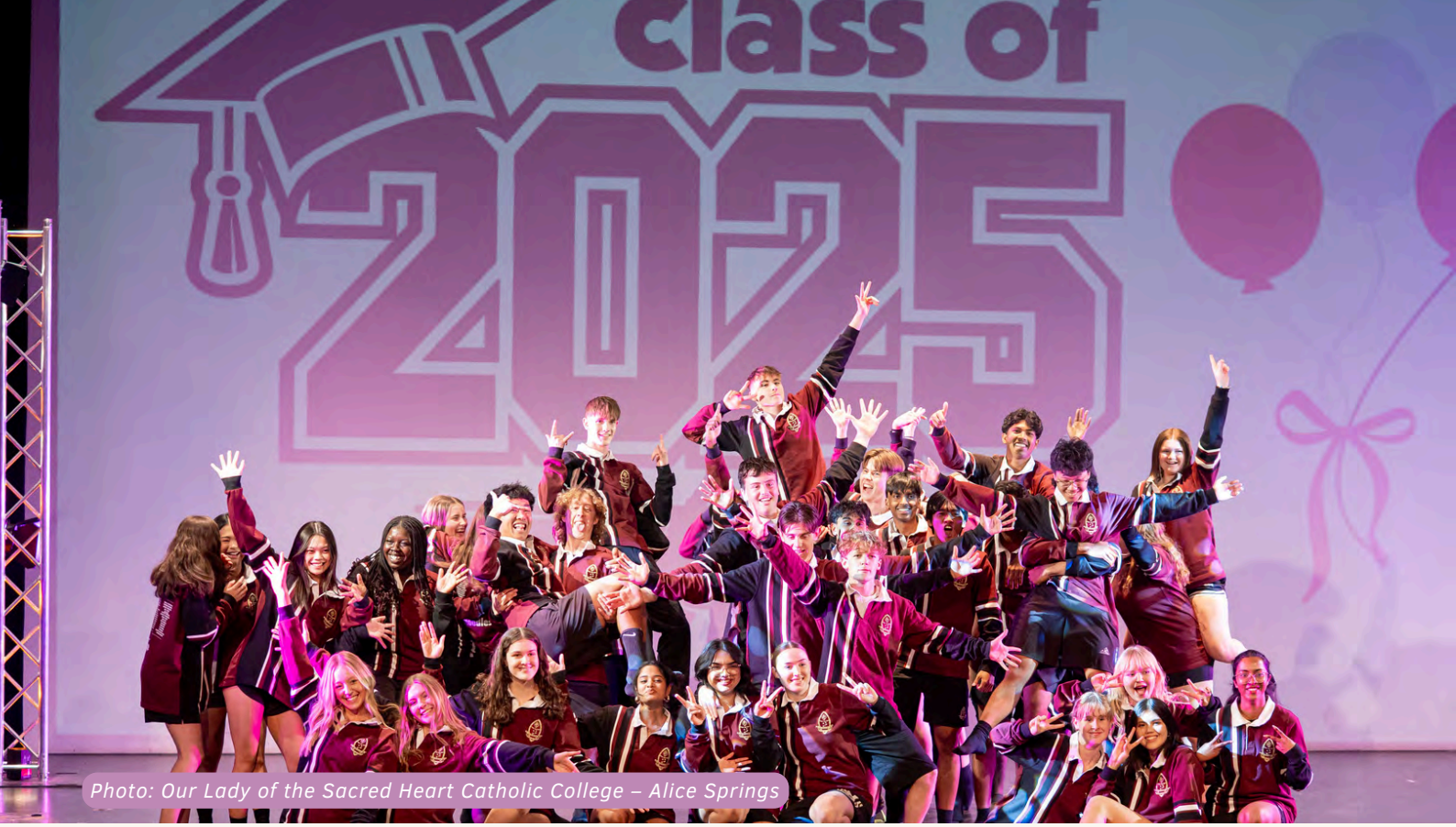


Photo: Our Lady of the Sacred Heart Catholic College – Alice Springs

Looking Ahead

As we close the 2025 school year, we also mark the conclusion of our Towards 2026 Strategic Plan. The achievements outlined in this report stand as a testament to the dedication of staff, students, families and communities across Catholic Education Northern Territory.

Looking forward, we step into the next chapter guided by Towards 2029. Inspired by the Emmaus story, this new plan invites us to continue walking together — recognising Christ in one another and allowing our shared mission to set our hearts burning within us.

The four priorities of:

- *Empowering Excellence,*
- *Igniting Potential,*
- *Living Catholic*
- and *Striving Together* will shape our work in the years ahead.

Financial sustainability remains an important part of this journey. Until the Northern Territory reaches full 100% funding of non-government schools in 2029, Catholic Education will continue to carefully steward its reserves to support both people and infrastructure.

Alongside these efforts, the Horizons 2030 and Beyond process has provided a valuable opportunity for deep listening across our schools and communities.

This work remains a conversation — one that we will continue to shape with schools, families and communities as we look towards the next decade.

As we move forward, we do so with confidence in our shared mission: to deliver educational excellence, equity and fullness of life for all, inspired by the Gospel of Jesus Christ.



Photo: Sacred Heart Catholic Primary School – Palmerston

In Closing

Catholic Education Northern Territory acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of the lands on which our schools and offices stand across the Northern Territory. We pay our respects to Elders past, present and emerging and recognise the continuing connection of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to land, waters and community.

We thank the many people who have contributed to the life and work of Catholic Education Northern Territory in 2025 — our principals, teachers, support staff, school boards, families, parish communities, the Catholic Aboriginal Leadership Team, and our partners across the Diocese of Darwin. Your commitment, care and faith make our shared mission possible.

Inspired by the Gospel of Jesus Christ, we remain committed to educational excellence, equity and fullness of life for all.



Acronyms

ACARA	Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority
ACCS	Aboriginal Catholic Community Schools
ACNC	Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission
AIEW	Aboriginal and Islander Education Workers
AIP	Annual Improvement Plan
CALT	Catholic Aboriginal Leadership Team
CEC NT	Catholic Education Council of the Northern Territory
CENT	Catholic Education Northern Territory
CEO	Catholic Education Office
CIM	Catholic Identity and Mission
EBA	Enterprise Bargaining Agreement
ECEC	Early Childhood Education and Care
FF&R	Finance, Facilities & Resources
NAPLAN	National Assessment Program – Literacy and Numeracy
NCCD	Nationally Consistent Collection of Data
NCEC	National Catholic Education Commission
NTCET	NT Certificate of Education and Training
OLSH	Our Lady of the Sacred Heart
QEST	Quality Education Support Team
SACE	South Australian Certificate of Education
SIRF	School Improvement and Renewal Framework
T&L	Teaching and Learning
TTFM	Tell Them From Me
WYD	World Youth Day

"May our hearts continue to burn within us as we walk together into the future."



Catholic Education Northern Territory
Berrimah, Darwin
Northern Territory, Australia

Phone: (08) 8984 1400
Email: admin@ceont.catholic.edu.au

Website: www.ceont.catholic.edu.au

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NORTHERN TERRITORY
Faith in their future