

HORIZONS

2030 and Beyond

REPORT SUMMARY • AUGUST 2025

Horizons 2030 and Beyond presents a shared vision for the future of Catholic education in the Northern Territory. Commissioned by the Catholic Education Council (CEC), it draws on evidence, experience and community voices to shape the next chapter in Catholic Education Northern Territory's (CENT) mission to deliver *Excellence, Equity and Fullness of Life for All*.

Importantly, this is not a fixed plan. The 28 proposed actions are **ideas for discussion, not final decisions**. Any future changes will only be made after careful consultation with parents, families, staff, clergy, and school communities, ensuring they reflect the needs and aspirations of each local context.

This summary explains the purpose of Horizons 2030 and Beyond, how it was developed, and the key findings and proposed actions that emerged through months of listening and consultation. It offers a roadmap for ongoing conversation and collaboration, helping schools and families plan together for a strong and faith-filled future for Catholic education in the Northern Territory.

Your voice matters – these directions will be shaped with schools, families, and communities every step of the way.

Why We Started This Journey

In 2024, the Catholic Education Council (CEC) commissioned Horizons 2030 and Beyond to consider how Catholic Education NT could strengthen its future as a system of schools that are Catholic in identity, purpose, and character. The project explored ways to:

- Support student wellbeing and faith formation
- Improve curriculum, pathways, and teaching
- Grow enrolments
- Strengthen school, family, and parish partnerships
- Use resources wisely

This report offers a realistic and hopeful picture of where Catholic education is now and proposes a shared pathway for renewal in the spirit of synodality—a journey that will only take shape through listening, dialogue, and collaboration with the communities we serve.

Shaping the future of Catholic education in the NT—together.

Our Catholic Identity

Two core principles underpin the future direction of Catholic Education NT:

CENT schools are Catholic – committed to the Gospel, valuing the dignity of every learner, and nurturing the whole child: mind, body, and spirit.

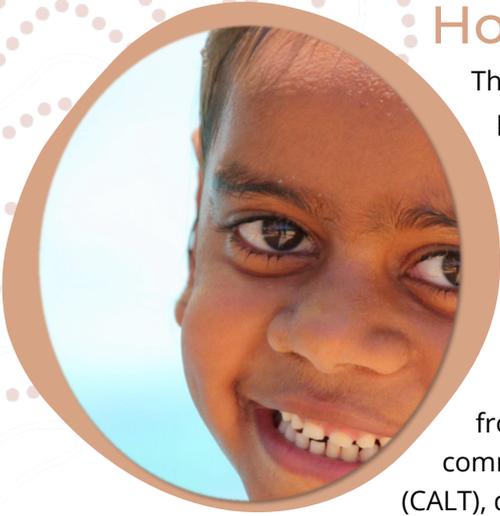
CENT schools are a system – connected and collaborative, working together in a shared mission while honouring the uniqueness of each school.

These pillars are supported by two important values:

SOLIDARITY – standing together as an inclusive community.

SUBSIDIARITY – empowering each school and local community to make decisions that serve their students best.





How the Plan was Shaped

The *Horizons* strategy was developed through a robust and collaborative process that took place across eight months, from July 2024 to March 2025. The work began with listening—through school visits, conversations, and yarning sessions that placed the voices of families, staff, and community members at the heart of the process.

The process included:

Visits to all 18 CENT schools, urban, regional and remote.

Consultations with school principals, clergy, system leaders and staff from the Catholic Education Office, Aboriginal representatives and community leaders, members of the Catholic Aboriginal Leadership Team, (CALT), diocesan leaders and School Board Chairs.

Insights from external Catholic education leaders and national experts who provided perspectives from other states and systems.

Analysis of CENT data on enrolment, attendance, student outcomes, transitions and staffing.

Review of research and guidance from:

- NT Government's *Review of Secondary Education* (2023)
- Catholic education documents from the Vatican, Australian bishops and diocesan systems
- National school data, leading educational research, and examples from other Catholic dioceses across Australia

This process ensured the proposed actions are firmly grounded in Catholic identity, guided by evidence, and tailored to the unique needs of schools and communities across the Northern Territory.

Listening first, guided by research, and shaped by community voices.

What We're Celebrating

Horizons 2030 and Beyond highlights the energy, dedication, and growth happening across Catholic Education NT. In every one of our 18 schools, staff, leaders, and families are working together to bring our Catholic mission to life with faith, care, and creativity

CENT schools are alive with faith, excellence and welcome.

Our schools are places of welcome, faith, and learning, and there is much to celebrate:

- A clear Catholic identity that is lived out in each school community
- Strong leadership and talented future leaders coming through
- Dedicated staff who are passionate about helping children learn and grow
- A supportive system of schools working more closely together
- More than 5,000 students enrolled in CENT schools, with continued growth
- Teachers sharing ideas and learning from each other across schools
- Increasing cultural and faith diversity that enriches our communities
- Shared approaches to reading, writing, maths, and student wellbeing that are lifting learning
- Strong partnerships with Aboriginal Catholic Community Schools and a deep commitment to Reconciliation
- Academic results improving and gaining national recognition

These strengths are a testament to the faith, hard work, and commitment of our educators, families, and parish communities—all helping to make Catholic schools vibrant places for young people to flourish.



Opportunities for Growth

While there is much to celebrate, the report also highlights areas to strengthen so every student can thrive. Like many school systems across Australia and overseas, Catholic Education NT faces similar challenges:

- **Working more closely together as one system**, while still supporting the unique strengths of each school
- **Helping more children attend school regularly** and reducing the need for families to move frequently between schools
- **Making school transitions smoother** so students can stay connected and confident from early learning through to high school
- **Finding and keeping more great teachers and principals**, across all our schools
- **Improving school facilities and resources** to meet the needs of growing communities
- **Lifting student progress in reading, writing, maths and senior years**, ensuring every student finishes school well-prepared for life

The 28 proposed directions in *Horizons 2030 and Beyond* are designed to address these challenges in ways that suit the needs of the Northern Territory and reflect the values of our Catholic community.

28 Proposed Directions for the future

The report suggests 28 interconnected directions to strengthen Catholic Education NT. These pathways are grouped into five key areas of focus, each designed to help schools grow and work together more effectively.



This visual framework shows the values, identity, and main directions that guide the Horizons 2030 plan for the future.

FOCUS 1: STRENGTHENING SYSTEM LEADERSHIP AND IDENTITY

- 01. Strengthen CENT as One System:** Build a stronger identity of CENT as a connected family of schools working together with shared goals, while respecting local context and uniqueness of each school.
- 02. Empower Principals as Faith and Instructional Leaders:** Support principals to lead faith/student formation and learning by clarifying roles and strengthening CEO support.

- 03. Explore Oversight Options for Early Learning and After-School Care:** Allow principals to focus on teaching and learning by considering a shift in management of early learning centres and after-school care to specialist local providers, working under CENT's dedicated coordination, while maintaining strong connections with their schools.
- 04. Strengthen the CEO's leadership and structure to better support schools:** Centralise key functions to streamline operations, avoid duplication and enhance efficiency. Elevate the Leader of Catholic Identity and mission to a Deputy Director role.
- 05. Create a Diocesan Catholic Education Charter and Prayer:** Develop a shared Charter and Prayer that expresses CENT Catholic mission, identity, and values. The Charter will explain the purpose and priorities of Catholic education in the NT, and the Prayer will provide a Christ-centred foundation for all schools.
- 06. Build a Leadership Development Framework:** Grow a pipeline of leaders—senior, middle and Indigenous—across all CENT schools.

FOCUS 2: REIMAGINING AND STRENGTHENING SCHOOL STRUCTURES

- 07. Create Learning Clusters Across Regions:** Organise schools into regional clusters to encourage collaborative planning, data sharing and professional development.
- 08. Consolidate and Align Key Schools:** Form three new colleges by bringing together O'Loughlin Catholic College with Holy Family Catholic Primary School, St Mary's Catholic Primary School with St John's Catholic College, and Murrupurtiyanuwu Catholic Primary School with Xavier Catholic College. Additionally, strategically align Lyentye Apurte CS with OLSH Alice Springs to streamline operations, optimise resources, and strengthen educational pathways.
- 09. Plan for St John's Catholic College Site:** Phase out boarding and reimagine the Catholic Education purpose of the site.

FOCUS 3: ENHANCING EDUCATIONAL EXCELLENCE AND COLLABORATION

- 10. Continue the CENT Schools Learning Agenda:** Keep using the evidence proven learning strategies to build a shared learning framework that helps students achieve their best and supports teachers in their work. Evidence-based methods—used by systems across Australia and internationally—remain a long-term priority for CENT.
- 11. Finalise and Strengthen System Literacy and Numeracy Programs** Ensure all schools consistently deliver the agreed teaching approaches for reading, writing and numeracy.
- 12. Implement a Strong and Consistent Curriculum with Tiered Support:** Ensure all schools follow a shared, quality-assured curriculum—and build a support system so that every student gets what they need, whether they are facing learning challenges, progressing steadily, **or** ready for extension.
- 13. Put CENT's Wellbeing and Care Policies into Practice Across Schools:** Ensure every school is consistently using CENT's pastoral care and wellbeing approach, so all students feel safe, supported, and connected as they learn and grow.
- 14. Expand Blended and Online Learning of Senior Courses:** Utilise hybrid or online learning options so students can access a broader range of senior subjects.
- 15. Promote High Expectations for All Students:** Build a shared belief across all schools that every student can learn and succeed.



16. **Redefine What Success Means:** Recognise that success is more than just grades—it also includes personal growth, cultural and spiritual identity, and wellbeing.
17. **Help More Students Complete Year 12:** Support more students to complete Year 12 NTCET and move successfully into further education, training or employment.

FOCUS 4: EXPANDING STUDENT AND STAFF OPPORTUNITIES

18. **Implement a System of Diocesan Awards:** Establish a diocesan-wide system of awards to celebrate the diverse achievements of students and staff in CENT schools. These awards will affirm excellence in academics, teaching, leadership, growth, cultural identity, and contributions to the school and diocesan community, fostering a culture of recognition and aspiration.
19. **Promote Vocational Education (VET) as a Valued Pathway:** Highlight and support vocational education in schools as a respected and worthwhile option, giving students practical skills and strong career opportunities.
20. **Explore a Trade Training Centre:** Investigate the feasibility of a dedicated centre where students can develop trade and technical skills aligned to local industry needs.
21. **Establish a Catholic University Presence in Darwin and initiate Teacher Education scholarships:** Partner with a Catholic University to establish a local hub providing teacher education and Catholic leadership programs, as well as programs to support local community and parish needs. This will be enhanced by scholarships, particularly for Aboriginal teacher development.
22. **Explore Options to Expand CENT's School Footprint:** Consider establishing additional Flexible Learning Centres in Darwin and Palmerston to support young people not suited to mainstream education, Additionally, explore the feasibility of a new T-12 school in the urban area to address sustained housing development and the enrolment capacity of MacKillop Catholic College. Also, investigate the potential need for an ELC/Primary School at Tennant Creek.

FOCUS 5: STRENGTHENING GOVERNANCE AND STAKEHOLDER RELATIONSHIPS

23. **Update the Way Secondary Schooling is Described:** Use simpler more inclusive language to describe Years 7 to 12 as one connected stage of learning instead of separating it into middle and senior school.
24. **Develop a Strategy for Enrolment Growth, Market Share, and Seamless Transitions:** Create an easy, single point enrolment process, reduce disruptions when students move between schools, and promote CENT schools more effectively to grow and retain enrolments.
25. **Renew the Skills of the Catholic Education Council (CEC):** Ensure the CEC has the right skills in governance, Catholic identity and educational leadership.
26. **Strengthen School Boards and Stakeholder Engagement:** Support existing School Advisory Boards more effectively, explore creating boards in interested Aboriginal community schools, and involve families and communities more through regular consultation and partnership.
27. **Update System Documentation:** Revise core CENT manuals and policies to reflect the system's new direction.
28. **Develop a Strategic Intent Statement for CENT:** Develop a unifying vision and mission statement that guides CENT's long-term priorities and identity.



Working Together on Future Changes

Bringing the vision of *Horizons 2030 and Beyond* to life will take time, conversation, and collaboration. The proposed actions are starting points that will be refined through further consultation with parents, school staff, and community members.

Future changes will be introduced thoughtfully, with CENT working side by side with schools and families to shape how and when each action is introduced, ensuring the best outcomes for every community.

The approach to implementation will:

- Start by **listening to feedback** from schools and communities
- Trial and **pilot new initiatives** before making broader changes
- Include **regular opportunities for feedback** and adjustment
- Ensure **Aboriginal Catholic Community Schools** are central to planning
- Build on each school's **unique strengths and character**

This is a starting point—not a finish line. The future of Catholic education will be shaped with parents, staff, and communities—together.

Shared Mission: Looking to the Future

The vision of *Horizons 2030 and Beyond* is bold yet practical. It honours the faith-filled history of Catholic education in the Northern Territory while looking ahead to the opportunities and challenges of a changing future.

The report makes it clear that Catholic Education NT is more than a group of schools—it is a united community shaped by Gospel values, strong partnerships, and deep respect for culture and Country. It reminds us of what we do well, shows where we need to grow, and offers a hopeful, faith-driven path forward.

The future of Catholic education here in the NT will rely on all of us—families, teachers, principals, priests, students, community leaders and system staff—working together, strengthened by our shared mission.

We are Catholic Education Northern Territory. Not this school or that school. Not the Catholic Education Office. We. All of us. Together.

