



Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Students Policy

1. Aim

- 1.1 Tombolo Academy recognises the universal right of every child to feel safe. We are committed to providing a friendly and inclusive environment for students in which their diversity and uniqueness is welcomed, respected and valued.
- 1.2 Tombolo Academy acknowledges that the risk of child abuse and other harm is heightened for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students when they do not feel culturally safe. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students may be less likely to disclose abuse or other harm due to a lack of cultural safety, and fear of authorities intruding into their family and community based on historical experiences of systemic racism and abuse.
- 1.3 Tombolo Academy strives to understand the diverse backgrounds and life circumstances of all children and students. We acknowledge that creating a culturally safe organization for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students requires a willingness to learn, understand and respond to the diversity of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture to empower participation in decision-making at our school.

2. Scope

- 2.1 The application of this policy is relevant to the governing board, the Principal, to school staff and parents.

3. Definitions

- 3.1 For the purpose of this policy, and its application, Tombolo Academy adopts the SNAICC definition for cultural safety:

'the child being provided with a safe, nurturing and positive environment where they are comfortable with being themselves, expressing their culture...their spiritual and belief systems, and they are supported by the carer... (who) respects their Aboriginality and therefore encourages their sense of self and identity.'

3.2 *Environments* refers to all physical, online or virtual places made available or authorised by Tombolo Academy for use by a student during or outside hours. *Environments* includes, but is not limited to, a campus of the school, online, virtual school environments and any other locations provided by the school or through a third-party provider for a student to use, such as locations used for camps, delivery of education and training, sporting events, excursions, competitions or other events.

3.3 For the purpose of this policy, and its application, Tombolo Academy adopts the Australian Human Rights Commission's definition of *racism*:

'Racism is the process by which systems and policies, actions and attitudes create inequitable opportunities and outcomes for people based on race. It includes all laws, policies, ideologies and barriers that prevent people from experiencing justice, dignity and equity because of their racial identity. It can come in the form of harassment, abuse or humiliation, violence or intimidating behaviour.'

4. Policy Statements

- 4.1 It is Tombolo Academy's policy that the diverse and unique identities of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students are respected and valued and that we provide a culturally safe environment for them to thrive. Tombolo Academy strives to deliver this with the following:

a) Identity

We understand that identifying as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander is one part of a child's identity and that each student is unique with their own characteristics, strengths and challenges and aim to provide a supportive environment in recognition of this.

b) Enrolment

Tombolo Academy identifies Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Students on enrolment as part of our standard process.

c) Family Engagement

Tombolo Academy understands that family is the cornerstone of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture, spirituality and identity and that family can be a broader concept than defined in some cultures.

Tombolo Academy will seek guidance from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students and their families on our provision of educational services and how the delivery of our services will impact their culture, including how they define what is comfortable and safe.

In order to contribute to the cultural safety of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students Tombolo Academy will seek to make student families welcome and include them at the School.

We recognise that approaches to parenting vary considerably across culturally diverse groups, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, but that the safety of children will always be paramount.

d) Cultural Awareness Engagement

Tombolo Academy recognises and engages in key actions, activities and events that acknowledge the history, and celebrate the culture of, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people including, but not limited to:

- i. Acknowledgement of Country.
- ii. Participation in National Aborigines and Islanders Day Observance Committee (NAIDOC) Week.
- iii. Acknowledgement of the National Government Apology to Australia's Indigenous People for the forced removal of Aboriginal children (Sorry Day).
- iv. Creating learning environments that are respectful of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures.

4.4 Racism

Tombolo Academy recognises that racism can be a form of child abuse and adopts measures to ensure racism within our School is identified, confronted and never tolerated.

Complaints about racism are taken seriously and we ensure that any instances of racism in our school environment are addressed with appropriate consequences.

4.5 Ongoing Learning

We recognise that inclusion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children is a continuous learning journey, requiring education, reflection and positive action to build awareness and understanding among our leaders, staff, volunteers, students and wider School community.

As the School develops and the make up of our students changes Tombolo Academy will engage with relevant training (e.g. cultural awareness training) and engagements (e.g. local Aboriginal elders) to ensure that the strategies within this policy evolve as we learn more about our students and their identities.

4.6 Training

Where staff or members of the Board have engaged in training relevant to the efforts to provide a culturally safe environment for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students key strategies will be shared with their peers. Records of training are maintained by the Administrative Team and monitored by the Principal.

4.7 Governance Strategies

Child Safety is a standing item in all Board meetings to ensure that we continue to monitor and review our efforts to provide a child safe environment. Cultural Safety forms part of these Child Safety discussions where relevant.

In addition, Tombolo Academy seeks to engage a mix of staff, volunteers and contractors that is diverse, with targets for diversity embedded into our governance strategies.

5. Breach

5.1 Staff, including the Leadership Team and Principal, Volunteers and Contractors who breach this Policy may be subject to disciplinary actions that may result in a range of measures including (depending on the severity of the breach):

- a) Remedial education
- b) Counselling
- c) Increased supervision
- d) Restriction of duties
- e) Appointment to an alternate role suspension

f) In the case of serious breaches, termination of employment, contract or engagement.

5.2 Where any other member of the School community breaches any obligation, duty or responsibility within this Policy, Tombolo Academy will take appropriate action.

6. Review

6.1 Tombolo Academy is committed to the continuous improvement of our Child Safety Program of which the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Students Policy is an essential part. We have established processes for the review and ongoing improvement of our child safe policies, procedures, and practices for overall effectiveness and to ensure compliance with all child safety related laws, regulations and standards.

6.2 Tombolo Academy reviews the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Students Policy at least every two years or after any significant child safety incident. We seek feedback from families and our School community in the development and review our child safety and wellbeing policies and procedures. We record and analyse all complaints, concerns, and safety incidents to identify causes and systemic failures and inform continuous improvement. We report on the outcomes of relevant reviews to staff, Volunteers, the school community, and families and students.

7. Policy Administration

Created date	March 2023
Policy Owner	The Principal
Consultation	School Staff School Board
Legislation	Education and Training Reform Act 2006 (Vic) Victorian Child Safe Standards as implemented by Ministerial Order 1359 Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006 (Vic)
Endorsed by	School Board
Endorsed on	June 2023
Last Review	June 2023
Next Review	June 2025