



St Mary's
ANGLICAN GIRLS' SCHOOL

INDIGENOUS
PROGRAM

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY

St Mary's Anglican Girls' School acknowledges and pays tribute to the Whadjuk Noongar people, the Traditional Custodians of the land on which we are located, and we pay our respects to their Elders – past, present and future.

We extend that respect to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who have contributed and continue to contribute to our national identity.

St Mary's recognises and values the continuity of cultural, educational and spiritual practices of First Nations Peoples and prays for the success of the continuing journey towards reconciliation.



St Mary's has been the school of choice for Indigenous girls for many years. While most of our Indigenous students are boarders, there are some who attend as day students in our Junior and Senior Schools.

Run by our Indigenous Student Coordinator, our Indigenous Program provides pastoral and academic support to our Indigenous students while strengthening the girls' understanding of their culture.

The program also enriches our School community, as it provides a platform for our Indigenous students to share their traditions, stories and learnings with fellow students, members of staff and the extended St Mary's family.



INDIGENOUS STUDENT COORDINATOR

Our Indigenous Student Coordinator, Julie Garnett, is responsible for creating a safe and supportive environment for our Indigenous students.



Her primary role is to act as an approachable and readily accessible point of contact, who is available to discuss the girls' wellbeing, academic progress and personal development.

Julie meets with the girls on a regular basis to build a sense of identity within our Indigenous student cohort, plan group activities and projects, and create a safe space for the girls to raise any concerns that they might have. She is responsible for monitoring the girls' academic progress and arranging additional support when it is needed.

Julie also advises our teachers about how to best support our Indigenous students academically and facilitates professional learning activities to broaden our staff's understanding of Indigenous culture and traditional practices.





SCHOLARSHIPS

St Mary's participates in a scholarship program run by MADALAH Limited, a not-for-profit organisation that offers secondary and tertiary education scholarships to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students from remote and regional communities.

Our MADALAH scholarship recipients enjoy frequent visits from MADALAH Mentors, who deliver tailored educational sessions and provide students with an opportunity to talk about their schooling experiences and future aspirations.

Scholars are also afforded opportunities to participate in activities and events with students from other local MADALAH Limited partner schools.

To learn more about MADALAH Limited's scholarships, please visit madalah.com.au or contact our Enrolments Team on (08) 9341 9121.

LIVING AWAY FROM HOME

We understand that leaving family, friends and country to attend school in Perth can be difficult. That is why our Indigenous Student Coordinator is there every step of the way to guide the girls through this period of transition. Julie meets with the girls regularly, communicates with their families and works closely with our Head of Boarding Kellie Douglas, Heads of Year and Wellbeing Team to make sure that each student feels settled and supported in our boarding house.





We recognise that each of our Indigenous boarding students has different backgrounds and needs; therefore, our goal is to create a culturally appropriate learning environment that supports their health, wellbeing and academic endeavours.

PERTH PAL PROGRAM

At St Mary's, we pride ourselves on welcoming each family into our boarding community, even before their daughters commence at the School. That all starts with our Perth Pal Program, which connects new boarders with a day girl and her family. Our students' Perth Pal families introduce themselves via email before meeting in person at our Orientation Day. In Term 1, our boarders are invited to a sleepover at their Perth Pal's house and in Term 2, they invite their Perth Pal to a sleepover in the boarding house. The program helps girls and their families settle into our School community.





BIG SISTER, LITTLE SISTER PROGRAM

Our Big Sister, Little Sister Program ensures that each new Year 7 boarding student is paired with an older boarder, who acts as a mentor during the beginning of a student's boarding journey. Our 'big sisters' and 'little sisters' form strong connections, which provide them with an important foundation for boarding life. The program includes a variety of activities and outings each term. It also extends to new boarders in Years 8 to 11, who are connected with an older boarder upon entering Anne Symington House.





FUTURE FOOTPRINTS PROGRAM

St Mary's is one of 18 schools that participate in the Association of Independent Schools Western Australia's

Future Footprints Program.

This was established in 2004 to ensure positive engagement of Indigenous students within the education system, to enhance Indigenous students' sense of belonging and self-worth in school settings, and provide them with the confidence, knowledge and skills to succeed in their academic and life pursuits.

Future Footprints is based on an Aboriginal Family Model of peer support and leadership.

The broad aim of the program is to improve educational outcomes for Indigenous students and enhance their post-school prospects, whether that be in tertiary studies, training or employment.

Each year, Future Footprints coordinates several initiatives and events that bring together Indigenous students from participating schools. Future Footprints also helps schools establish their own Indigenous programs.



NAIDOC WEEK

Our Indigenous students take great pride in leading St Mary's NAIDOC Week celebrations, which are dedicated to recognising the rich history, culture and achievements of our First Nations people.



Working with our Indigenous Student Coordinator, the girls run a series of activities across our Junior and Senior Schools to enhance our entire School community's understanding and appreciation of Indigenous culture.

Some of those activities have included:

- The creation of traditional sand murals
- Producing traditional artworks with Junior and Senior School students
- Teaching fellow students traditional songs and dances
- Hosting cultural awareness seminars
- Cooking and sharing bush tucker with staff and students

The week of celebration culminates in a whole-school assembly held around our Indigenous students' sand mural. Past assemblies have featured Welcome to Country and smoking ceremonies conducted by Noongar Elders, traditional musical and dance performances, and inspiring addresses by Elders, guest speakers, students and staff.





A man in a brown cloak and headband, possibly a traditional Indigenous Australian, is standing on a green lawn. He is holding a small plant or stick. A large group of students in maroon uniforms are sitting on the lawn behind him, watching the activity.

Two young girls in maroon uniforms are sitting at a table, focused on drawing or coloring. They are using markers on a piece of paper. Other students are visible in the background, also engaged in activities.

ANNUAL PROJECTS

Every year, our Indigenous students undertake projects that are designed to help them better understand their culture and strengthen their connection to country. Two examples of these projects are St Mary's Bush Tucker Garden and our Indigenous student shirts.



Bush Tucker Garden

In 2019, our Aboriginal students planted a Bush Tucker Garden in the School grounds. With the help of the 'Tuckerbush Schools Program', which involved a Bush Tucker Garden Starter Pack, a Bindi Bindi Dreaming workshop and an educational learning resource, the girls worked tirelessly to create the garden, which boasts a variety of native plants with edible fruits, nuts, seeds and leaves.

The students also produced artwork on six jarrah and tuart poles to reflect the six Noongar seasons: Birak, Bunuru, Djeran, Djilba, Kambarang and Makaru. The girls developed their design concepts with guidance from Aboriginal artist, Rubeun Yorkshire, before painting the poles.

Produce from the girls' Bush Tucker Garden has been incorporated into our Food Science Program, as well as our Science and Environmental Science classes.

Indigenous shirts

In 2021, our Indigenous students embarked on a project to design a shirt that they could wear with pride around campus and at significant events. From the outset, the girls' goal was for the shirt's artwork to communicate who they are and the values that they hold.

After plenty of consultation and hard work, the girls developed a design that conveyed their connection to land, water and people.

The story:

The hills in the background depict our vast country and the land of the girls' families, while the red dirt is reflective of the Kimberley region, from which many of our students hail. There are people located around campfires yarning, telling stories and getting to know each other. The biggest of these campfires represents all students and people who are welcomed into St Mary's, and the boomerangs surrounding each campfire offer protection to everyone within the School community. Spirit lines link the campfires, and waterholes represent the water connecting the land, while kangaroo footprints convey the connection between the land, ocean and St Mary's.





St Mary's

ANGLICAN GIRLS' SCHOOL

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