



First Nations Education

Towards 2035



CATHOLIC
EDUCATION
WESTERN AUSTRALIA



Artist Statement

Walking Together Through Faith, Truth-Telling, Reconciliation and Hope

At the heart of the artwork is the sacred fire, symbolising both the Holy Spirit and a cultural healing fire. The fire reflects the presence of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, bringing guidance, wisdom, renewal and hope. Positioned at the centre, it represents the shared commitment of Catholic Education Western Australia (CEWA) and First Nations peoples walking together in faith, truth-telling and reconciliation.

Flowing from the goals are the pathways, which represent the ongoing journey of reconciliation, truth-telling and justice. These pathways connect each goal, demonstrating that meaningful change occurs when all parts of the system work together, guided by respect, understanding and partnership.

The circles, depicted in CEWA colours, represent the five strategic goals. The circles reflect the interconnected nature of the goals and the shared responsibility required to achieve lasting change.

Within each circle is the number of key actions associated with that goal. These key actions are the practical steps that bring each goal to life, guiding the work needed to achieve meaningful outcomes for First Nations students, families, communities and staff. The numbers symbolise commitment, accountability, listening, communication and purposeful action.

A message stick passes through each goal, symbolising the sharing of knowledge, wisdom and responsibility across the journey. It represents the importance of communication, connection and carrying the vision forward, linking each goal together as part of a shared pathway towards a stronger future for all.

Together, the sacred fire, pathways, message stick and goal circles tell a story of faith, healing, truth-telling, reconciliation and hope. The artwork reflects CEWA's commitment to walking alongside First Nations peoples, fostering strong relationships, cultural respect, educational excellence and flourishing communities for future generations.

Artist Biography

Bethany Farmer is a proud Minang and Koreng Noongar woman from Katanning. Growing up with strong family connections and deep ties to culture and community has shaped her identity and the values she carries into her work today.

Bethany is passionate about bringing people together through truth-telling, learning and shared understanding. In her role as a First Nations Liaison Officer with CEWA, and through her artwork, she uses storytelling to celebrate culture, faith and connection, while encouraging meaningful conversations about reconciliation, healing and hope for future generations.

Preamble

Catholic Education Western Australia (CEWA) is called to proclaim the dignity of every human person, created in the image and likeness of God, and to foster communities of learning that enable all to flourish. This commitment is expressed through the vision of Integral Human Development, which seeks the holistic growth of each person – spiritually, intellectually, culturally, emotionally, socially and physically – within a community grounded in love, justice and the common good.

Integral Human Development recognises that education is not merely the transmission of knowledge, but the formation of the whole person in the right relationship with God, others, self and creation. It calls on Catholic schools to be places where truth is pursued, where identity is honoured, and where authentic human flourishing is nurtured in partnership with families and communities. This vision is inseparable from the Gospel and the Church's social teaching, which affirms the inherent dignity, cultural identity and self-determination of First Nations peoples.

In the Western Australian context, this commitment carries a particular responsibility to walk alongside First Nations peoples in a spirit of reconciliation, truth-telling and justice. CEWA acknowledges the deep wisdom, resilience and cultural richness of First Nations communities, and recognises the enduring connection to Country, kinship, language and spirituality that shapes identity and

belonging. We also acknowledge the historical ongoing injustices and intergenerational trauma experienced by First Nations peoples and the role that education must play in healing, restoration and transformation.

To form culturally responsive schools the CEWA First Nations Education Strategy enables truth telling, truth listening and addresses the realities of Australian history, First Nations stories, First Nations connection to Country and First Nations cultures for all staff, students and families.

The CEWA First Nations Education strategy is grounded in a relational and dialogical approach, where First Nations voices, students, families, Elders and communities, are valued co-constructors of educational life. It affirms that authentic partnerships for all are essential to achieving meaningful and sustainable outcomes. In this way, CEWA seeks to move beyond inclusion towards genuine co-responsibility, where First Nations perspectives are embedded across all aspects of schooling – culture, curriculum, leadership and community engagement.

The goals articulated in this document reflect a commitment to the implementation of the Fifth Plenary Council of Australia decree, *Healing Wounds, Receiving Gifts* through a focus on:

- nurturing holistic wellbeing and human flourishing (mind, body and spirit);
- strengthening community relationships and cultural identity;
- embedding culturally responsive and truth-informed education;
- promoting justice through equitable outcomes and opportunity; and
- developing leadership and agency among First Nations peoples.

These priorities reflect the interconnected dimensions of Integral Human Development, recognising that educational success is inseparable from wellbeing, identity, belonging and purpose.

CEWA commits to a future where all First Nations students and staff are supported to thrive academically, culturally and spiritually; where families and communities are genuinely engaged and empowered; where all staff are formed in cultural competence and humility; and where schools witness to the Gospel through actions that promote justice, reconciliation and hope.

In this shared journey, we are guided by the belief that Christ came so that we “may have life and have it abundantly” (John 10:10). Through this vision, CEWA seeks to create places of learning where First Nations students, families and their communities not only belong but lead and flourish; contributing their gifts to the life of the Church and the broader Australian society.



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Goal 1

Strengthen partnerships
and engagement with First
Nations families, Elders
and communities.

Goal 2

Embed culturally responsive
practices across the
whole system.



Goal 3

Improve First Nations student attendance, engagement and wellbeing.

Goal 4

Strengthen recruitment, retention, formation and leadership development for First Nations peoples.

Goal 5

Working towards closing the gap in academic achievement of First Nations students by nurturing high expectations.

Goal 1

Strengthen partnerships and engagement with First Nations families, Elders and communities.

Strengthening relationships with families, Elders, parishes and local communities as co-partners in the mission of Catholic education, honouring the cultural gifts and dignity of all peoples.

Indicators of Success

- 1 Increase the proportion of First Nations students at CEWA schools to 6% by 2035.
- 2 Increase the number of schools where the First Nations student enrolments are reflective of the demographics of the local catchment area.
- 3 Increase staff participation in First Nations community led events e.g. Reconciliation events.
- 4 Increased participation of First Nations students, families and Elders in school events and advisory groups.
- 5 Track number of effective partnerships with community organisations.
- 6 Increased number and retention of students supported by bursary programs.
- 7 Seek feedback from families through surveys and consultation processes in relation to engagement e.g. Climate Survey results.
- 8 CEWA office data analysis on centralised entry and exit surveys.
- 9 Increase in opportunities for cultural learning, faith expression and community connection grounded in respect for Country, culture and story.

Suggested Actions

- All schools to work with local First Nations families and communities to ensure that the local First Nations story is incorporated into their Faith, Story and Witness and other induction processes. (4,7,8,9)
- Employment of First Nations Community Liaison Officers across all CEWA offices to support schools and First Nations Teaching Assistants to connect with community. (1,3,4,7,8,9)
- CEWA office staff to develop a structured community engagement process in consultation with Elders and families to support schools to be innovative and responsive in the approach to community engagement. (3,4,5,7,8,9)
- Improve access in order to increase enrolments of First Nations students to better reflect local demographics. (1,2,7,8)
- Promote a First Nations Student Bursary Program across K-12. (1,2,6,7,8)
- Formalise relationships and partnerships with local First Nations organisations, communities and parish groups across schools and offices. (3,4,5,7,8,9)
- Share and celebrate local culture and stories through regular community forums, listening / yarning circles and cultural events. (3,4,5,7,8)
- CEWA office staff to formalise regional First Nations family and community consultation committees across all dioceses. (4,5,7,8)

Goal 2

Embed culturally responsive practices across the whole system.

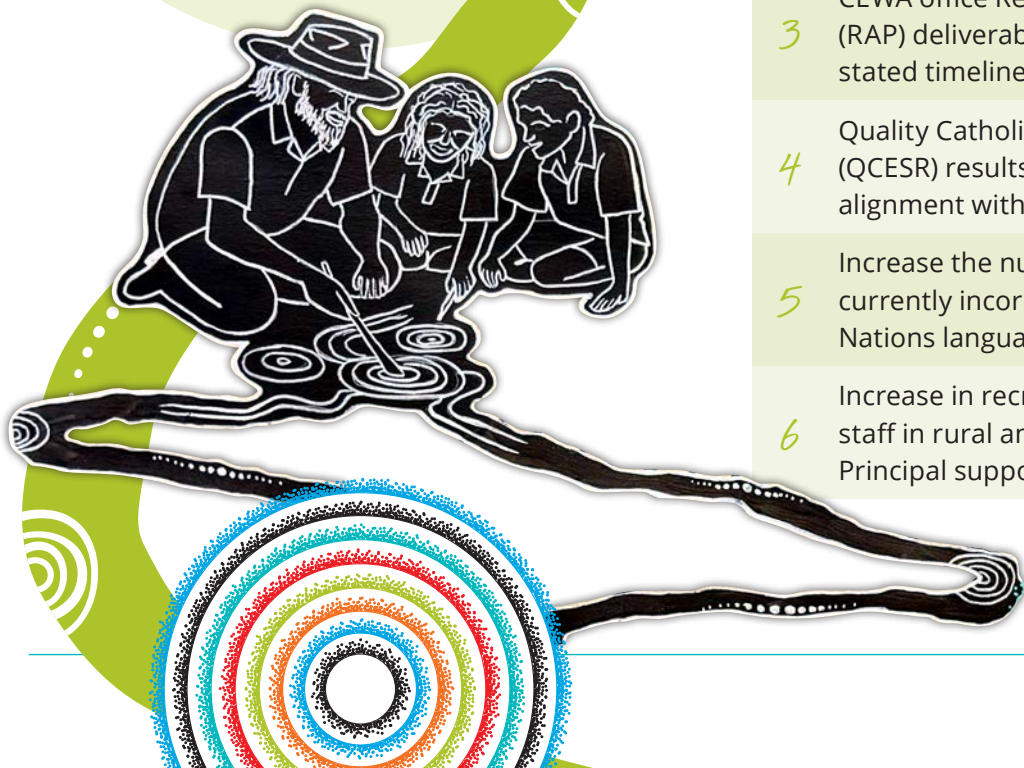
Forming communities that respond respectfully to diverse cultural identities and local stories while maintaining high expectations for all.

Indicators of Success

- 1 Teacher practices and curriculum documentation evidence First Nations perspectives across learning areas.
- 2 Schools demonstrate an improvement in cultural responsiveness using the CEWA measures of the culturally capability continuum.
- 3 CEWA office Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP) deliverables achieved within stated timelines.
- 4 Quality Catholic Education School Review (QCESR) results demonstrate increased alignment with First Nations perspectives.
- 5 Increase the number of schools currently incorporating and offering First Nations languages.
- 6 Increase in recruitment and retention of staff in rural and remote schools including Principal support of secondment of staff.

Suggested Actions

- Implement the First Nations Education Improvement Map (FNEIM) process in all CEWA schools. (1,2,4)
- Integrate First Nations perspectives across all curriculum areas by building and sharing cultural resources. (1,4)
- Embed truth-telling and accurate historical education practices in induction processes and Faith, Story and Witness (Library of Voices) through engagement of local First Nations cultural educators. (1,2,4)
- Implement and monitor the CEWA office RAP. (3)
- Provide culturally responsive professional learning and formation of all staff in CEWA schools and offices, inclusive of the needs of remote and regional schools. (2,3,4)
- Provide opportunities for schools to engage with 'on-country' learning while utilising local First Nations knowledge. (1,4)
- Encourage schools and Early Childhood Centre teachers to incorporate and/or teach local First Nations languages where possible in a sustainable manner. (1,5)
- Review the regional and Kimberley Calling strategy to attract staff to rural / remote areas. (6)



Goal 3

Improve First Nations student attendance, engagement and wellbeing.

Bringing together the pre-conditions for successful learning by fostering holistic development – mind, body and spirit.

Indicators of Success

By 2030 return the attendance levels to 2019 levels for First Nations students.

1 By 2035 the student attendance level is the same as the overall student population.

(Better Fairer Schools Agreement)

2 Improved First Nations trends in cultural safety, wellbeing and belonging survey results such as the School Climate Survey.

3 Increased participation of students in leadership opportunities and co-curricular activities.

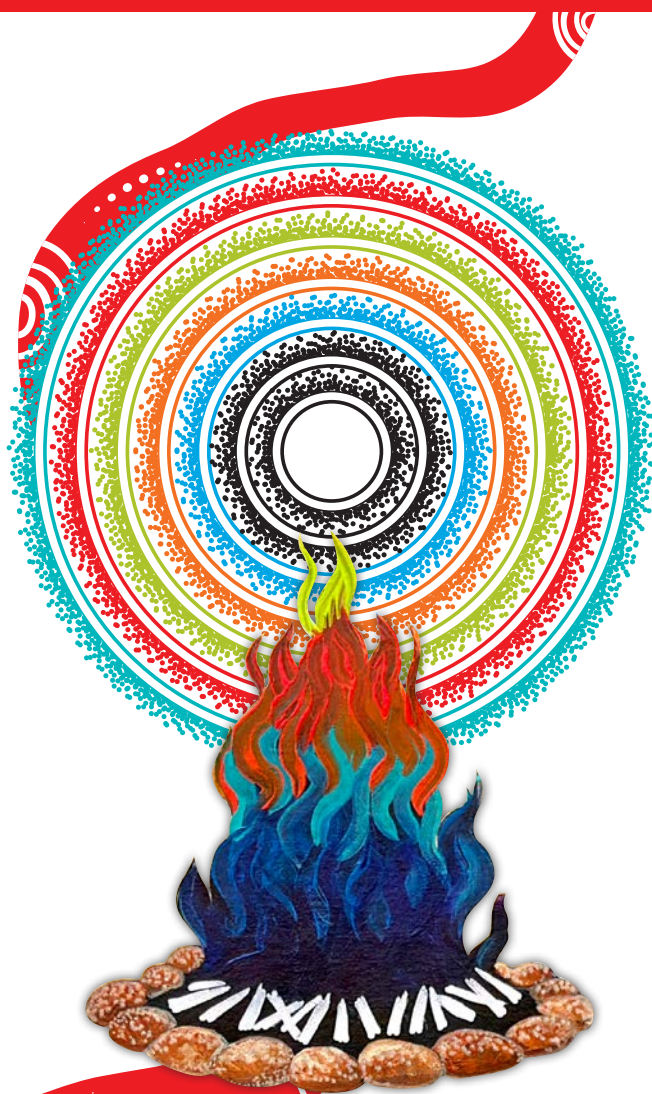
4 Increased attendance, engagement and retention of students going to boarding schools using enrolment and attendance data.

5 There is increased First Nations media representation in CEWA news, social media and reporting.

6 Early identification and intervention for developmental and health needs through the implementation of recommendations of service providers and system testing (e.g. on-entry testing, OT, speech etc).

Suggested Actions

- Establish regular monitoring and reporting cycles for attendance of all First Nations students (K-12) with individualised attendance plans where attendance falls below 85%. (1,4)
- Develop a whole school strategy where attendance levels overall are consistently under 85%. (1,4)
- Ensuring there are established transition processes for First Nations students in boarding schools with the Transition Service Team, including clear expectations of boarding student school attendance at the beginning and end of all school terms. (1,4)
- Implement culturally responsive wellbeing strategies and processes aligned with the CEWA Wellbeing Framework. (2,4)
- Consult with students, families and community to co-design strategies for improved attendance, wellbeing and engagement with First Nations voice and agency. (1,2,3,4)
- CEWA Communications Strategy to include a plan to present news and stories with positive representations of First Nations people in CEWA. (2,3,4,5)
- Conduct school readiness developmental screening (e.g. speech, hearing, OT, health). (2,6)



Goal 4

Strengthen recruitment, retention, formation and leadership development for First Nations peoples.

Providing ongoing formation, creating pathways and leadership opportunities, and attracting high-quality teachers, particularly in rural and remote settings.

Indicators of Success

1 Increased percentage of First Nations staff across the CEWA system by 15% by 2035, including increased levels of First Nations staff in leadership positions.

2 Improved First Nations staff retention rates.

3 First Nations participation rates in leadership development programs increase, along with an increase in leadership applications, short listings and appointments.

4 Number of staff scholarships awarded is increased, evidenced by an improvement in the completion of qualifications.

5 Climate Survey results show an increase in the cultural safety levels of First Nations staff.

Suggested Actions

- Implement the [Aboriginal Employment Strategy](#). (1,2,3,4)
- Provide scholarships and study pathways for First Nations staff. (1,2,3,4)
- Develop and formalise talent identification and leadership development pathways for First Nations staff. (1,2,3,4)
- Ensure development courses offered are inclusive of the learning needs of First Nations staff in schools and offices. (1,2)
- Ensure First Nations representation on appointment panels, where possible, where there are high percentages of First Nations students. (1,2)
- Ensure strategies and processes are in place for the cultural safety of First Nations staff. (1,2,3,5)



Goal 5

Working towards closing the gap in academic achievement of First Nations students by nurturing high expectations.

Close the Gap between First Nations and all students in CEWA schools by improving academic outcomes and enabling opportunities for success for First Nations students.

Indicators of Success

- 1 NAPLAN - By 2035, increase participation of First Nations students in reading and numeracy to 95% respectively. (Note: ACARA participation rates include Exempt students)
By 2035, increase the proportion of First Nations students who achieve proficiency in reading and numeracy to 60% respectively.
- 2 Increased teacher EAL/D qualifications or training completion rates leading to more targeted literacy strategies. Improved EAL/D practices evidenced by increased PL and use of progress maps for EAL/D students.
- 3 By 2035, increase the proportion of First Nations students achieving a Western Australian Certificate of Education (WACE) and/or Certificate II or higher to 90%.
- 4 Increase the percentage of First Nations students who transition to employment, training or tertiary post-school pathways.

Suggested Actions

Implement targeted literacy and numeracy strategies to maximise learning growth for First Nations students. (1,2)

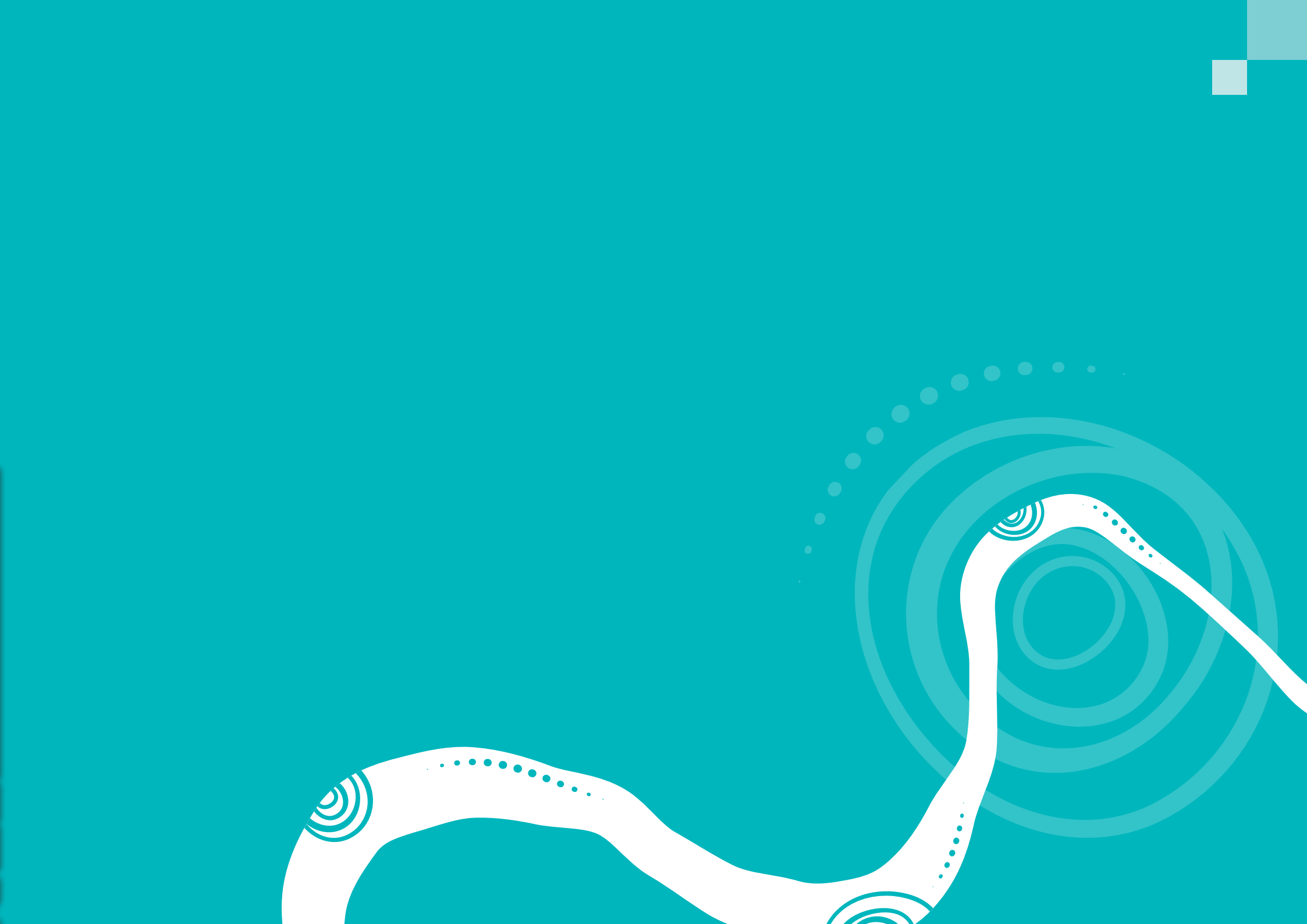
Strengthen EAL/D teaching capability, particularly in regional and remote schools (e.g. PD). (1,2)

Develop clear academic and vocational pathways through regular consultation and investigation of options on an individual basis with students. (2,3,4)

Strengthen partnerships with First Nations organisations and engagement services, tertiary providers and employers. (3,4)

Monitor First Nations students on a regular basis across all areas of growth (i.e. academic, career alignment etc). (1,3,4)







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