

## Celebrating Year 12 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Graduates

On Friday, September 12, students, families and educators gathered at Rydges Melbourne for the 2025 Victorian Catholic Education Association (VCEA) Year 12 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Graduation Recognition Dinner.



This annual event is a highlight of the education calendar, providing an opportunity to celebrate the achievements of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students as they complete their secondary schooling. This year, 206 students across Victoria were recognised, including 27 students from the Diocese of Ballarat.

The evening was beautifully organised by the VCEA Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Working Party and featured a rich program of cultural recognition and words of encouragement. Wurundjeri Elder Mr John Terrick delivered a Welcome to Country, followed by inspiring addresses from Professor Elizabeth Labone and Professor Mark Rose, who each spoke about the importance of education.



DOBCEL Executive Director, Tom Sexton, was proud to attend alongside colleagues, joining in the recognition of the graduates and their families. The message shared throughout the night was clear: education is not only valuable for each individual graduate, but also has a lasting impact on families and communities for generations to come.

The booklet for the evening carried the proud message “VCEA welcomes the Class of 2025”, with a blessing prayer by Melissa Brickell 2008, NATSICC featured on the back page:

## Aboriginal Young People Celebrate the Spirit

Stand tall, stand proud, stand strong,  
stand still... and know yourself always.

Joyously celebrate the fruits and gifts  
of the Spirit

Bear the determination of the spirit of  
our people in your voice with passion

Love one another and spread the message  
of God's peace and love

Share the spiritual richness of our  
ancestors with all others

Faithfully carry the Aboriginal Message  
Stick with pride and honour

So dreams and hopes will be guided  
and fulfilled by the Creator Spirit and, so...

Rejuvenate young Aboriginal  
ambassadors and leaders...

and celebrate the Spirit.

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MELISSA BRICKELL 2008, NATSICC