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Aboriginal Families as First Educators Program

Catholic Education Western Australia (CEWA) recently commenced the Aboriginal Families as First Educators (AFAFE) Program in Broome.

The new program aims to support Aboriginal families, with birth to four-year-old children, in their role as the child’s first and foremost educator.

Twenty-five participants took part in the initial training in Broome, run over three days, which will be followed by the Program's implementation at locations across the state. Funding for the AFAFE has been secured under the Australian Government's Indigenous Advancement Strategy.

Executive Director Dr Tim McDonald explained how the program fits into Catholic Education’s traditional support of Aboriginal people.

“The AFAFE program is just another way that Catholic Education is responding to the needs of the vulnerable in our society. Specifically we are working to address the significant gaps in academic achievement between indigenous and non-indigenous Australians and this is our latest contribution to closing that gap,” said Dr McDonald.

The program provides support through a combination of playgroup and home visits, and the implementation of the Australian Abecedarian Approach (3a) in partnership with the University of Melbourne to Early Childhood education, which combines Learning Games, Conversational Reading and Enriched Caregiving. Literacy, numeracy and mental health benefits are key aims for the Program.

The AFAFE Program will be facilitated through 11 school sites across Western Australia, with four metropolitan locations (Redcliffe, Piara Waters, Rockingham and Mandurah), two south-west regional areas (Waroona and Albany), four Kimberley locations (Derby, Beagle Bay, Broome and Kununurra), and the mid-west town of Carnarvon.

The Program will be closely aligned with these schools, forging strong connections between school communities and families from the children’s early years.

AFAFE is funded through the Australian Government’s Indigenous Advancement Strategy for two and a half years and $6.25m, and CEWA will be pursuing on-going funding to ensure the Program will continue to benefit Aboriginal children and families.