Definition
This policy concerns the approach of Mount Lilydale Mercy College to Aboriginal perspectives and viewpoints within the curriculum.

Rationale
What was done in the past is beyond anyone’s ability to change, but not beyond remedy. We need to admit to past injustices while looking to the future with hope, seeking individual and national reconciliation. The Church can contribute much to this process of reconciliation because it draws people into a unity which goes beyond differences of class and race.

Government action alone will not bring about true reconciliation. It is a matter for each individual, each parish, each school and Church community. All people of good will, Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal, need to go out to one another in a spirit of love and mutual respect. The Church commits itself to influence the minds and hearts of the people of Australia, to achieve justice and harmony and to uphold the dignity of the Aboriginal people whose ancestors settled here thousands of years ago.

Principles
The following principles reflect a wish by teachers for the curriculum to include Aboriginal perspectives. The principles arise from the belief that a truly Australian dimension in curriculum calls for an adequate representation of Aboriginal viewpoints.

1. The introduction of Aboriginal perspectives is essential and relevant to all students and should be taken into account in all areas of learning and at all levels of schooling in Victorian Catholic schools. Presenting the cultures of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as the starting point of human experience in Australia will ensure a balance to the notion of an Australian curriculum.

2. Care should be taken, when introducing Aboriginal perspectives, to offer worthwhile knowledge within a coherent and developmental framework. Such learning should take proper account of the values and judgments of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. As with other learning experiences offered at school, Aboriginal perspectives should be sensitive to the stage of development of the students involved. Care also needs to be taken to ensure that the overall effect of school initiatives in Aboriginal perspectives succeeds in encompassing the whole range of Aboriginal experiences, including contemporary as well as historical aspects.

3. Efforts to introduce Aboriginal perspectives should explore the distinct and separate cultures of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and their relationships to the land. This principle highlights the need for professional development activities which enable teachers to design appropriate and effective curriculum initiatives. Such curriculum would reflect the diversity of Aboriginal cultures and emphasize the spiritual links which Aboriginal people have with the land.

4. Curriculum should develop in all students a respect for the beliefs, customs and values of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. Care should be taken to present such beliefs, customs and values as integrated and valid with their own complete and subtle ritual expressions. Students should be enabled through sensitive learning strategies to recognize the sophisticated and complex nature of the beliefs, customs and values of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and accord them the dignity they deserve.

5. Learning activities in Aboriginal perspectives should aim to establish mutual respect for our separate and joint heritage, recognizing that the European arrival has profoundly disturbed the ancient and dynamic civilization of the indigenous people. While there is no advantage in Mount Lilydale Mercy College presenting Aboriginal perspectives in ways that engender guilt among students for the past, there is merit in developing initiatives to convey the full impact of European settlement on the indigenous people. This will include past and present injustice. This should be done within a framework of regard for the good aspects of the culture and heritage brought with European settlement.

Students should be led to see that the future of all people in Australia depends upon there being a clear acknowledgment that each group has something of value to offer, and that the contribution of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples needs far more recognition and respect in the future than it has received in the past.
Mount Lilydale Mercy College provides opportunities for students to become aware of Aboriginal culture and life through participation in a special reciprocal arrangement with the Jigalong Remote Aboriginal community in Year 10 and through the Year 12 outreach visit to the Santa Theresa community near Alice Springs.

The leadership position of Indigenous Prefect has been created to foster greater knowledge of indigenous culture within the student body. It is planned to establish an Indigenous Education Centre within the Barak Campus during 2008 to highlight the culture of Indigenous people.

We acknowledge that the College is located on the traditional land of the Wurrundjeri people and the Year 10-12 Campus is named after the last chief of the Wurrundjeri, William Barak. Year 10 students are provided with background on the life of William Barak as part of their pastoral care activities.

The development of a Reconciliation Committee comprising students and staff is seen as important in order to nourish awareness of issues raised in this policy.

**Policy Development and Review**
This policy was developed in 1999. It is based on the CECV Policy 1.3. The policy was reviewed during 2005 by the Curriculum Management Team and minor adjustments were made again in 2007. A further review will take place in 2008.