Clontarf Aboriginal College is a co-educational Catholic school located on the Whadjup Nyoongar Boodjar site in Waterford.

Established in 1986, Clontarf Aboriginal College’s motto is ‘Learning for Life’. The college’s vision is to develop a core curriculum that is central to its students’ needs, assisting them to be confident and creative, with a high degree of self-worth. Through a diverse mix of activities and programs, the college meets the educational needs of each student.

The college has been offering Vocational Education and Training (VET) in Schools programs since 2007 and believes its students develop a stronger work ethic through the attainment of a nationally recognised qualification.

School profile

- Approximately 165 students
- Years 7 to 12
- Year 10 students enrolled in VET in Schools programs 89%
- Year 11 students enrolled in VET in Schools programs 97%
- Year 12 students enrolled in VET in Schools programs 89%

Many Clontarf students have had limited regular schooling and live in rural and remote communities in Western Australia. A majority of students also speak one or more Aboriginal languages and study English as a second dialect. To address the cultural complexities that are central to Aboriginal life, the college has designed a curriculum that provides for spiritual, intellectual, physical, emotional and social development as well as cultural renewal. VET in Schools programs play a major role in this plan.
Clontarf Academy programs provide students with sporting programs, mentors/role models, camps and other activities. This attracts some students into the college where they are introduced to a range of training and employment opportunities to engage and keep them there. Students need to be enrolled at Clontarf Aboriginal College to qualify for enrolment at an academy.

Program background

Clontarf Aboriginal College values the diversity of learning styles and cultural practices among its students and this has shaped its student centred teaching and learning environment and training options.

The college offers its Year 11 and 12 students a range of on and off site VET in Schools programs including the opportunity to participate in Aboriginal school-based traineeships and specialist industry programs. These training options are completed over one to two years.

Approximately half of the Year 11 and 12 student cohort are enrolled in an Aboriginal school-based traineeship. These students are employed through a group training organisation (GTO) which is responsible for:

- nominating which registered training organisations (RTOs) will provide the students’ training and assessment;
- placing the students with host employers;
- paying their training wage;
- monitoring the on and off the job training; and
- mentoring students to assist them to complete their traineeships.

Where possible, the college connects students to industry employment opportunities in the regional and remote areas where students normally live. Most of the traineeships commence in Year 11 and are undertaken over two years.

A select number of Aboriginal school-based training programs are also available to Year 10 students, including the Certificate I in Leadership Development and Certificate I in Resources and Infrastructure Operations. These are generally undertaken over one year and prepare the students for further training in Year 11 and 12.

The Ertech Civil Construction specialist industry program is also a popular VET in Schools pathway for students. This program enables full time Year 11 and 12 students to undertake a Certificate II in Civil Construction at the Ertech Construction Academy. Students complete a combination of training and workplace learning at the Academy, with the program completed over 12 to 18 months.

In 2013, Clontarf Aboriginal College, in partnership with Trinity College and Mercedes College, opened a Trade Training Centre (TTC) at the Clontarf site. A range of building and construction, engineering and horticulture qualifications are delivered through the TTC. Entry into these programs is open to students from other schools, with priority given to the college’s students.

Program partners

Strong and well-established industry and employer partnerships are crucial to the success of the college’s VET in Schools programs. Many of these partnerships provide students with supported training and workplace opportunities which have a direct impact on improving student outcomes in employment and successful completion of VET qualifications.

The college recognises the importance of program partners, inviting them to attend sporting matches, breakfasts, cultural days and school assemblies, and celebrate student achievements.
Industry partners

The college has established a number of partnerships with large industry groups who assist with providing specialist industry programs or support for its VET in Schools programs. These partnerships are underpinned with written Memorandums of Understanding (MoU) which clearly outline the roles and responsibilities of each partner.

Key industry partners include:

- **Ertech Holdings Pty Ltd** – has developed the Ertech Civil Construction program and cover the training fees, resources and training facility costs to run the program. The partnership also engages the services of an RTO to provide vocational training and assist students to complete their nationally recognised qualification; and
- **BHP Billiton** – significantly supported the college to establish the TTC and provides ongoing support to the college to ensure the TTC meets industry standards in terms of facilities, safety procedures, staffing and relevant curriculum. BHP Billiton also provides students with work experience and workplace learning opportunities to support their vocational learning.

Host employer partners

Strong partnerships have been established between the college, selected GTOs and large host employers to provide work placements for students undertaking Aboriginal school-based traineeships.

Key host employers include:

- **Leighton Contractors** – employs students seeking to commence a trade pathway in engineering. Students undertake a Certificate II in Engineering traineeship and work alongside Aboriginal apprentices who act as their role models and mentors.
- **Nestle Australia** – employs students interested in a career pathway in retail. Students are offered a diverse range of work placements to allow them to explore different occupations that exist within the retail and business industry. Students who successfully complete this traineeship program gain a Certificate II in Retail.

On completion of traineeships, host employer partners discuss future employment and training options with the students.
Program features

Course structure
The college has a number of flexible timetabling options to accommodate the various training options available to students:

- Aboriginal school-based traineeships – students attend school three days a week, train one day a week with their RTO and spend one day a week in the workplace.
- Ertech Civil Construction program – Year 11 students attend the Ertech Construction Academy one day a week and work towards completing industry specific training such as white cards. Those students demonstrating commitment throughout Year 11 continue with the program in Year 12 and attend the Academy two days a week. One day consists of theoretical study and the second, machinery operation.
- TTC qualifications – students attend school three days a week and the TTC two days a week.
- General VET in Schools – students attend their general VET in Schools program one day a week.

Year 10, 11 and 12 students also study the following courses:
- English (as a second dialect);
- Literacy;
- Mathematics;
- Religion and Cultural Awareness; and
- Sporting Academy (two periods).

Student entry requirements
Students who wish to undertake an Aboriginal school-based traineeship through a GTO must complete an application form and attend an interview. GTO field officers help students understand the interview and selection process and assist them to update their resumes and write applications. Due to the limited school-based traineeships available, students need to demonstrate the capacity to take responsibility and self-manage tasks.

Students who wish to participate in the Ertech Civil Construction program must complete an application form and attend an interview. The application form must include a joint recommendation from the college VET Coordinator and the Clontarf Football Academy.
The college believes that VET in School programs should be accessible to all students. For this reason, the school does not set entry requirements for any of the other VET in Schools programs offered to students.

**Student selection process**

Students who have applied for an Aboriginal school-based traineeship must attend an interview with the GTO field officer, a representative from the school and the employer. The interview is very informal and students are assessed on their level of interest and capacity to undertake the program.

Students who have applied for a place in the Ertech Civil Construction program must undertake a panel interview in Term 4. The panel includes representatives from Ertech human resources, an Ertech trainer and an RTO trainer. The purpose of the interview is to learn more about the student and determine the student's:

- level of maturity and common sense;
- level of interest in the program; and
- capacity to undertake the program (a positive ‘can do’ attitude and the ability to adapt to challenges).

Due to the limited regular schooling of most students, academic achievements and school attendance does not form part of the selection process.

Many students are from rural and remote areas and tend to be shy unless in the company of a peer. The school provides these students the option of being interviewed in pairs rather than individually, to encourage students to open up.

Clontarf Aboriginal College recognises that many of its students have not been exposed to the broad range of career options available to them. To address this issue, the college provides an extensive program of career education activities, commencing in Year 10, to help students choose training pathways that best meet their needs and aspirations. The college, in conjunction with the Clontarf Academies and industry employers, offer the following activities for students in Year 10, 11 and 12:

- Bridging the Gap Career Caravan - twice a year Bridging the Gap visits the college with a fully equipped caravan and offers students one on one career guidance and advice using their research tools and computerised guidance packages;
- Coaching Young People for Success program - supports students to make informed choices about training and employment prospects by exploring strengths and talents as well as areas for development;
- work-ready workshops and resume assistance provided by staff from Herbert Smith Freehills Lawyers;
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- guest speaker sessions – industry representatives, especially those of Aboriginal background and former students, from a variety of industry sectors are invited into the college to pass on their career experiences and chat informally with students;
- employer forums – approximately 20-25 employers attend the forums, and, in 'speed dating' style, students rotate between tables and ask employers set questions about their industry in five minute blocks;
- excursions to workplaces to provide students with a visual perspective and an opportunity to discuss occupations with prospective employers;
- Try-a-Trade days for Years 10, 11 and 12;
- career information sessions;
- pathway plans are established for all senior school students; and
- Ertech open days for potential trainees to visit the training academy.

Student support
The college uses an all-inclusive approach to increase student participation and improve retention and outcomes. This includes partnering with a number of organisations, including GTOs, employers, community groups and the Clontarf Academies, to provide students with a range of support services including:

- Mathematics in the Workplace workshops, delivered by Leighton Contractors to assist their Aboriginal school-based trainees to improve their numeracy skills;
- Notre Dame University volunteers provide one on one tutoring to help students improve their literacy skills as part of the MultiLit (making up for lost time in literacy) program;
- Rotary Club volunteers supervising student driving hours while they are on their learner permits; and
- tutors from Curtin University assist students in learning areas.

Students undertaking an Aboriginal school-based traineeship are also mentored by GTO field staff as part of the program.

The college ensures that staff delivering support services have a solid understanding of the complexities of Aboriginal culture and practices.
Parental liaison

Due to the distance and language barriers that exist with some parents living in remote Western Australia, engagement is difficult and at times not possible. To address these barriers, a range of strategies are used to ensure parents are well informed about their child’s schooling:

- boarding house personnel have regular phone contact and meet students and parents on campus to provide one on one sessions;
- Aboriginal Liaison Officers visit communities and have regular phone contact to enable parents to provide feedback to the college;
- DVDs are sent to parents each term highlighting VET in Schools programs;
- newsletters are produced regularly and emailed to parents and made available on the college website; and
- contact is made with other family members living in the metropolitan area.

Program results

In 2013 Clontarf Aboriginal College had a Certificate II or higher completion rate of 67% for Year 12 students.

Clontarf Aboriginal College was State winner of the Schools First Impact Award for their Ertech Civil Construction specialist industry program in 2011.

Lessons learnt

- Only use employers with a solid commitment and genuine understanding of Aboriginal student needs.
- Use the support and resources of the whole community to ensure success for students.
- Celebrate achievements together.
- Resolve workplace issues promptly.
- Share resources and knowledge.
- Use a collaborative approach to manage and build partnerships.
- Do not use attendance history to assess student suitability, as it excludes those that have had limited schooling.
- Use industry training councils for advice on industry specific equipment, personal protection equipment, skills shortage and current trends.
**Critical success factors**

**Leadership, continuity and partnerships**
- VET is embedded into the college culture with students and teachers supporting VET in Schools programs.
- Long term critical partnerships with clearly defined roles have been established to support successful outcomes for students.
- The college actively seeks funding/resources from external sources to support VET in Schools programs.
- Succession planning includes the development of policies and procedures manuals and the upskilling of staff.

**Student cohort and parent liaison**
- Language and/or distance barriers are addressed through Aboriginal Liaison Officers and boarding house personnel.
- Students are provided with a broad range of VET qualifications.
- The college has established partnerships with specific registered and group training organisations to meet the needs of Aboriginal students.
- Aboriginal students thrive on peer leadership and support. Student successes are celebrated regularly at the school and the award ceremonies.

**Vision, place and configuration**
- Aboriginal school-based trainees are placed with lead industry employers to improve job prospects.
- Partnerships are developed with potential employers of Aboriginal youth.
- Training pathway plans and exit plans developed with upper school students. These exit plans include the necessary documentation when seeking employment – driver’s licence, tax file number, resume, birth certificate, statement of attainment, bank details.

**Flexibility**
- Timetabling is flexible to suit individual pathways and enable students to complete their Western Australian Certificate of Education (WACE) and participate in sporting activities run by the Clontarf Academies.
- The college works closely with both academies to ensure large sporting events do not fall on scheduled work days.
- All key employer partners are provided with the sporting and curriculum calendars in advance.

**Course content, structure and evaluation**
- RTOs are informed about student literacy levels and learning styles up front so assessment strategies can be adapted.
- The college collects data to capture student retention rates, attrition and track stable employment outcomes.
- The college ensures the programs offered are hands on and delivered by supportive, empathic and culturally aware personnel.

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