



# Annual Report 2020





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# Executive Director Report



**This report outlines the operations of Worawa Aboriginal College for the 2020 school year.**

Worawa Aboriginal College holds Registration by the Victorian Registration and Qualifications Authority (VRQA) as a Specialist School for Girls and is designated as a Special Assistance School. The College is aware of the importance of a holistic approach in addressing health and wellbeing needs of our students.

Emphasis is placed on implementing the Worawa Model of Wellbeing, an overarching Social and Emotional Wellbeing Strategy in order to support students and enable them to focus on education. The principles and practices of the Worawa Model of Wellbeing, Relationship, Consistency and Balance are applied consistently across the organisation.

This report outlines an extraordinary year in the operation of Worawa Aboriginal College for the 2020 school year. It outlines the many challenges in operating a boarding school in a COVID pandemic. Throughout the year uncertainty and disruption were in abundance with frequent changes based on decisions of the Victorian Government Chief Health Officer and adjustments to student travel, boarding arrangements, curriculum delivery and cancellation of sporting and major events.

The year commenced with an enrolment of 53 students. We were particularly pleased to welcome back returning students. Aboriginal families and

communities who send their children to Worawa wish to see them complete their secondary education and be prepared for future education or work opportunities, as well as taking on leadership roles back in their home community. I acknowledge the tenacity of those students who left family and home community to pursue their education.

Worawa Aboriginal College upholds the principles of the founding Elders. At the formal opening of the College in 1983, founding Patron, Pastor Sir Douglas Nicholls said: "Aboriginal children must be educated in the way of our People. They must learn their history, about their great ancestors, the language and the lore. It's time for them to know and understand themselves. They must also be educated in the ways of the society in which they live, in the very best of what it has to offer, so they can truly be a part, not only of Australia's past, but also its present and future..." Over the years the Worawa program has evolved, and continues to do so, to meet the education needs of First Nations children now and into the future.



The College curriculum is underpinned by the Australian Curriculum and is carefully designed to ensure that approaches to knowledge and culture are as inclusive as possible and build upon Aboriginal understandings and values. Pedagogical approaches give attention to Indigenous-focused pedagogies, with particular respect to knowledge illuminating Aboriginal ways of Knowing, Doing and Being.

In terms of rigour and compliance, the Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA) document is honoured in our benchmarking and in our competency and skill base development. At Worawa we recognise that there is a world view of Indigenous knowledge and learning and that Indigenous people's living culture has a unique role in the history and life of our country. Seeing through an Aboriginal lens in no way compromises curriculum integrity but rather provides a unique perspective.

At the 2020 Presentation Day we farewelled Rose Archie, a Worawa student of four years from the remote community of Bulla. We celebrated Rose's achievement and the achievements of all of our students. The virtual Presentation Day event enabled families, communities and supporters to join in the celebrations.

I wish to acknowledge with gratitude the outstanding commitment and agility of all staff in supporting students in the classroom, distance education and boarding. I extend my gratitude to the health and wellbeing student support services of our on-site nurse and through partnerships with Caraniche and Monash Children's Hospital.

I sincerely thank the Board of Directors under the leadership of Mr Thomas Bell for their strategic advice and commitment to ensuring that Worawa Aboriginal College maintains its unique position in the Indigenous education landscape.

I extend my heartfelt thanks to the parents of all of the girls that have presented at Worawa and thank them for their trust in Worawa as their school of choice.

*Dr Lois Peeler, AM*  
Worawa College Principal/Executive Director



## Vision / Philosophical Statement

*Sending young Aboriginal women out into the world with confidence in who they are, where they want to be and what they can contribute to their communities and to the wider world.*

Worawa Aboriginal College will provide an education based on the best elements of both traditional Aboriginal and current Australian education, aiming to produce an Aboriginal person versed in her traditions and proud of her identity who has the tools and necessary qualifications to contribute effectively to the Australian community.

## Worawa Statement Of Intent

Worawa Aboriginal College provides a holistic education and boarding experience for Aboriginal young women in secondary schooling with emphases upon;

- Affirming and fostering students' pride in their cultural identity, knowledge and respect for their heritage, languages and place as part of the nation's diverse First Australian peoples
- Flourishing in a bi-cultural learning environment that provides pathways for life-long learning, participation and success in cross-cultural learning contexts
- Mastery of core learning skills, knowledge and understandings, with particular emphasis upon the acquisition and development of essential skills in literacy and numeracy
- Offering Aboriginal communities and families an education choice for their young women to participate in a mainstream education opportunity to achieve their full academic and intellectual potential
- Preparing and equipping young Aboriginal women with positive and optimistic attitudes and the life skills required for their futures in their home communities and the wider world
- Nurturing and developing students' creativity and self-expression, talents and capabilities, as well as their confidence and motivation to strive for excellence
- Developing students' personal self-confidence, respect, responsibility, stamina, rigour and commitment in all their pursuits, while also enabling and equipping them for making significant life choices
- Students being engaged, challenged and fulfilled through participating in Worawa's total education program and open and equipped to link with education opportunities at the College's partner schools
- Developing and maintaining good moral, emotional, mental and spiritual health and well-being as well and physical fitness
- Developing meaningful, respectful and quality relationships between students and between students and staff
- Providing students with opportunities for personalised learning through negotiation and development of personalised learning plans relating to academic, social, cultural emotional and physical learning
- Sending young Aboriginal women out into the world with confidence in who they are, where they want to be and what they can contribute to their communities and to the wider world.

## Overarching Educational Strategies and Directions

During 2020, the focus was on maintaining engagement in learning through the impact of COVID-19, various lockdowns, and the resultant needs that arose for the student cohort. Throughout the interruptions staff worked diligently to provide continuous education of enrolled students with the priority of supporting student return to school as soon as possible.

Teachers invested time to prepare learning material that was suitable for the variety of formats required during Covid-19 conditions. This included: paper-based remote learning, online lessons, attendance at local community schools, cooperation with other agencies such as youth centres, and onsite lessons at Worawa.

Staff have been both challenged and supported to prepare comprehensive unit plans that truly reflect the Worawa Way in synthesis with the Australian

Curriculum. Out of necessity, unit plans reflected reduced content and focused on core skills. Wellbeing and regular contact between staff and students was prioritised.

The aim and purpose of Worawa education programs continues to be the development of every girl and young woman to reach her potential and to understand her strengths, confidence and sense of hope and opportunity in a culturally informed setting.



## Learning and Teaching

As a Specialist School, the Australian Curriculum is amended to target the learning needs of the student cohort. The challenge of prioritising a cultural overlay is addressed through our commitment to the Worawa Way. Staff have been guided to access resources that develop their understanding of Aboriginal context of the school, state and nation.

Worawa teaching staff are well equipped to ensure that Worawa achieves its primary objective to provide a total education program for young Aboriginal women. The College recognises the importance of its teaching staff in achieving optimal outcomes for its students. Working with staff to be adaptable to the development of a responsive and at times a necessarily agile and reactive learning program that has appropriate review intervals has been the direction sought in 2019.

The overarching College theme of Cultural Connections is reflected in programs planned in each of the five Learning Centres throughout the year. The curriculum plan calls for Learning Centres for Languages, Mathematics, Science, The Arts and Health and Physical Education. Information Technology is available across all learning activities. The curriculum design is on a two-year pattern.

This enables the following features:

1. Multi-age/grade classes that suit differentiated teaching and learning.
2. Cross-curricular learning that allows deeper learning on given topics.
3. Suitability for Personalised Learning Plans

Teachers have been guided to monitor and share data to inform differentiated planning and support individual progress for all students. Visual learning has allowed students to take ownership of their own learning goals.

The role of Learning Support has been evaluated and focus has been redirected to targeted support for individual students through 1:1 instruction or small group withdrawal.





## Senior Secondary Certificate - Victorian Certificate of Applied Learning (VCAL)

At the completion of 2020, one student graduated from Worawa Aboriginal College with a Senior VCAL qualification heralding her successful completion of Year 12. This graduate received an offer to continue further education in the Foundation Program at RMIT. She has deferred this opportunity due to the impact of COVID and the related implications.

## Vocational Training for Senior Students

COVID significantly limited the ability to deliver the vocational training program.

- No external certifications could be delivered during 2020.
- Cert II in Community Services was delivered onsite, however students were unable to participate in work experience opportunities.
- Pathways to Womanhood was postponed.

Students were encouraged and supported to source work experience in their home communities during the extended lockdown period in Term 2 in Victoria. There was varying success in these endeavours.





## Transitions and Pathways

Students returning to communities for significant periods of time in 2020, resulted in stronger relationships being formed between staff at Worawa and key stakeholders in the communities where the students were living. Staff were afforded the opportunity to better understand the contexts and opportunities to which students would be returning post-secondary schooling and what viable employment there might be.

## Student Survey Outcomes

Student satisfaction surveys were conducted on Survey Monkey, across all College activities from engagement in sport and fitness, homework, catering and the boarding program. Responses allowed staff to tailor remote learning, timetabling and activities to provide more supportive teaching and learning during the trying conditions of COVID restrictions. 2020 feedback from students highlighted their value of family connection with the College.

## Development of the Teaching Team

Professional development of teachers has focussed on curriculum and pedagogy to re-prioritise the Gananggurr curriculum. Outcomes of this have been evident in improved documentation of unit plans, cross-curricular alignment and a re-focus on data driven differentiation.

Professional development during whole school staff opportunities has focussed on embedding the Worawa Model of Wellbeing. Teaching staff have engaged deeply with Boarding staff to increase consistency in application of the first two elements of the model: Relationships and Balance.



## National Literacy and Numeracy Benchmarks

NAPLAN testing was cancelled nationally in 2020 due to the impact of COVID.

SUBJECT	YEAR LEVEL	2017	2018	2019
Reading	7	13%	34%	38%
	9	20%	57%	66%
Writing	7	26%	17%	16%
	9	40%	36%	50%
Spelling	7	40%	50%	65%
	9	50%	57%	50%
Grammar and Punctuation	7	20%	No data	36%
	9	30%	43%	50%
Numeracy	7	64%	42%	46%
	9	90%	71%	60%

## Student Rates of Attendance

2020 Attendance Rates	
Year 7	93.42%
Year 8	95.38%
Year 9	90.40%
Year 10	88.79%
Year 11 VCAL	73.93%
Year 12 VCAL	81.73%
<b>Whole of School</b>	<b>89.85%</b>

### Managing Student Non Attendance

Worawa Aboriginal College has a Student Attendance Monitoring and Management policy in place which provides student attendance requirements and management strategies.

Students who are found to be consistently late to class or demonstrating class avoidance may be requested to attend an interview with the Head of Learning and Teaching, the Head of Boarding and Wellbeing or the Principal for interview or to attend the Student Review Committee (SRC). The SRC determines strategies to be implemented to improve attendance. Parents and guardians are notified by the Principal where appropriate. Worawa has a School Nurse, Head of Boarding and Student Wellbeing, a visiting paediatric doctor from Monash Children's Hospital and visiting Psychologist from Caraniche who provide wellbeing support and health care to students.



# Student Learning Outcomes (as outlined on the MySchool website)

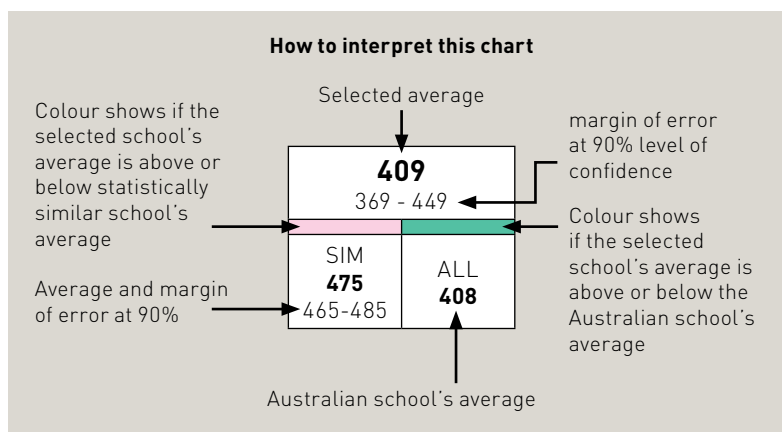
NAPLAN testing was cancelled nationally in 2020 due to the impact of COVID.

2019										
	Reading		Persuasive Writing		Spelling		Grammar & Punctuation		Numeracy	
Year 7	<b>424</b> 395 - 453		<b>355</b> 321 - 389		<b>439</b> 409 - 469		<b>405</b> 373 - 438		<b>418</b> 390 - 445	
		ALL <b>546</b>		ALL <b>513</b>		ALL <b>546</b>		ALL <b>542</b>		ALL <b>554</b>
Year 9	<b>482</b> 445 - 518		<b>436</b> 387 - 485		<b>465</b> 424 - 506		<b>449</b> 408 - 490		<b>498</b> 467 - 530	
		ALL <b>581</b>		ALL <b>549</b>		ALL <b>546</b>		ALL <b>574</b>		ALL <b>592</b>
2018										
	Reading		Persuasive Writing		Spelling		Grammar & Punctuation		Numeracy	
Year 7	<b>408</b> 378 - 438		<b>329</b> 295 - 363		<b>413</b> 381 - 445		<b>299</b> 265 - 344		<b>414</b> 385 - 442	
		ALL <b>542</b>		ALL <b>505</b>		ALL <b>545</b>		ALL <b>544</b>		ALL <b>548</b>
Year 9	<b>490</b> 463 - 518		<b>423</b> 386 - 460		<b>490</b> 459 - 521		<b>447</b> 416 - 479		<b>502</b> 478 - 527	
		ALL <b>584</b>		ALL <b>542</b>		ALL <b>583</b>		ALL <b>581</b>		ALL <b>596</b>
2017										
	Reading		Persuasive Writing		Spelling		Grammar & Punctuation		Numeracy	
Year 7	<b>394</b> 366 - 421		<b>373</b> 343 - 404		<b>402</b> 374 - 431		<b>344</b> 374 - 431		<b>435</b> 409 - 462	
		ALL <b>545</b>		ALL <b>513</b>		ALL <b>550</b>		ALL <b>542</b>		ALL <b>554</b>
Year 9	<b>449</b> 417 - 482		<b>433</b> 389 - 476		<b>461</b> 425 - 498		<b>417</b> 380 - 454		<b>503</b> 475 - 532	
		ALL <b>581</b>		ALL <b>552</b>		ALL <b>581</b>		ALL <b>574</b>		ALL <b>592</b>

- SIM** Schools serving students from statistically similar backgrounds
- ALL** Australian schools' average
- Student population below reporting threshold
- Year level not tested

Selected school's average is:

- substantially above**
- above**
- close to**
- below**
- substantially below**



# Teachers Standards and Qualifications

All teaching staff hold registration with the Victorian Institute of Teaching.

## In 2020 the academic qualifications held by staff included:

- Bachelor of Applied Science
- Bachelor of Arts
- Bachelor of Design
- Bachelor of Environmental Science
- Bachelor of Exercise Science
- Bachelor of Teaching
- Certificate of Education Integration Adie
- Diploma in Community Services
- Diploma in Education
- Graduate Diploma of Education (Secondary)
- Graduate Certificate of TESOL
- Honours in Linguistics
- Master of Counselling
- Master of Education (International)
- Master of Special Education Needs
- Master of Teaching



## Leadership and Management

Worawa Aboriginal College operates on the principles of Aboriginal Self-Determination based on Aboriginal leadership and decision-making involving collective decision making. Worawa is a designated Special Assistance boarding school whose students come from Aboriginal communities across the country. The College has a multi-disciplinary approach to matters of student engagement, health and welfare to enable them to focus on learning. A Student Review Committee

meets weekly to monitor the progress of each student. The Head of Learning and Teaching is a member of the College Executive, which allows issues that relate to teacher satisfaction and development to be discussed and College strategies for continuous improvement to be enacted. The Worawa Advisory Committee provides guidance as required and as a member of Independent Schools Victoria, the College is able to draw on expert advice.

## Workforce Composition

Workforce Composition	Non Indigenous		Indigenous	
	Male	Female	Male	Female
<b>Teaching Staff</b>				
Principal				1
Teaching Staff FT	1	8		
Teaching Staff PT		2		
<b>Non Teaching Staff</b>				
Specialist Support FT		1		
Specialist Support PT	1	1	1	1
Boarding Staff FT		6		1
Boarding Staff PT		4		1
Admin & Clerical FT		1		
Admin & Clerical PT	1	4		1
Buildings & Other FT	3			
Buildings & Other PT		1		

## Professional Learning

Worawa is a Professional Learning Community with Professional Learning Teams that meet weekly. Consistent with the philosophy of a Walking Together, Worawa has a focus on 'continuous improvement' across all aspects of the College's operations.

The College conducts professional learning for all staff at the commencement and conclusion of each term. In addition to in-house professional learning activities, staff are released for professional development activities provided through affiliate organisations during the year. The Worawa integrated model of education includes professional development in aspects of health and wellbeing.

A perpetual and important focus upon the training of all staff, and in particular teaching staff, is to provide culturally safe and culturally aware learning environments.

This has again been a strong feature of the Worawa Professional Development calendar. A particular focus throughout 2020 was the continued development and refinement of the Worawa Model of Wellbeing.

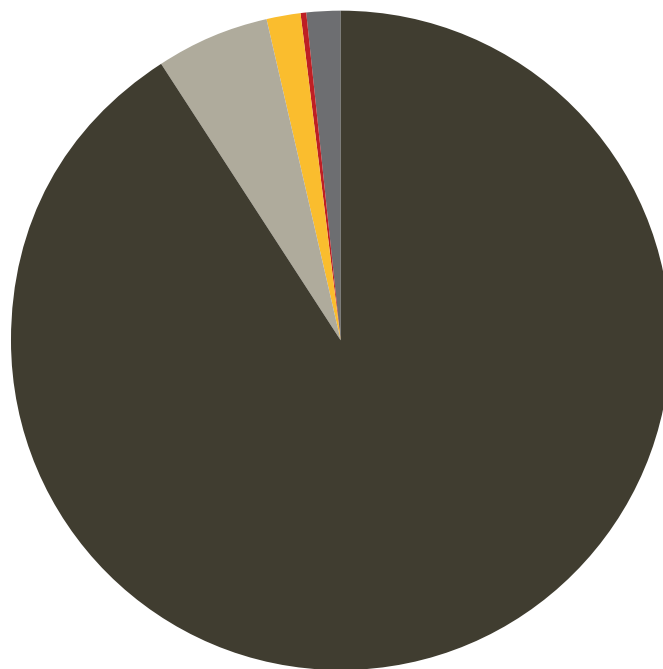
An internal education committee which includes an ISV representative meets monthly, and teaching staff have representation on the Worawa Advisory Committee which reports to the College Board.

During 2020, \$47,299.53 was spent on staff professional learning.

## School Financial Activity

Information on the school's financial activity has been provided to the Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission (ACNC). The school community can access financial information from the ACNC website at <http://acnc.gov.au>.

School Income by Funding Source	
Revenue from government including capital grants	4,191,819
Donations and bequests	256,878
Fees and charges	72,180
Revenue from investments	20,461
Other revenue	66,125
<b>Total Gross Income</b>	<b>4,607,463</b>



## Parent, Teacher and Community Satisfaction

Throughout 2020 much of the school / community engagement was affected by COVID restrictions.

Generally representatives are selected from student communities to chaperone students to and from the College. Chaperones typically spend two days on campus visiting classrooms, spending time in the boarding houses and having meals with students, enabling them to gain a good understanding of the College operations in the areas of Learning and Teaching, Boarding, Health and Wellbeing and extra-curricular activities. In addition the College conducts an annual School Community Forum for Worawa staff and carers/parents/families of students to workshop the year in review and plan for the coming year. Informal and anecdotal reports from families and agencies are positive. Interviews with families of students are available for viewing at [www.worawa.vic.edu.au](http://www.worawa.vic.edu.au).





**Worawa Aboriginal College**

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**We Believe** in Education, Culture + Wellbeing