



Annual Report 2021





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Worawa Aboriginal College overview

Worawa Aboriginal College is Victoria's only independent Aboriginal school. An Aboriginal community initiative, Worawa is owned and managed by Aboriginal people. Worawa provides a holistic education program through an integrated education, culture and wellbeing model where Aboriginal culture has a central place. The diversity of Indigenous Australia is reflected in the student cohort of young women in secondary years of schooling (Years 7-12) who come from urban, regional, remote and very remote communities throughout Australia. The curriculum is aligned with the Australian Curriculum enriched by Aboriginal cultural perspectives.

The 55-hectare site provides an aesthetic and culturally safe boarding school environment on land of cultural and historical importance to Victorian Aboriginal people. It was previously the site of a traditional camping site that became a government-controlled Aboriginal Reserve, Coranderrk, in 1863 until its closure in 1924.

Worawa Aboriginal College directly targets and redresses several 'risk factors' for Aboriginal disengagement from education. As a boarding school, Worawa provides a culturally safe learning environment for students, delivering a rigorous education enriched by Aboriginal cultural perspectives. The College has adopted the Aboriginal values of Relationship, Responsibility and Respect as the basis for College life.

Statement of Commitment to Child Safety

Worawa Aboriginal College

- has zero tolerance for child abuse
- has systems to protect children from abuse, and will take all allegations and concerns very seriously and responds to them consistently in line with the organisation's policies and procedures
- is committed to promoting physical, emotional and cultural safety for all children
- actively works to listen to and empower children
- is committed to providing a safe environment for all children



Executive Director Report

This report outlines the operations of Worawa Aboriginal College for the 2021 school year.

Worawa Aboriginal College is registered with the Victorian Registration and Qualifications Authority (VRQA) as a Specialist Girls School. The specialist nature of the College's operations lie in its integrated model which combines personal development, intensive health and well-being programs with strong formal education principles and cultural activities led by Aboriginal Elders. Worawa Aboriginal College is owned and governed by Aboriginal people and holds classification as an Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisation (ACCO).

Worawa services the educational needs of Aboriginal female adolescents in the secondary years of schooling (Years 7-12). The young people who attend Worawa come from many and varied communities across Australia. Enrolment applications are subject to Commonwealth ABSTUDY procedures where families are means tested and must meet criteria for approval under Home Conditions. The Worawa Education Model has a distinctive and unique profile based on an integrated Education, Culture, Wellbeing model. The Worawa curriculum strongly emphasises foundation studies in literacy and numeracy while providing a breadth and depth of learning experiences across key disciplines/learning areas.

Parents who send their children to Worawa wish to see them complete their secondary education and be prepared for future education and work opportunities, as well as taking on leadership roles back in their home community.

Our aim is to provide a rigorous education to create positive pathways and opportunities for our students through appropriate care, supervision and support to help them achieve their goals and reach their individual potential. Worawa staff work together and in partnership to provide students with positive experiences and support their engagement in learning.



The College has focused on consolidating a strong, cohesive approach to the Social and Emotional Wellbeing of its students through creating an environment that supports students to flourish. Changes include a structured orientation program for enrollment applicants and incoming students - both new and returning along with attention to clinical health needs and provision of strong social and emotional support.

The 2021 school year commenced with an enrolment of 42 students from Aboriginal communities across the country. The coronavirus pandemic brought many challenges in school operations and we are so very proud of students who demonstrated resilience and commitment in adapting to living in the 'Worawa Bubble'.

At the end of 2021 we farewelled 5 graduates of the Victorian Certificate of Applied Learning (VCAL). For all they were 'First in Family' to have achieved a senior level of education and through their own effort they increased the choices and opportunities open to them.

I wish to acknowledge with gratitude, the support of the National Indigenous Australians Agency (NIAA) to enable the College to address the many challenges to Aboriginal families and communities posed by the global pandemic. I also wish to acknowledge the commitment and support of our valued staff for their outstanding support to students.

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.

Boarding and Student Wellbeing

Throughout the year the boarding focus was:

- Whole school approach to supporting a culture of Wellbeing
- Emphasis on implementing the Worawa Model of Wellbeing that supports students in their educational journey
- Focus on developing the emotional literacy of students by defining their social and emotional context more explicitly
- Restorative Practice
- Holistic approach to Health and Wellbeing with support of Cultural connections
- Focus on the College values of Relationship, Responsibility and Respect whilst embedding consistency and balance across the boarding program
- Boarding through the pandemic managing COVID-19

Throughout 2021 the focus in Boarding has been to bring alive the Worawa Model of Wellbeing in a practical and tangible way. Key to this process were the weekly gatherings of Respect Circle, Wellbeing Circle and Restorative Circle to promote emotional literacy and support strategies for addressing trauma. Through this process, the aim is to support students to feel empowered and free to meet their educational opportunities with increased self-awareness, confidence and independence and ability to Walk in Two Worlds.

Regular circle gatherings and involvement of the senior students in running the Respect Circle meetings strengthened opportunities for student's voice and leadership development. Senior student's provided strong role modelling to younger students through conducting House Meetings and working in smaller groups in restorative practice.

Continuous review of the student code of conduct at Respect Circle Meetings provided an opportunity to ensure that current social and emotional issues that impact student's lives are voiced responsibly. This process also allows for appropriate follow-up through SRC for referral and ongoing professional counselling support.

In 2021 the Teams platform was implemented which streamlined communications, creating a more efficient and effective response and greater collaboration between staff and enhanced professionalism. This has improved systems for tracking decision-making and logistics daily through handover which can be accessed 24/7 by staff.

We have created electronic version of a daily diary and weekly Wellbeing report of each girl so all staff can have a good understanding and appreciation for continuity of care when not on shift, thus supporting their entry and exit from the workplace.

Throughout the year we have aimed to promote goal setting around protective behaviours through Wellbeing Circle meetings targeting specific concerns relevant to young teenage girls and supporting discussion and reflection of manageable strategies that support self-regulation. Our focus on each student was to:

- communicate explicitly the purpose and relevance of their unique educational journey emphasizing the importance of goal setting and bringing a strength based approach to their personal lifelong learning.
- tackle behavioural issues effectively through continued use of the Restorative Practice model and engaged senior students in supporting this informally amongst their peers.
- encouraged more opportunities for strengthening cultural pride and connection to place and culture by programmed activities on our cultural precinct on the banks of Birrarung (Yarra).

Overarching Educational Strategies and Directions

Throughout 2021, 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. Uncertain student numbers had required further review of the academic workforce. Enrolment procedures have also been reviewed. There has been a need to balance the urgency of growing the student body against the number of staff required to deliver a rigorous and holistic program. Leadership are mindful of the need to be strategic in the recruitment and enrolment process.

Significant time has been invested in refocussing the academic team on the Gananggurr curriculum. Staff have been both challenged and supported to prepare comprehensive unit plans that truly reflect the Worawa Way in synthesis with the Australian Curriculum.

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 prioritizing a cultural overlay is addressed through our commitment to the Worawa Way and outlined in our Gananggurr (Another Day) curriculum framework.

During 2021, teaching and learning staff undertook a review of Gananggurr and conducted a series of in house workshops to reflect on best practice in implementing the Worawa Way and Aboriginal pedagogy through methods of Knowing, Doing and Being.

The five Learning Centers were evaluated and redefined to ensure embedding of the College's overarching theme of Cultural Connections as well as best practice within the Australian Curriculum. The Learning Centers were redefined as Literacy, STEAM, Humanities, The Arts and Health & Physical Education. Information Technology is available across all learning areas with access to advanced and specialized skills prioritized within STEAM and The Arts. 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 actively monitor and share data to inform differentiated planning and support individual progress for all students.



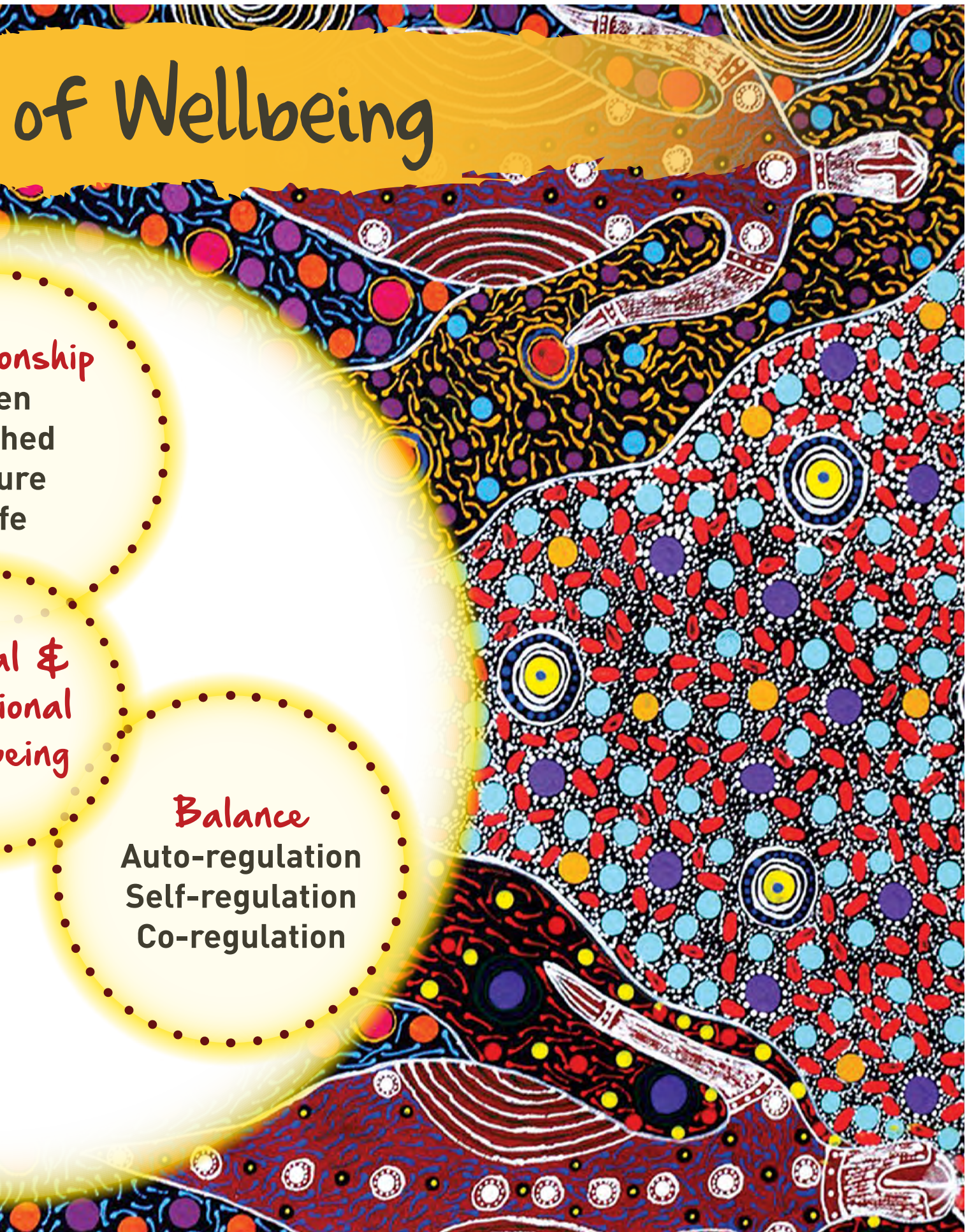


Worawa Model

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Consistency
Communication
Restorative
Reflective



of Wellbeing

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Balance
Auto-regulation
Self-regulation
Co-regulation



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

At the completion of 2021, 5 students graduated from Worawa Aboriginal College. 2 graduated with a Senior VCAL qualification. 3 graduated with an Intermediate VCAL qualification. Due to the impact of COVID and the related implications all graduates opted to seek initial further education and work opportunities in their home communities.

Vocational Training for Senior Students

Opportunities to engage in Vocational Training were provided onsite and through external short courses when available between COVID lockdowns.

- Students completed certification in First Aid, Food Handling and Barista training.
- Cert II in Business was delivered onsite. Students completed some work experience opportunities however these were heavily impacted by COVID mandates.
- Pathways to Womanhood ran as an altered program with the Debutante Ball being held onsite at Worawa.





Transitions and Pathways

Throughout 2021 focus was placed on intentional strengthening and cementing of relationships between Worawa staff and key stakeholders in the communities where students reside. Where possible Worawa staff travelled with inter-state students and supported quarantine stays. Work is ongoing on developing transition and pathways partnerships with further education and employment providers across all states within which students reside.

Student Survey Outcomes

Student satisfaction surveys were conducted across all College activities from engagement in sport and fitness, homework, catering and the boarding program. Responses allowed staff to tailor offsite activities during periods of low restriction to best meet the needs and interests of students. 2021 feedback from students highlighted the value of focusing on the unit of each boarding house as its own family/ community through shared meals, activities and friendly inter-house competitions.

Development of the Teaching Team

A review of Worawa teaching staff areas of skill and expertise was conducted in line with planned changes to replace the senior Victorian Certificate of Applied Learning (VCAL) qualification with the Victorian Certificate of Education Vocational Major (VCE VM) and Victorian Pathways Certificate. To prepare for this transition in the senior certificate a Change Management plan was initiated which saw alterations to the staffing model and an increased staff professional development program.

The College recognizes the high level of individualized skill and expertise Teaching Staff must carry as members of a small team and aims to ensure that our team are best placed, through training and qualifications, to achieve our primary objectives of providing a total education program for young Aboriginal women.



National Literacy and Numeracy Benchmarks

Percentage Of Year 7 and 9 Students Reaching National Literacy and Numeracy Benchmarks:

SUBJECT	YEAR LEVEL	2018	2019	2021
Reading	7	34%	38%	38%
	9	57%	66%	28%
Writing	7	17%	16%	50%
	9	36%	50%	42%
Spelling	7	50%	65%	38%
	9	57%	50%	28%
Grammar and Punctuation	7	No data	36%	25%
	9	43%	50%	14%
Numeracy	7	42%	46%	13%
	9	71%	60%	42%

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

Student Rates of Attendance

2021 Attendance Rates	
Year 7	92.10%
Year 8	88.32%
Year 9	79.73%
Year 10	86.49%
Year 11 VCAL	86.72%
Year 12 VCAL	90.97%
Whole of School	86.91%

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 and 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 a member of the Leadership Team 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. In recognition of the impacts of ongoing lockdowns and quarantine periods, Caraniche support was increased during the second half of the year.



Student Learning Outcomes (as outlined on the MySchool website)

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

2021										
	Reading		Writing		Spelling		Grammar		Numeracy	
Year 7	447 410 - 485		429 387 - 471		464 422 - 506		386 341 - 431		427 391 - 464	
	SIM 438	ALL 542	SIM 415	ALL 522	SIM 455	ALL 548	SIM 400	ALL 533	SIM 420	ALL 550
Year 9	467 428 - 506		466 414 - 519		459 415 - 502		464 420 - 508		497 463 - 530	
	SIM 460	ALL 577	SIM 435	ALL 551	SIM 480	ALL 580	SIM 452	ALL 573	SIM 482	ALL 588

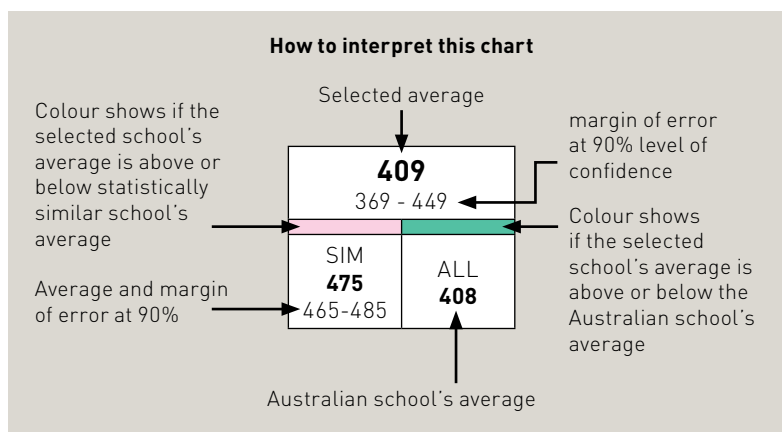
2019										
	Reading		Writing		Spelling		Grammar		Numeracy	
Year 7	424 395 - 453		355 321 - 389		439 409 - 469		405 373 - 438		418 390 - 445	
	SIM -	ALL 546	SIM -	ALL 513	SIM -	ALL 546	SIM -	ALL 542	SIM -	ALL 554
Year 9	482 445 - 518		436 387 - 485		465 424 - 506		449 408 - 490		498 467 - 530	
	SIM -	ALL 581	SIM -	ALL 549	SIM -	ALL 546	SIM -	ALL 574	SIM -	ALL 592

2018										
	Reading		Writing		Spelling		Grammar		Numeracy	
Year 7	408 378 - 438		329 295 - 363		413 381 - 445		299 265 - 344		414 385 - 442	
	SIM -	ALL 542	SIM -	ALL 505	SIM -	ALL 545	SIM -	ALL 544	SIM -	ALL 548
Year 9	490 463 - 518		423 386 - 460		490 459 - 521		447 416 - 479		502 478 - 527	
	SIM -	ALL 584	SIM -	ALL 542	SIM -	ALL 583	SIM -	ALL 581	SIM -	ALL 596

- 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**



Staff Training and Professional Learning

Worawa is a Professional Learning Community with a perpetual and important focus upon the training of all staff in order to support them in self-care and to meet the required standards of their roles.

At the beginning and end of each term two days are allocated specifically to professional learning for all staff. In addition to in-house professional learning activities, staff are released for professional development activities provided through affiliate organisations during the year.

A strong feature of the Worawa Professional Development calendar includes training on the care, safety and welfare of students. A key focus continues to be on Child Safety and Protection, including mandatory reporting. External specialists were engaged to deliver on Child Safety training.

The Worawa integrated model of education extends to professional development in the Worawa Model of Wellbeing and includes aspects of health and wellbeing. We believe that teaching teachers how to best interact with adolescents who have had ruptures in their primary relationships, will promote not only the best possible learning environment, but also a road to recovery for that young person.

As an educational boarding facility Worawa offers a culturally relevant and inclusive model of teaching and learning to adolescent females, from Aboriginal communities across Australia. The term social and

emotional wellbeing is used by Indigenous peoples to describe the social, emotional, spiritual, and cultural wellbeing of a person. The model designed to describe the Worawa Wellbeing philosophy has been developed from evidence-based research from both developmental psychology and neuroscience. The model identifies three main components of human health necessary to the development and function of resilience in young people: Relationship, Balance and Consistency. Staff training also includes Aboriginal history and culture to support the College's aim to provide a culturally safe learning environment.

In 2021, Worawa commissioned the Go1 online learning system, integrated and aligned to the commissioning of new HRIS platform Employment Hero. Go1 offers the largest curated eLearning library from top training providers and will be utilised for some of the College's online learning compliance related training. It also provides for the delivery of customised induction and cultural programs as well as on-line courses specific to the requirements of Worawa Aboriginal College.

During 2021, \$44,224.37 was spent on staff training and professional learning.



Leadership and Management

Worawa Aboriginal College operates within the current regulatory framework, on the principles of Aboriginal Self-Determination based on Aboriginal leadership and decision-making involving collective decision-making approaches. The College has a multi-disciplinary approach to matters of student engagement, health and welfare. 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.

Workforce Composition

Workforce Composition	Non Indigenous		Indigenous	
Teaching Staff	Male	Female	Male	Female
Principal				1
Teaching Staff FT	1	6		
Teaching Staff PT		2		
Non Teaching Staff	Male	Female	Male	Female
Specialist Support FT		3		
Specialist Support PT				1
Boarding Staff FT		6		
Boarding Staff PT		2		
Admin & Clerical FT	1	1	1	
Admin & Clerical PT		1		
Buildings & Other FT	3			
Buildings & Other PT		1		

Teachers Standards and Qualifications

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

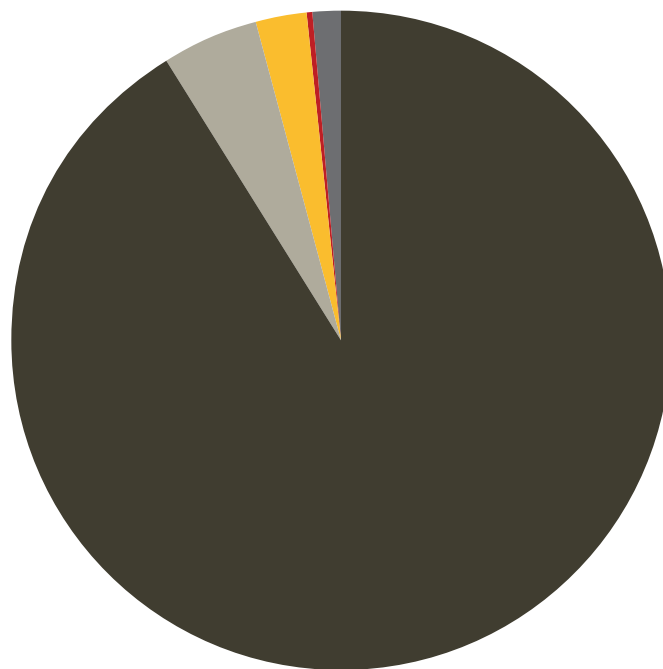
In 2021 the academic qualifications held by staff included:

- Certificate IV Training and Assessment
- Certificate of Education Integration Aide
- Diploma in Community Services
- Diploma in Education
- Bachelor of Applied Science
- Bachelor of Arts
- Bachelor of Design
- Bachelor of Environmental Science
- Bachelor of Exercise Science
- Bachelor of Teaching
- Honours in Linguistics
- Bachelor of Education
- Diploma of Teaching
- Graduate Certificate of TESOL
- Graduate Certificate (Careers)
- Graduate Diploma of Education (Secondary)
- Master of Counselling
- Master of Education
- Master of Education (International)
- Master of Elementary Education
- Master of Special Education Needs
- Master of Teaching
- Master of Applied Learning and Teaching
- PhD: Ed. Psychology

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	3,302,659
Donations and bequests	177,037
Fees and charges	93,672
Revenue from investments	3,544
Other revenue	47,186
Total Gross Income	3,624,098



Parent, Teacher and Community Satisfaction

Throughout 2021 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.





Worawa Aboriginal College

Phone: 03 5962 4344 | Email: admin@worawa.vic.edu.au | ABN: 18 371 286 615
visit worawa.vic.edu.au

We Believe in Education, Culture + Wellbeing