

CELEBRATING



40
YEARS
1983-2023

Annual Report 2023





**Victorian
Registration &
Qualifications
Authority**

Worawa Aboriginal College, recognised by the Victorian Registration and Qualifications Authority (VRQA) as a Specialist Girls School, stands as a beacon of excellence in Indigenous education. Our unique integrated model melds personal development, comprehensive health and wellbeing programs, formal education, and cultural enrichment led by Aboriginal Elders. Proudly owned and governed by Aboriginal people, Worawa holds the esteemed classification of an Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisation (ACCO).

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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.



Worawa Aboriginal College Overview

Worawa Aboriginal College is Victoria's only 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 2023 school year.



As the newly appointed Executive Director/Principal of Worawa Aboriginal College, I am honoured to reflect on my first year leading this extraordinary institution. Worawa caters to the educational needs of Aboriginal female adolescents in secondary schooling (Years 7-12), welcoming students from diverse communities across Australia. Admission is guided by Commonwealth ABSTUDY procedures, ensuring that families meet the necessary criteria for approval. The Worawa Education Model, distinguished by its integrated Education, Culture, and Wellbeing approach, places a strong emphasis on literacy and numeracy foundations while offering a wide array of learning experiences across key disciplines.

This year holds special significance for us as it marks our 40th anniversary. Over the past four decades, we have been committed to fostering academic excellence, cultural pride, and personal growth among our students. This milestone is a testament to the enduring strength of our community and the positive impact we have made on countless lives.

We remain steadfast in our mission to provide young Aboriginal women with a robust education that paves the way for positive pathways and opportunities. This mission is supported by appropriate care, supervision, and encouragement to help each student achieve her goals and realise her potential.

The 2023 school year began with an enrolment of 43 students from Aboriginal communities nationwide. Currently having our highest student numbers in the years 9 & 10, we have initiated attraction and retention strategies aimed at our younger and older student cohorts.

Throughout the year, our focus was on resetting our school environment after the impacts of COVID-19. To achieve this, we increased onsite clinical psychological support, enhanced social engagement through excursions, and bolstered our staffing to better support our students. To assist with the integration of new students, a restructured orientation program was introduced which positively impacted the transition of new starters into boarding life. This assisted with potential students and families becoming familiarised with the College which resulted in them settling into our College program more quickly.

I would like to take this opportunity to praise my predecessor, Dr. Aunty Lois Peeler AM, for her years of service to the College. Her leadership and vision have been instrumental in shaping Worawa into the

exceptional institution it is today. I am also delighted to share that Aunty Lois, our former Executive Director, remains an integral part of our school community in her new role as Elder in Residence. In this capacity, she provides our students with pastoral care while also offering the school community cultural knowledge and oversight on Caring for Country. Her continued presence enriches our College, ensuring that our students benefit from her wisdom and experience.

I would like to acknowledge the hard work and dedication of our staff in creating a positive and inspiring learning environment for our students. Your commitment to excellence has been instrumental in shaping student success. A special thank you goes to the Board of Directors, led by Mr. Thomas Bell, for their strategic guidance and unwavering support to maintaining Worawa Aboriginal College's unique standing in the Indigenous education landscape. I also wish to express my heartfelt gratitude to the families of our students for entrusting us with the education and wellbeing of their children.

At the year's conclusion, we celebrated the graduation of three students from the Victorian Certificate of Applied Learning (VCAL). Each graduate leaves us with a clear pathway to either higher education or workplace opportunities. The accomplishments of our 2023 cohort reflect not only their individual efforts but also the collective support of our entire community. Together, we continue to uphold our resolve to providing an exceptional educational experience that empowers our students to thrive and succeed.

Tanya Peeler,
Executive Director/Principal

Leadership and Management

Worawa Aboriginal College operates under the guidance of a majority Aboriginal governance body, ensuring that our leadership is deeply connected to our community's cultural heritage. The day-to-day operations are overseen by our Executive Director/Principal, Tanya Peeler, a proud Aboriginal woman with ancestral connections to the Yorta Yorta, Wiradjuri, and Wurundjeri peoples.

The College adopts a collaborative approach, working closely with our non-Indigenous colleagues while maintaining cultural appropriateness in all interactions and decisions. This ensures that our educational environment remains respectful, inclusive, and effective in meeting the needs of our students.

Staff Composition

Division	Non Indigenous		Indigenous	
	Male	Female	Male	Female
Leadership		2		2
Administration	2	3		1
Academic - Teaching	1	4		1
Academic - Non Teaching		2		
Boarding(FT,PT,Casual)		14		
Operations	2	1	1	





Student Voice

Every term, student voice surveys are conducted by the academic team. Additionally, the Principal holds yarning circles with all students to facilitate open discussions and gather feedback on their experiences. The feedback from both activities is shared with the Leadership Team to identify areas for improvement and ways to enhance our program.

Parent and Community Satisfaction

Worawa Aboriginal College places a strong emphasis on understanding and addressing the needs of our students' families and communities. Each year, we hold an Annual Community Forum with the families and carers of our students. This forum provides valuable insights into their desires and needs. By listening to their perspectives, we can tailor our education program to better develop our young women, equipping them with the skills and knowledge needed to seize opportunities and become future leaders.

Boarding and Student Life

In 2023, boarding life at Worawa was dedicated to empowering our students and preparing them for young adulthood through a comprehensive focus on life skills. Throughout the year, our boarding program actively engaged students in learning essential tasks such as cooking, housekeeping, and self-care, which are crucial for independent living and future success. Senior students had opportunities to undertake driving lessons to assist in obtaining their car licenses. Additionally, some senior students gained real-world experience through after-school and weekend jobs, supported by staff who provided transportation and mentorship.

In addition to skill development, our students immersed themselves in the sporting community by participating in local football and basketball clubs. We prioritised a balanced social experience by offering numerous opportunities for students to attend AFL footy matches, theme parks, movie theatres, shopping excursions, and various other social outings. These initiatives were integral to fostering a supportive environment where students thrived academically, socially, and personally.





Overarching Educational Strategies and Directions

During 2023, significant efforts were made to enrich the Gananggurr (Another Day) curriculum. Teachers were both challenged and supported in preparing comprehensive unit plans that ensure an Indigenised pedagogy, truly reflecting the Worawa Way in harmony with the Australian Curriculum. A highlight of the year was a workshop on the '8 Ways of Learning' Aboriginal pedagogy conducted by a visiting Indigenous academic, which provided valuable insights and assistance to our academic team in their curriculum planning.

Learning and Teaching

As a Specialist School, the Australian Curriculum is adapted to target the specific learning needs of our student cohort. The challenge of prioritising a cultural overlay is addressed through our unwavering commitment to the Worawa Way, as outlined in our Gananggurr curriculum framework.

Our classes are designed to cater to:

1. **Multi-age/grade classes** that suit differentiated teaching and learning.
2. **Cross-curricular learning** that allows for deeper exploration of given topics.
3. **Suitability for Personalised Learning Plans** to meet individual student needs.

Our overarching aim remains the development of each girl and young woman, helping them to reach their full potential while understanding their strengths, building confidence, and fostering a sense of hope and opportunity within a culturally informed setting.



Student Attendance

Managing Student Non Attendance

Worawa Aboriginal College has a robust Student Attendance Monitoring and Management policy, ensuring clear attendance requirements and effective management strategies. Attendance is taken at the start of every class and recorded in our student management system.

Students who are consistently late or show signs of class avoidance may be requested to attend an interview with the Deputy Principal or the Principal.

During the interviews strategies are discussed and implemented to improve attendance. Where appropriate, parents and guardians are notified by a member of the Leadership Team.

2023 Student Attendance:

89% Attendance Rate



Student Learning Outcomes (as outlined on the MySchool website)

NAPLAN student results

The table below shows the average student results at this school for 2023.

<https://myschool.edu.au/school/46288/naplan/results>

2023										
	Reading		Writing		Spelling		Grammar		Numeracy	
Year 7	432 385 - 479		420 367 - 473		432 382 - 481		376 323 - 429		414 372 - 457	
	SIM 447	ALL 536	SIM 439	ALL 534	SIM 444	ALL 539	SIM 433	ALL 539	SIM 428	ALL 538
Year 9	431 395 - 468		421 372 - 470		421 380 - 461		414 373 - 455		440 409 - 472	
	SIM 459	ALL 564	SIM 446	ALL 567	SIM 562	ALL 568	SIM 442	ALL 557	SIM 462	ALL 568

NAPLAN participation for this school is 100%

NAPLAN participation for all Australian students is 95%

SIM Students have a similar background as determined by parental occupation and education. The background of students has been shown to have an impact on NAPLAN results

ALL Australian schools' average

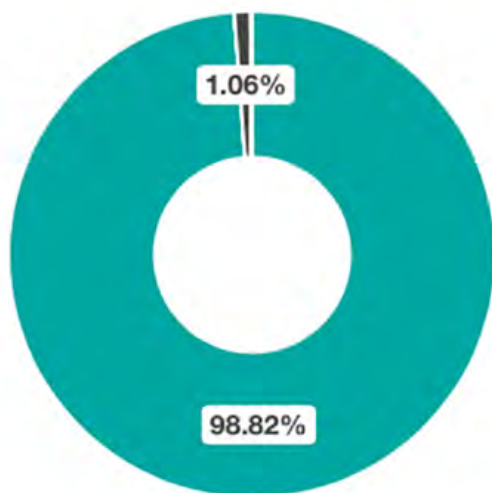


School Financial Activity

Financial information from the latest AIS.

Revenue

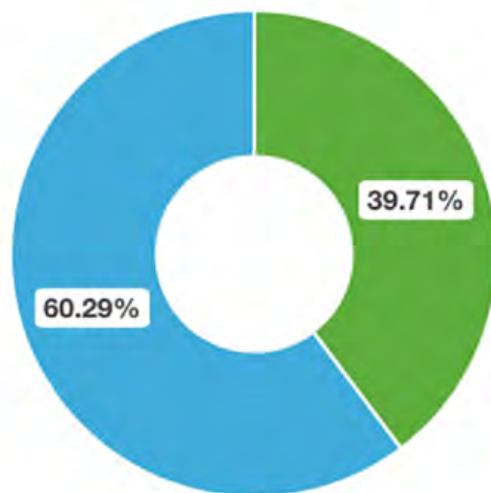
Total revenue: \$4,443,779.00



- Revenue from Government
- Other Revenue
- Revenue from Donations and Bequests
- Revenue from Goods or Services
- Revenue from Investments

Expenses

Total expenses: \$4,274,430.00



- Grants and donations made for use in Australia
- Grants and donations made for use outside Australia
- Interest expenses
- All other expenses
- Employee expenses





Reconciliation Takes A





Worawa Aboriginal College

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We Believe in Education, Culture + Wellbeing