

**Worawa Aboriginal College Ltd  
2010 Annual Report**

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## **1. PHILOSOPHY AND MISSION STATEMENT**

### **PHILOSOPHY**

At Worawa we believe an effective school begins with dedicated, committed staff who embrace the ethos of Worawa Aboriginal College and who continually encourage students by nurturing their self-esteem and educating every student in a holistic way. Within this philosophical framework we engender confidence in students to become motivated to strive for excellence. We are aware that all students are unique and therefore curricula must be suitably flexible to cater for their needs and levels of understanding to develop fully the talents and capacities of all students. The task of Worawa Aboriginal College is to nurture and develop the abilities of its students so that they may live with a true sense of confidence in themselves and their ability to achieve in their area of choice.

### **MISSION STATEMENT**

- To provide an appropriate mainstream education to enable students to attain the confidence, knowledge, skills and attitudes necessary to become fully contributing members of Australian society.
  
- To provide students with a sense of their Aboriginal identity, knowledge of their history, confidence in their place as First Australians; and to build their self esteem as a basis for success in their chosen life pursuits.

## **2. CHAIRMANS REPORT**

Bevan Mailman – Chairman

I am pleased to present the 2010 Annual Report for Worawa Aboriginal College Ltd.

### **COLLEGE GOALS**

The College goals implicit in the Philosophy and Mission Statement have formed the basis of our work at the College this year. They are underpinned by our values:

- student focus
- educational achievement
- cultural maintenance
- continuous improvement
- community and stakeholder relationships
- confidentiality
- safe work environment

As Victoria's only registered Independent Aboriginal school Worawa Aboriginal College has a central place in Indigenous education. Worawa aims to provide a holistic program that develops the intellectual, social, physical, emotional and cultural wellbeing of each student through a combination of mainstream education and Aboriginal Pedagogy – ways of Being, Knowing and Doing.

Worawa is situated on Aboriginal land and is owned and run by Aboriginal people. A full boarding school, Worawa now caters exclusively to Aboriginal girls in the middle years of schooling years 7 – 10. Girls entering the College come from urban, regional and remote communities which experience a mosaic of need, and resulting trauma. Historically these communities have experienced very high levels of unemployment, poor school attendance rates and high levels of individual and community trauma. Worawa Aboriginal College is committed to providing an appropriate mainstream and Aboriginal Cultural education to enable students to attain confidence, knowledge, skills and attitudes necessary to become fully contributing members of Australian society.

The beginning of the 2010 school year saw the start of a new era for Worawa Aboriginal College. The College changed its registration to a Specialist School for girls catering for the special needs of Indigenous girls in the middle years of schooling. This change of direction was based on community knowledge, documented evidence based research and assessment of the operating environment. Our educational program is based on the knowledge and experience we as Aboriginal people have of Aboriginal community education needs coupled with cutting edge solutions. Through an integrated Education Model based on Education, Culture and Wellbeing students are encouraged to develop academically, culturally and socially to their full potential. Throughout the year the Worawa Board has worked consistently to consolidate the operations of Worawa Aboriginal College as a specialist school which caters to the specific needs of Aboriginal girls in the middle years of schooling. The Board's Strategic Plan focussed on enhanced educational outcomes through supporting the

College's holistic education model. Worawa's model responds to community need and is designed to directly address issues of trauma and disadvantage within the educational environment; deliver an alternative intensively supported pre year ten educational experience which is both culturally supportive and adaptable to a range of post year ten educational and training pathways.

The Board engaged Blake Dawson to conduct a Board Appraisal, with an internal review of the College's Strategic Plan being undertaken.

Under specialist designation, the College also appointed Lois Peeler to the position of Executive Director. Lois is a long time supporter and director of the College, and sister of the College founder Hyllus Maris.

### **COMMUNICATION**

Staff members and relationships within communities remain our key point of contact. The Worawa brochure and website is an important communication tool in conveying information on the College to prospective students/families and other interested parties. We produce a quarterly newsletter for distribution to parents, communities and stakeholders.

### **ALLIANCES**

The College is a member of Independent Schools Victoria. We are pleased to be a member of the Girls School Alliance. Our School Partnership Program includes the following schools:

- Presbyterian Ladies College
- Shelford Girls' Grammar
- Scotch College
- Luther College
- Trinity Grammar
- Yarra Valley Grammar
- Tintern Girls School
- Genazanno College
- Billanook College
- Healesville High

During the year Worawa also received a Business Partnership Award from Rotary International for the College's partnership with our business partner ANZ.

We are pleased to have the continued support of the Worawa Academic Reference Group (WARG). WARG continues to monitor the implement the Worawa Education Model. Data collection and analysis provide a foundation for improvements to the Worawa Model.

### **3. EXECUTIVE DIRECTORS REPORT**

Lois Peeler – Executive Director

The executive team have worked effectively as a team with each individual doing a great job in their respective roles. As a team we have adopted a culture of 'continuous improvement', raising the standards of practice in a culture of high expectations across the organisation. Emphasis is placed on strong corporate governance, responsible management, a rigorous education program, student wellbeing, campus care and development. This Report sets out progress against the ten strategic priorities identified in the College's existing Strategic Plan.

#### **CORPORATE GOVERNANCE**

The past twelve months has seen a vast improvement in the organisation's financial management reporting to all stakeholders. The College's strategic plan identifies continuous improvement in corporate governance and recommends an annual appraisal of the Board. A review of policies and updates/ renewals commenced and there is a clear strategy for a staged growth of the College.

#### **EDUCATION PROGRAM**

Emphasis is being placed on building a strong teaching team to deliver a quality program to our students. Teaching staff are carefully selected and the College provides professional development each term. Professional development is provided to support staff in their roles as teachers and carers and the school year commenced with professional development for all staff. The Worawa Academic Reference Group chaired by Pam Russell provides oversight to the curriculum. All students have undergone diagnostic assessment to determine their level of achievement. The College uses the Brigance system which includes assessment of hearing, health and well being needs. This alerts staff to the need for specialist support. Most if not all of our students have experienced trauma and may be considered 'high need'; the teaching and learning program takes into account the specialist requirement in working with traumatised children. Small groups and individual tuition enables the development of positive relationships and students have established strong relationships with teachers. Learning by Doing, short sessions and team teaching are some of the strategies employed.

Worawa is a member school of Independent Schools Victoria (ISV) and through the ISV National Partnerships Program, ISV provides ongoing staff support, opportunities for professional development and some resources to support the College program. Care has been taken to strengthen the quality of the boarding house staff and operations to ensure an integrated approach to learning so that students receive guidance and support to enable them to learn. Structured extra curricular activities are designed to engage the girls in 'learning for life'. This year we have groups of students from communities of Yuendumu and Epanarra with others from Kintore, Papunya, Yuelumu, Wagga Wagga and Victorian regional and urban centres.

The College's IT system continues to be a major issue and hampers efforts to deliver a quality education program, and is a focus for next year. The College has placed

emphasis on the recruitment and retention of a suitably qualified and committed staff team and there has been a deliberate move from part-time to full-time teaching staff.

### **STUDENT HEALTH AND WELLBEING**

The College has entered into an MOU with Valley Primary Health Centre for an on-site Clinic conducted by female doctors who attend on a weekly basis. All students undergo a health assessment. As a number of students have been identified with impaired hearing the College has installed sound technology systems in the classrooms.

The College has entered into an MOU with Yarra Ranges GP Association for mental health assessments and counselling services for students. An arts therapy program has commenced for girls who need extra support, and the College also has access to other specialist professional clinical services.

The College has entered into a partnership with Monash University Faculty of Medicine, Nursing and Health Sciences for placement of students in the School for Indigenous Health. With funding support from Perpetual Trustees the College has implemented a Sport and Fitness Program which has every student on a fitness regime with Deakin University undertaking a formal evaluation of the project. Health and wellbeing extends to diet and nutrition in the dining room and boarding house. The chef is advised to prepare nutritious meals, junk food is banned and students receive education on health. Sport is an important part of the program and students are involved in basketball, softball, football and soccer.

Through the Victorian Close the Gap Health Strategy, the College has secured part funding towards additional school nurse hours. Specialist counsellors also work with individual students who need extra support, with emphasis placed on programs and innovation to address trauma and healing and support student retention.

### **CAMPUS CARE AND DEVELOPMENT**

A plan is in place to improve the appearance of the College campus through grounds beautification and enhancement to existing buildings.

Work is half way complete in the refurbishment and extension of the boarding houses. This will conclude around May 2011 and double the boarding capacity of the College. An application has been lodged with BGA for additional class room and facilities to the science block. The Indigenous Land Corporation are also considering an application from the College to replace the ageing art, culture and music room. There is a focus on enhancing the buildings and grounds with teams of Melbourne University graduates working with the College. One is the development of a centrepiece, named the 'Worawa Heart' which will provide a recreation space for the girls in between the boarding houses. Another team is working on grounds beautification and has developed a garden landscape project. A Lutheran Community men's group have committed to involvement in a Working Bee to spruce up the gardens.

### **ABORIGINAL CULTURE AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT**

Efforts are being made to strengthen the Aboriginal presence and content across the program. Emphasis is being placed on threading culture through the curriculum and involvement of Aboriginal artists and role models through a series of activities. Council of Elders meetings are scheduled for each term.

The School Community Forum brought together the Worawa community and parents/families of a number of students. The purpose of the forum was to strengthen links with communities and to learn from parents/families the aspirations they have for their children. The Forum was a huge success. A Debutante Ball is being planned for 2011 which will bring the families of girls to the event.

### **ALLIANCES**

The College has partnerships with a number of organisations including: Victorian Aboriginal Education Association Inc. (VAEAI) Local Aboriginal Education Consultative Group (LAECG) Regional Justice Advisory Committee (RAJAC) Valley Primary Health Care, Yarra Ranges GP Association, Eastern Health, EACH, Monash University, Healesville Sanctuary, Healesville High School, Upper Yarra Secondary College. Worawa is part of the Yarra Valley trade training consortium, which will provide industry training in a variety of trades.

The College has a strong program with a number of schools and in particular Scotch College and Trinity Grammar. The program with Scotch involves a group of Worawa students and Scotch students working together on joint projects. Trinity Grammar provides a music teacher on a fortnightly basis. Melbourne Grammar once again fielded a team to contest the Doug Nicholls trophy at our Reconciliation Sports Carnival playing a composite team of Indigenous boys under the Worawa banner.

Emphasis is being placed on building relationships with the communities that our students are from. Strategies include visits to and from communities, community art exhibitions with visiting artists, involvement of parents/families in school special events and communication through IT such as Skype.

## **4. TEACHING & LEARNING**

Ann Baxter – Head of Teaching & Learning

### **INTRODUCTION**

The Worawa Learning Centre Programs incorporate all three domains of the Victorian Essential Learning Standards [VELS]: Discipline and Learning, Interdisciplinary Learning and Physical, Personal and Social Learning. The College curriculum plan calls for Learning Centres for Language, Culture, Mathematics, Science and Environment, Visual Arts and Wellbeing incorporating Health and Physical Education, Information Technology is available across all learning activities. The curriculum design is on a four-year pattern based on literacy and learning centres. This enables the following features:

1. Suitability for Individual Learning Programs
2. Coverage of all curriculum areas for a given student
3. Flexibility of timetabling in response to different possible enrolment patterns
4. Accommodation of "orbiting" students - students who enter part way through a term.

Upon entry all students undergo diagnostic assessment to determine their level of achievement. They also undergo a health test that incorporates hearing and dental checks.

2010 marked a significant year of development and change for Worawa Aboriginal College. Commencing the year as a girls only school saw intensive education for all staff and a whole new approach to the running of the College. Our beautiful new Boarding Houses were renovated and extended gradually throughout the year.

Teaching staff were all focused on developing best practice in student management and outcomes. As a result, each term has seen intensive professional development courses in areas as diverse as behavioural management, first aid and information and computer technology.

### **THE WORAWA EDUCATION PROGRAM**

The Worawa Education Program is based on the concept of "two way" learning. This involves the Teaching and Learning Program addressing the Key Learning Areas of mainstream curriculum whilst taking into account Aboriginal culture, values, spiritual beliefs and learning styles. Importantly College academic staff, management and the Board are jointly committed to the 'Walking Together' ethos, enriching the College program through shared wisdom and knowledge.

### **THE WARG CURRICULUM**

Members of the Worawa Academic Reference Group (WARG) provided support to all teaching staff with their expertise in each Learning Centre of the Worawa Curriculum. These areas include; Literacy, Numeracy, The Arts, Science and Environment, Physical Education and Health, all overlaid with an Aboriginal Cultural perspective.

All students are given baseline tests in Literacy and Numeracy using the Brigance Inventory upon entering the College. They are then regularly re-tested twice a year to track their progress and modify their Individual Learning Plans. This process allows us to keep a close eye on our girl's development and modify as necessary.

Teachers begin their term unit preparation with one question: "How is this relevant to our students?" After some research and guidance from WARG, all subject areas can be developed from this starting point. One example we were especially proud of saw Astronomy from the eyes of the oldest astronomers on the planet. The Aboriginal Dreamtime stories for our own Southern Skies. A very successful astronomy camp with partner schools Presbyterian Ladies College and Scotch College, shared this knowledge with teachers and non-Aboriginal students who had never heard of these links.

The Arts Program continues to be developed. 2010 saw the introduction of DRAMA to The Arts Program with students enjoying workshops with the Ilbjeri Theatre Company for six weeks. We enjoyed occasional visits from Community Elders who taught their own styles to our girls and hope to see these opportunities as a more regular part of our program next year. Our girls were very productive in their own artwork and saw many pieces sold at the Presentation Day Ceremonies. The Music Program was again supported by Trinity College and we were happy to see new sets of Clap Sticks painted up, Drumming, Singing and Dance performances, (especially in Hip Hop).

Physical Education remains a great love for our students and the highlight of the year was clearly the Phillip Island camp in term Four. The students enjoyed a range of activities on the camp including bike riding, boogie boarding, surfing, volleyball and nature walks. Anytime outside is a joy for everyone and staff particularly enjoyed the comfortable rapport we developed with all students on the camp.

Academic subjects have developed some unique teaching strategies this year. Some ideas we have trialled include:

- teaching in ten minute concentration blocks during a lesson
- experiential learning strategies (learning by doing) which is more natural for our girls and
- increasing the number of adults available in a lesson (for more one on one attention).

The girls have thrived on these strategies and our increasing retention each term in testament to these efforts.

### **TEACHERS AND CLASS STRUCTURES**

2010 saw the arrival of a new Science, Literacy and Art teacher. Our new commitment by all teaching staff to work together and support each other in the classroom saw a significant change in our student cohort. All our students for one

reason or another crave one on one learning experiences and having two adults in class has made this more possible.

The introduction of another new subject called Life Skills to improve some life fundamentals such as cooking, sewing, growing plants, shopping and good nutrition. Many students found great satisfaction in this subject.

### **INITIATIVES**

All staff are very proud of the hard work that has been put into the Academic Program of 2010. We saw many other successful initiatives created for our girl's benefit. These included:

- The Cadet Ranger Program where students gained work experience with keepers at Healesville Sanctuary
- The Phillip Island Camp; a highly successful outdoor camp where students developed wonderful relationships with teaching staff
- The development of the Digital Portfolio program: copies were included in semester reports
- Lou Bennett working with our girls in music, also with Suzanne Brimacombe from Trinity Grammar
- Our Astronomy camp, held onsite with Scotch College & Presbyterian Ladies College
- Digital Storytelling Workshops for literacy
- The production of Aunty Dots Story with Mt Lilydale Mercy College
- Drivers Education with METEC
- Several plays with the Ilbjerri Theatre company
- Music workshop with Kutcha Edwards

### **NAPLAN**

NAPLAN results for 2010 were encouraging given our comparison schools and the fact that many of our student come from remote communities where English is not their first language. The school had very few students present to sit for NAPLAN testing. Some found the process too daunting to attempt. A review of student preparation and expectation will be looked at for the next school year.

### **IN SUMMARY**

Overall the College staff can be proud of the hard work they have given in engaging the students in their learning environment and improving both retention and outcomes throughout the 2010 school year. Challenges specific to our students have continually been addressed and staffing is stable. We head into the 2011 school year with clear directions for the College for academic programs and technology development. We look forward to challenging our students to more school camps, increased E Learning and further opportunities for work experience and qualifications to take home and use. We remain dedicated to providing each of our girls with a definite pathway to future study and careers that are relevant to their home communities and their personal goals.

## 5. FINANCIAL REPORT

Andrew Jans – Business Manager and Company Secretary

The 2010 financial year was a period of consolidation for the College, as well as a time to refocus on the best way to support and resource our student cohort given the College's holistic perspective and the student's many and varied needs.

In the latter part of the year, extensions and renovations to the boarding houses were commenced thanks to various Government funding packages. Once complete, this will serve a two-fold purpose; by increasing the amenity of the existing houses and allowing an increase in student numbers.

For 2010 the College posted an accounting surplus of \$837,697. Once capital grants of \$851,025 are excluded, the College posted an operating deficit of \$13,328.

### Profit and Loss Statement as at 31 December 2010

#### Recurrent Income

Commonwealth Grants 1	31.86%	\$617,879
Commonwealth Grants 2	35.85%	\$695,170
State Grants	11.22%	\$217,603
Discrete Grant Funding	11.48%	\$222,572
Other	9.59%	\$186,023
	100.00%	<b>\$1,939,247</b>

#### Recurrent Expenditure

Salaries & Staff Entitlements	66.26%	\$1,293,843
Non Salary Expenses	28.13%	\$549,227
Depreciation & Amortisation	3.95%	\$77,074
Borrowing Expenses	1.66%	\$32,431
	100.00%	<b>\$1,952,575</b>

**Operating Deficit** **\$13,328**

#### Capital Income

Capital Grants \$851,026

**Total Surplus** **\$837,698**

### Balance Sheet as at 31 December 2010

#### Assets

Cash and cash equivalents	\$387,626
Debtors	\$27,174
Land and Buildings	\$2,285,489
Motor Vehicles and Equipment	\$307,346

Furniture, Fixtures, Fittings	\$125,988
Capital Works in Progress	744,076
Other	\$1,100
<b>Total Assets</b>	<b>\$3,878,799</b>

#### **Liabilities**

Trade payables	95,819
Borrowings	130,488
Other	50,000
Provisions	17,043
<b>Total Liabilities</b>	<b>293,350</b>

<b>Net Assets</b>	<b>\$3,585,449</b>
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#### **PLANS FOR 2011**

The focus for 2011 is to complete the boarding house extensions by the commencement of Term 2. Grant applications are in process to secure funding for additional teaching space and amenities. Work is also underway to secure 2011 grant funding to replace the existing art, culture and music room, and replace the current computer system.

In terms of student mental health and wellbeing, additional resources will be made available in 2011 and coming years to increase the capacity of the College in meeting the challenges presented by the student body as a whole, and in meeting the particular needs of each student.

Our involvement with the Yarra Valley Polytechnic will result in significant plant and equipment being installed during the 2011 year. This will occur in our commercial kitchen, and in buildings and equipment required for the Rural Operations courses which are to commence in 2012.

## 6. SCHOOLS PERFORMANCE 2010

### TEACHER PROFESSIONAL ENGAGEMENT 2010

The Staff Attendance Rate in 2010 was 97.97%.

Staff Retention from 2009 to 2010 was 64.3%. This retention rate includes the whole of school staff which includes boarding staff. The College changed to an all girls school for the 2010 year, and staff changes were required to accommodate for this change.

### TEACHER STANDARDS AND QUALIFICATIONS

All staff have a teaching qualification recognised by the Victorian Institute of Teaching. Staff currently also have the following range of academic qualifications:

- Bachelor of Teaching
- Bachelor of Arts
- Master of Science
- Master of Arts in writing
- Diploma of Education
- Graduate Diploma in Education (Primary)
- Graduate Diploma in Education (Secondary)
- Graduate Diploma in Performing Arts

### PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

All staff have participated in the professional learning activities organised by the College. Other professional development activities are organised on an as needs basis.

During the year \$3,792 was spent on professional development with staff. In addition, the College gratefully acknowledges the support it receives from Independent Schools Victoria and Eastern Health in providing numerous professional development programs on a gratis basis.

### KEY STUDENT OUTCOMES

#### Student Attendance

The 2010 attendance rates are:

Year 7	95.85%
Year 8	79.84%
Year 9	76.63%
Year 10	79.21%
<b>Whole of School</b>	<b>83.84%</b>

Attendance rates are impacted by events in the families and communities of the students. For instance, it is necessary for students to return home for periods of time for occurrences such as sorry business. During the year attendance was also impacted because of delays in student arrivals at the beginning of Term 3 and 4 as a result of flooding in the Northern Territory and the availability of flights.

### STUDENT RETENTION

Retention rates for 2010 have not been recorded due to the fact that the school ceased co-education at the end of 2009 and became an all girls school in 2010.

### 2010 STUDENT SATISFACTION

Surveys were undertaken in relation to student satisfaction of the boarding aspect of the College during the year. These surveys were performed by Aboriginal Hostels Limited as a condition of funding. Results may be obtainable from Aboriginal Hostels Limited.

A College student satisfaction survey was also conducted during 2010. Students were asked a series of questions in relation to their life after school, various College programs and the importance of education in their life. This information was used as feedback for curriculum delivery.

### NATIONAL BENCHMARKS

Proportion of students meeting the minimum standards in Year 7:

2010	Spelling		Grammar & Punctuation		Numeracy	
	480		364		442	
Year 7						
	SIM	ALL	SIM	ALL	SIM	ALL
	421	545	375	535	429	548

	substantially above
	substantially below
	close to

SIM Schools serving students from statistically similar backgrounds  
 ALL Australian schools average

Year 9 results are not available due to the student population being below the reporting threshold.

### 2010 PARENT SATISFACTION

Being a boarding school, and with many students coming from remote communities and from disadvantaged backgrounds, the College initiated a School Community Forum late in the year. This brought together the Worawa community and parents/families/elders of a number of students. The purpose of the forum was to strengthen links between the College and communities and to learn from parents/families/elders the aspirations they have for their children. The Forum was a huge success and allowed the College, community elders and families to understand the issues facing the students, and allow a sharing of common concern and aspiration for the students. A Debutante Ball is being planned for 2011 which will also bring the families of girls to the event.

## **2010 TEACHER SATISFACTION**

A formal process of teacher satisfaction was not undertaken during the 2010 year, however given the direct nature of feedback at the College due to our particular size, structure and student group, a number of initiatives were instigated and implemented by the teaching body. These included a series of professional development days with mental health specialists to develop strategies to develop the student cohort, major timetabling changes which allowed 2 staff members per class session, and camping programs to improve rapport and relationship between staff and students. During the year each teacher was subject to a performance appraisal process, and at the end of each term a whole of College meeting is held to discuss issues, trends and progress.

With the Head of Teaching being a member of the College Executive, issues that relate to teacher satisfaction are discussed on a weekly basis with refinements to processes in keeping with the Colleges continuous improvement thinking.

## **7. FUTURE DIRECTIONS**

For 2011 the College through the Board and Executive will continue to focus on the issues at the heart of Aboriginal education.

### **INCREASING MENTAL HEALTH AND WELLBEING CAPACITY**

The mental health and wellbeing of students lies at the heart of all future outcomes for students which includes their current educational outcomes. Next year an entire review of the mental health and wellbeing element of the College will be conducted, with the intention of substantially increasing both the level and depth of care provided to students.

### **INCREASING RETENTION**

Retention is an issue affecting all schools with an Aboriginal student body. It is planned to investigate the concept of a term break program for students who find it difficult to return home or difficult to return back to school.

### **INCREASE EDUCATIONAL OUTCOMES**

We believe that through increased mental health and well being of our students, educational outcomes will naturally increase. Developing and implementing strategies for all staff appropriate for traumatised adolescent girls will make the students more available to be taught.

### **INCREASED CLASSROOM SPACE AND AMENITY**

It is envisioned we will be successful in securing funding next year to replace older buildings and add additional classroom space. Current extensions and renovations of the boarding houses will also be completed.

### **RENEW COMPUTER SYSTEM**

Next year the College will settle the specification for an entirely new computer system.

### **YARRA VALLEY POLYTECHNIC**

Modules for the Rural Operations course to be offered at the College in 2012 will be developed, and infrastructure installed.

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