



# NEWSLETTER

Term 4, 2015

We Believe in Education, Culture + Wellbeing



Unbelievably, we are at the end of another successful and exciting year at Worawa Aboriginal College. As the year draws to a close it is a good time to reflect on what has happened and what has shaped us. Most notably we remember a year where the College convened Yapaneyepuk First Nations Indigenous Education Symposium with local and international First Nations Educators and a group of delegates passionate about walking together to make a difference.

2015 also saw the launch of Walking Together to Make A Difference Research Project undertaken by Dr Mauricette Hamilton. This research material is available on the Worawa website [www.worawa.vic.edu.au](http://www.worawa.vic.edu.au)

Our School Community Forum was attended by 22 parents from communities across Australia. As a boarder, students embraced the many new learning experiences on offer. In 2015, Worawa students participated in a mini exchange program with Pymble Ladies College where our students went to Pymble and Pymble girls came to Worawa. During Australian Fashion Week, courtesy of Target, students met with Jessica Mauboy and were delighted when she joined them in singing Burra Ferra. Our students took part in

an art project with Scotch College under the tutelage of Taungurung Elder Uncle Mick Harding. Throughout the year our girls participated wholeheartedly in a range of sports which had some nail-biting moments. So a lot has happened in 2015, we have much to celebrate.

While Presentation Day 2015 was a time to celebrate the achievements and successes of our students, we also intentionally showcased amazing Cultural Ceremony alongside the Performing and Visual Arts that have sprung from the rich cultural heritage of our students. The Arts has an important place in the College program. The Arts values, respects and explores the significant contributions of Australia's First Peoples to Australia's arts heritage and

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contemporary arts practices through their distinctive ways of representing and communicating knowledge, traditions and experience. We honour our past but we look to our future. We support students to hold onto language and culture whilst giving them the confidence, skills and ability to walk in both worlds.

The student production opened with a traditionally created, possum skin cloak and followed by stunning capes designed to showcase art works based on Dreaming stories of our students.

The student rendition of an Aboriginal lullaby in language, brought many tears as it evoked memories of the Stolen Generation. Students sang songs in both Aboriginal language as well as popular songs by Aboriginal Artists. They danced both in styles that are older than written history and in current expressive styles to a popular Jessica Mauboy song. Students spoke with confidence about their time at Worawa, and recited the college poem and Cultural Acknowledgement with pride.

We were privileged to see Elder and Grandfather, Gali Yalkarriwuy Gurruwiwi dance the Morning Star in honour of the graduation of his grand-daughter, Sasha. Our Elcho students joined him in the dance and it was definitely one of the highlights of Worawa's 32 year old history.

Founder Hyllus Maris said the school:

"...should be based on the best elements of both traditional Aboriginal and current Australian education, aiming to produce an Aboriginal person versed in their traditions and proud of their identity, who has the tools and necessary qualifications to contribute effectively to the Australian community".

This Presentation Day truly exemplified this desire, showcasing a college which both nurtures Cultural Identity and fosters skills and talents so students can be sure of who they are, and confident in what they wish to achieve.



## STUDENT TRANSITIONS

Each state across Australia runs a curriculum that is similar in the senior years. However, the slight variations to courses can make the difference in outcomes, motivations and success for our girls. The central and western states offer senior curriculum focus on Aboriginal Languages and Culture more than the eastern. New South Wales is introducing Aboriginal Languages in 2016 to the HSC curriculum. The remaining states are expected to follow in future years.

In Victoria, students can follow two pathways in senior schooling; the Victorian Certificate of Education (VCE) and the Victorian Certificate of Applied Learning (VCAL). Both streams have the option for vocational learning, however the more applied learning and work ready focus of VCAL is becoming a very attractive option for many students as they can study and gain workplace qualifications (Certificate II and III) and a placement.

Regina Inkamala and Alliyanna Tipiloura are two of our transitioning students this year that have successfully enrolled into VCAL Course options for 2016. Regina will complete her VCAL with a Traineeship with the Geelong Cats and her course delivered through Gordon TAFE (Geelong). Alliyanna will complete her VCAL course through a school delivery at Our Lady of Sacred Heart (Bentleigh).



## SCHOOL CAMP

Term Four saw us heading south to Boonwurrung Country for our Surf Camp at Phillip Island. Our fleet of buses hit the road, stopped for fish and chips, and finally arrived at the YMCA Discovery Camp for three days by the beach. Students were split into activity groups where they participated in beach adventures, surf and body board lessons, a scenic drive and a whole school beach carnival. Students supported each other when faced with challenges, and cheered each other on when teams won or students stood for the first time on a surf board. For some students it was their first time seeing the ocean, others were reminded of scenery from their home communities. The camp was filled with new experiences, laughter, good food, support and building stronger friendships. We look forward to more surfing next year.



## EDUCATION FOR GIRLS

With the focus of our school being the education of girls, the students of Blue Group took the opportunity to explore the importance of schooling for girls, and the impact attending schools has on a community.

The girls learnt that attending schools reduces the rates of child marriage, incidence of HIV in young women and provides opportunities for families that aren't available when just the father is educated.

Students had the opportunity to design a school that would be inviting to young women, and to also develop an advertising campaign to get girls to school in their own communities. This was the first time many of the students had worked with articles and references rather than books, and they proved equal to the challenge.

Listening to the girls express their relief that they weren't excluded from schooling was an enlightening aspect to the course. Students studied texts as diverse as a speech by Michelle Obama to documents from the United Nations, as well books by Malala and Greg Mortenson.

Visual texts were incorporated to include "The Flyover School" in India, which was particularly captivating – the girls were astounded to find a local store keeper running the classes for students who were too poor to attend a regular school.

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## NEW SCHOOL PARTNERSHIP

I am delighted to advise that Worawa has entered into a partnership with Pymble Ladies College (Sydney). Both schools are excited about this opportunity and the mutual benefits that may ensue. The partnership commenced with a visit to Worawa by members of Pymble executive staff following their attendance at the Yapaneyepuk 'Walking Together to make a Difference' Indigenous Education Symposium convened by Worawa in July. Discussions identified opportunities for joint activities. The partnership between the two schools was launched with a Mini Exchange for four Year 8 students. Participating students spent half the time at Pymble and then half the time at Worawa with a staff member of each school. Girls were matched with a 'buddy' from the other school. Students who participated in this inaugural exchange between the two schools provided the following bios:

### Vicki:

I am from Armidale, in NSW. I am 13 years old and I like dancing and singing. I have 3 younger sisters, 2 younger brothers and 2 older brothers. I play many sports including soccer, netball and basketball. My favourite TV show is Home and Away.

### Stephanie:

My name is Stephanie and I am from Darwin. I like all sorts of sports as well as singing and dancing. I'm 13 years old. I love eating pizza. My favourite subject at school is English. I like watching all sorts of TV shows.

### Tiara:

My name is Tiara, I am from Titjikala, which is south of Alice Springs. I enjoy doing Art and playing sport. I come from a big and busy family back home. I love watching Home and Away and I love to go hunting with my family.

### Shikira:

My name is Shikira, I am from Tiwi, an island north of Darwin. I like playing footy and all other sports. I like cultural dances, I love going hunting and fishing. I am the only girl in my family. I love watching Home and Away and other movies too.

## INDIGENOUS LITERATURE

The girls in Yellow Group explored Indigenous literature from a number of perspectives, beginning with a new novel called "Freedom Ride". From there the girls explored the novels "The Binna Binna Man" and "Walking the Boundaries". Students completed a research project about one of the original Australian Freedom Riders and learnt how to present their work using Microsoft Publisher. The girls were open to exploring different types of literature, and for many of them it was the first time they had been brave enough to read aloud in the classroom, for which they are to be commended.

## SCHOOL COMMUNITY FORUM

Relationships with students' home communities are valued and are critical to students' wellbeing and learning. A Parent forum is held at the end of each year.

The annual School community forum is central to Worawa practice and development. Working in partnership and developing positive relationships between students, parents and carers and school staff helps in fostering a sense of belonging and connectedness to the school community. The 2015 School Community Forum saw 25 family participants.

This is a time of feedback, sharing of goals and desired outcomes, evaluation and planning. Worawa aims to provide students with the foundations of strong self-esteem, positive attitudes, skills and knowledge to proceed successfully to post compulsory schooling or the world of work.

The School Community Forum provides valuable insight into the aspirations of the families for their girls and assists in planning for the College's Pathways and Transition Program. The College has developed partnerships with a wide range of schools and institutes to facilitate such pathways for our students.

