



Korowal 36th AGM 7 May 2014

Report from the Chair – Greg Lucas

I would like to acknowledge that we are here tonight on the traditional lands of the Darug and Gundungurra peoples. Korowal acknowledges this and recognises the strength, capacity and resilience of past and present Aboriginal people in this region.

It is with immense pride that I present the Chair's report for this, our 36th Annual General Meeting. As my second report as Chair I am pleased to report that Korowal School has achieved another year of strategic development and, not only a maintenance - but a strengthening, of our strong reputation within the community that we serve. We have enhanced and developed our relationships with our stakeholders and created many new ones over the twelve months. Our staff continue to meet and exceed our expectations for performance and commitment.

In keeping with our focus that the board governs, and management manages, I will leave comments on our educational delivery and achievements to our Principal's report.

Operations

Consistent with the Board's focus on clarity of reporting lines, during the year Mark Thomas was successful in developing the role of 'School Co-Ordinator' to that of Principal as well as developing the Primary and Secondary Co-Ordinators to Deputy Principals.

Mark Thomas resigned from his role of Principal during the year and a school celebration day was held to mark this occasion. Mark remains as a high school teacher and I have received a great deal of positive feedback from parents as to his obvious talents as a teacher. Barb was appointed to fulfill the role of Principal. It says a great deal about not only the culture of Korowal but also the personal integrity of Mark and Barb that they were able to manage the 'passing of the baton' in such a professional and effective manner. Thank you Mark, and thank you Barb.

It was with regret that the management of the school accepted Annie Carment's resignation from her honorary position of Public Relations and Marketing Manager for Korowal. Annie dedicated many hours each week to this role since 2006. She was one of the key drivers in our relocation effort to Hazelbrook. Annie, from the entire Korowal community an enormous thank you for not only your time, but your passion and relentless energy. We are pleased to see you continue in your involvement with Korowal as a parent of a student, a parent of a teacher and, in the near future, the grandparent of a student!

Finances

Our finance department reports to the Principal and comprises our Business Manager, Bev Milner, and our Finance Officer, Melanie Williams. They are supported by our Administrative Team being Cath Walker and Susan Pearce, who are also our Student Support Team.

When attending an Association of Independent Schools training course during the year, I was able to mingle with bursars and principals of other independent schools. As a result of these conversations, I was struck with the realisation that Korowal is **financially** unique. I.e., the other independent schools with which I spoke had a 'higher level' above them, such as a church or a religious faith. This offered those schools resources – both financial and non-financial. However, Korowal is **truly** unique – we have no 'higher' organisation above us. As a result, prudent financial management and monitoring of our resources is essential.

In my capacity as Chair of the Finance and Resource Committee of the Board, I attend a monthly Finance and Resources Committee Meeting. I would like to take this opportunity to thank this team – in particular Bev and Mel – for the outstanding work and the professionalism they bring to their roles.

Our key financial achievements were:

- Maintaining fee discounts and concessions at 15% of total gross fee income;
- Collection of an increasing number of 'fees in advance' which supports our cashflow;
- Maintaining expenditure on staff costs at 72% of total expenditure, whilst meeting our obligation to provide staff with a 3.6% pay increase;
- Maintaining expenditure on other operating costs necessary to maintain the quality of our delivery of educational services and our built environment; &
- Repayment to our mortgagees, Kanowna Hostel Pty Ltd \$421,000 in interest and fees as well as a further \$200,000 in principal reduction.

Board

Directors of this board fall in to one of two categories. Essentially, they are either teachers at the school or represent students (i.e. parents, grand-parents etc). Additionally, the Principal of the School is required to be at all board meetings. Irrespective of their 'category', all Directors serve in their directorial role in an honorary capacity. The devotion of time and energy of each Director is outstanding. A very heartfelt thank you to the parent Directors – Mick Barrett, Vittorio Cintio and Lis Bastian – and the teacher Directors – Nancy Oosterhoff, Lousie Dungate, Steve Garthwin, Joachim Hermann and Cairo Rha. Equally, my thanks to Barb Fitzgerald not only for being the 'life-blood' of the school, but also for taking to her leadership role with such passion and acuity.

I would like to particularly acknowledge our Deputy Chair and Company Secretary, Mick Barrett. Mick has been a Director for the past 6 years. I am enormously grateful to Mick for the support that he has offered to me. This has been demonstrated repeatedly – whether it

has required practical assistance or simply guidance. His insight is greatly valued, thank you.

During the year, two directors resigned – Vittorio Cintio and Steve Garthwin.

Vittorio served the board for over a decade and was chair for a period of approximately ten years. In his eloquent address when resigning, he spoke of a desire to free his time and commented on his view that the future of Korowal was ‘in good hands’. Whilst I appreciate and support his desire for more time, his keen sense of the role of a board – and his tenaciousness in asserting this are missed. So are his good-humour and focus on our value of equity. Thank you for the many contributions and sacrifices you made for the benefit of Korowal.

Steve Garthwin also resigned from his role of Director having served the board for approximately 6 years. I admired his ability to separate his Director role from his Staff role. In his role of director, he consistently demonstrated clarity of judgement; passion for excellence and equity and always been able to be relied on to provide much-needed good humour. Thank you.

During the year we welcomed as new members to the Board, Lis Bastian, Joachim Hermann and Cairo Gawne. Their unique skill sets contribute to the collective mind that is our Board.

Finally, at the Board level, we have been incredibly blessed to receive the support of one of the grandparents of a 2013 student at our school, Bruce Corlett as an advisor to the Board. Allow me to provide a brief summary of Bruce’s background. He initially trained as a lawyer, and has operated in the business world for the past 40 years. He has been actively involved in a range of sectors including investment banking, property, mining, financial services and maritime. He has been a non- executive director of many companies including Stockland Trust Group, Advance Bank, TNT, Australian Maritime Safety Authority (Chair) and Adsteam Marine (Chair), and Trust Company (Chair). He currently chairs Fortius Funds Management, Servcorp and Australian Maritime Systems.

He has had a lifetime involvement in the not for profit sector including Chair of the Microsearch Foundation of Australia, Senate Fellow – University of Sydney, Chair Advisory Board Faculty of Economics and Business – University of Sydney. Current roles in this sector include Ambassador – Australian Indigenous Education Foundation, Chair – Lifestart, Chair – Mark Tonga Relief Trust Fund. In 2011 he was awarded an AM for service to the community.

Bruce has been extremely generous in his gift of time, energy and passion for Korowal. During the year this has been directed at mentoring and supporting both my role as Chair, and Barb as our CEO. Bruce, we are most grateful.

Outlook

As ever, the Korowal Board is extremely aware of the challenging times that the Independent Schools Sector is currently facing.

Education funding from the Government is being squeezed, enrolments across the sector in the infant years continue to fall and the region we service continues to feel the effect of the Global Financial Crisis.

Last year, when making similar comments I asked each member of our school community to

assist in promoting the school to new families to grow our enrolments by becoming advocates of the advantages of a Korowal Education. This year, I say 'thank you'. Firstly, to those people who did precisely that. And secondly, to the increasing number of parents and carers that have acknowledged the importance of prompt payment of their accounts to our budget. Your efforts are appreciated.

While we can be proud of our performance over the last year, our focus is firmly on the future. Korowal School produces graduates that are centred beings. Throughout the year I have spoken with employers who recognise the value of a Korowal education – thus giving me the comfort that we are meeting our aim of being a recognised leader in providing inspiring educational experiences for the benefit of our students. We have the right people in our staff, a diversely talented board and the right strategy to achieve the goals we have set ourselves. I look forward to being part of the journey.