

## **Korowal 2010 AGM - Report from the Chair**

This is my first AGM report as Chair of Korowal School Council. Let me begin by saying it is a privilege to be in this role and to be part of such an inspirational human centred school. We have an amazing school community comprised of our beautiful children, dedicated, highly skilled and hard working teachers and support staff, and our committed parents, many of whom have made sacrifices and choices to ensure their children have the opportunity to be educated at Korowal.

Korowal is a small school with a big heart. Its small size and integrated structure means that it can function as a community in which children, teachers and parents are able to develop strong and meaningful relationships and get to know and care about each other. This does not mean that we will always get on, but it does mean we are in a community that values and understands that relationships are at the heart of a successful educational process. As one of our principles states: Committed, mutually respectful relationships between students, teachers and parents are crucial to educational success.

In this regard I can report that your School Council is working cooperatively, respectfully and productively with the best interest of the school at heart. The Korowal School Council is a democratically elected body comprised of equal numbers of parents and teachers that essentially takes on the role of being the Board of Directors that controls Korowal School. All school policies and school financial decisions are subject to the approval of the Council.

2010 marks the second year of our school in our new location in Hazelbrook. I would like to congratulate the Korowal School community on this journey we have successfully made and on the journey we are continuing to make, as we settle in to our new location. This transition has created new challenges and new opportunities. We have moved from being a financially subsidised school to being a more truly independent school. This independence comes with a price - in the form of a large mortgage and new responsibilities to develop, maintain and renew our school buildings, facilities and grounds.

Korowal has new financial responsibilities and challenges that need to be addressed in a planned and strategic manner. The School council is committed to doing this. In 2009 the Council established a Finance Committee which is working very hard with the School Council to address the financial and budgetary challenges and issues facing the school, now and into the future. I would like to take the opportunity to thank Richard Elkan (Chair), Bev Milner and Mark Thomas for their work with me on this committee.

In addition, Mark our School Coordinator is working with the Council on the development of a Business Plan for the future of the school. Amongst other things, this plan will address our future strategy and options for addressing our financial challenges. Having a significant mortgage, means that we do need to be thinking and acting in a more business like manner. A key challenge is how can we do this without compromising the principles and values which are at the heart of our school. No doubt there will be many policy issues to be resolved by the School Council such as the extent to which we can afford to offer bursaries and scholarships – something that the school has and probably will continue to be committed to. Provision of bursaries can ensure we have a diversity of families and children from all socio-economic backgrounds within the school.

The transition to a new site has also been the opportunity to take stock, reassess the things that are important and ensure we are doing our utmost to make Korowal the best school it can be. A major focus of the School Council over the last 12 months has been reviewing our policies and procedures, administrative processes and business systems. In 2009 the School Council established a Human Resources Policy Committee to review all Korowal Policies and Procedures pertaining to Human Resources. This Committee is comprised of Council and Korowal School community members. It has worked extremely hard with key achievements to date being:

- Development of a revised Staff Induction and Orientation Policy and Procedure; and
- Development of a revised Staff Selection Policy and Procedure

Work currently in progress includes:

- A review of Korowal's Complaints Policy and Procedure
- A comprehensive review of the schools Administration Systems and Practices with a report with recommendations to be submitted to the School Council in late 2010.

I would like to take the opportunity to thank Deborah Keenahan (Chair), Leanne Kent, Vittorio Cintio, Peter Sprolc and Mick Barrett, for their immense contribution and work on this committee.

Our new location has required significant work on buildings, grounds and facilities and many long hours especially from Mark Thomas and Annie Carment on planning approvals and Development Applications and on grant and funding applications. In moving to a new site we have also had to work hard to let people know we are here. I would like to thank Annie Carment for her tremendous work and contribution to the school on marketing and other jobs like updating the school's website.

In 2010 Korowal took a stand against the Federal Government's NAPLAN School league comparative tables and benchmarks. Along with other small schools around Australia, Korowal has lobbied to have NAPLAN test results from small schools excluded from the Federal Government's My School Website. This is not only because they are statistically inaccurate given the very small class sizes, but also because Korowal does not support ranking students against each other in this way. Korowal supports a far more holistic and integrated approach of providing children with continuous opportunities for meaningful and constructive assessment. Korowal measures its success through its graduates and as a recent newspaper article highlighted, and as shown in our new page on the school website listing graduate achievements, Korowal HSC students consistently gain excellent results. Our graduates are painters, actors, engineers, scientists, plumbers, builders, architects, doctors and dancers to name some.

No doubt there will be many more issues that Korowal will choose to take a stand on and be heard. That is part of who we are.

In conclusion, I would like to thank my fellow Council members – Mark Thomas, Nancy Oosterhoff, Barb Fitzgerald, Steve Garthwin, Kath Veel, Annie Carment, Mick Barret, Richard Elken and Deb Keenahan for their hard work and contribution at the policy level to the effective running of Korowal over the past 12 months. I would especially like to acknowledge the tremendous contribution from Kath Veel who has recently resigned from the Council after a period of service totalling just over 10 years.

I would like to finish by thanking Mark our School Coordinator and the other members of the School Executive who work closely with him – Nancy our Primary School Coordinator and Barb and Steve our High School Coordinators for their role in managing the day to day operations of the school. Your contributions, often beyond the call of duty, are most appreciated.

Rosemary Dillon