

## **Annual General Meeting 2007**

### **Coordinators Report**

Thursday 31 May 2007

In my annual report, I have chosen in part to reflect on the year past and to comment on our near future. Having just read through my report from last year I smiled ruefully at a report that brought together the achievements of the previous five years.

Last year I commented on the successful response of the school community in creating the stability and the certainty necessary to continue with our purpose; that is, the education of children true to our principles and values.

As I said last year, schools like ours either meet the challenges or they don't. The comment I made reflected my belief that we had indeed met our challenges and had created a school of which we are very proud.

After 5 years of, at times, very hard work, I had anticipated a period of consolidation in preparation for future endeavours. Amongst my plans were the development of a formative appraisal process for teaching staff, creating greater opportunity for teachers to reflect upon and refine their practice, the further refinement of a parental engagement process, both of which are aimed at taking the Korowal message well beyond the existing community. Korowal is, and has always been, far too quiet about its way of operation, and I am strongly opposed to the external forces that seek to control the education agenda in this country.

On that point, I applaud the community response in unanimously rejecting the Federal Government's imposition of the mandatory grading of students.

This year, with support from the Korowal School Council, I commenced a Masters degree in Educational Leadership. I enrolled in this course partly to expand my capacity to do my existing job but also as a mechanism to support my desire to communicate Korowal to the world.

Last year, I invited parents to a values forum, which was well supported. The outcome of that forum was the sharing and gathering of information in anticipation of the development of a Korowal values charter.

I am not abandoning my intentions, but my energies—for the moment—have been distracted by the event of having to move our School.

At the beginning of the year, we increased our enrolments to 250 students. Last year I thought we were nearly full; this year we are full. We have a current waiting list of about 140 students, most of whom are wanting to commence either in future Kindergartens or Year 7s—our traditional entry points—and now for Pathways (which is a very new experience). Many are simply waiting for any opportunity to join the school. Some families have been waiting 2 or 3 years to be offered a place.

This is evidence to me that what we have to offer is valued, and increasingly so in an educational environment where choice is becoming more restricted. We offer a sound academic education with the added emphasis on the development of personal or human qualities. I believe our students are supported to be kind, caring, creative,

compassionate, inclusive and tolerant, despite what I perceive as the diminishing of these qualities in the current political and economic landscape. I also believe that our graduating students have the strength of character to defend these values as they live their lives, wherever and in whatever circumstances they find themselves.

As I commented last year, when I take visitors around the School, at any time of the day, I am confident they observe a strong sense of purpose in their experience of the classroom environment. There is an evident quality of experience. It is something not quite definable but supported by teachers and students. What is observed is always delightful, whether it be a K12 morning circle or the dynamic interactions between students and teachers in an HSC class.

I know, and have always known, that the strength of the school and its capacity to achieve its objectives is a collective one. In the current circumstance, we are faced with another challenge and as painful and distressing as many of us find things, we have met these challenges before and I have to trust myself and the community to respond as they have in the past: to create something positive from the challenge.

I would personally like to acknowledge my gratitude to every parent who chooses Korowal for their child.

Korowal depends on employing teachers who have the capacity to work within our values framework. There is a lot to learn about being a Korowal teacher.

This year we welcomed Irini Savvides to our High School staff, replacing Pamela Tucker who retired at the end of last year. Sadly, Irini was unable to continue beyond Term 1, and we were very fortunate to find a replacement in Kon Kalos. Also joining us this year is Denise Melocco, who replaced Lorena Nesa as our Primary Italian teacher. Kirsty Bishop joined us during the last year as our student support teacher. We also welcomed Freya Manning and most recently Monica Morris to the support staff.

I would also like to thank those parents who able to support the School through their assistance in the classroom, volunteering in the canteen and participation in many other school events.

Thank you also to Robyn Mehl and Linda Brisbane for running the Canteen and Cathy Gorman for her role on the Canteen Committee.

As the first point of contact in the School, the office staff, Hilary Wale, Cath Walker and Susan Pearce do a wonderful job. The increased enrolments in the School have created a lot of extra administrative work, and they have responded admirably. Cindy Babbage in her role as school Bursar has been invaluable.

The Korowal School Council continues to provide wonderful support and, in the current circumstance, leadership and authority. I would particularly like to thank Caroline Summerfield (a parent who has resigned from the Council) for her involvement and energies, and Catherine Dignam (a teacher) who has also resigned for her time, effort and wisdom.

We plan to celebrate our existence this year through many events that reflect the strength of our community. In particular, the Primary School will be producing a play in September in which nearly everyone will be involved, and the High School will be presenting a variety Cabaret in June. To which you are all invited.

Finally, thank you to all the teaching staff, especially the Executive team: Nancy Oosterhoff, Kath Veel and Joachim Herrmann.

In the meantime, I thank the whole community, both past and present for its support.

*Mark Thomas*