

## **Principal Report on 2022 AGM - May 2023**

In 2022 we experienced great joy in welcoming parents back onto site after two years of restrictions, sharing experiences that are the mainstays of our school culture, but which were set aside for two years prior to this. We came together for the primary play, fun run, swimming carnivals, Gala Day, Open Day & Fair, junior Drama elective production, HSC Drama performance, parent information sessions, and graduation ceremonies. Through laughter and smiles we wove the fraying threads of community together once again, forging connectedness and a sense of belonging which newer families to the school had only heard about, but not yet internalised. How we had missed this!

Many of our young people relaxed back into the school routines with aplomb, while for some, it has taken more time to settle. The students' enjoyment and enthusiasm in engaging in performances was palpable and contagious. We are also impressed by the efforts and achievements of individuals and groups throughout our school as they embraced the learning challenges and progressed through the stages.

There was intense focus brought to recreating the Fair, for our traditional crew of parents had graduated since last we had this event. The diligence and talents of Caroline Flack and Deb Robertson made this event possible and they worked around the clock, rallying parents to participate in both the preparations and running of stalls on the day. For the first time in decades the Korowal Fairy Walk was resurrected by Tammy Hall and her team. Our graduates remember this event fondly from our days at Leura. They did a remarkable job of creating a fairy land that appealed to the child in us all.

### **STAFF**

2022 was also a year of dynamic changes to staffing for Korowal. After a long period of stability, we encountered a number of significant adjustments, often attributed to the impact of COVID on individuals and their families. While we had hoped that it would be a year of recovery, further interruptions hindered the reprieve that we had craved. Staff absences due to illness continued to be high, as the impact of the additional stresses experienced across the prior two years took their toll.

For many, it was a time of review and contemplation that prompted change.

In June, our Deputy Principal Bec Finch was offered a Principalship in Northern New South Wales, a great accolade to Bec and significant loss to us. Bec left at the end of term 2, and while she was/is dearly missed, we celebrate that Tallwood Steiner School benefits from all that Bec takes with her from her experiences at Korowal.

We were very fortunate that Cindy Barnsley was a candidate for the role of Deputy, a standout amongst the many. We were doubly fortunate that Cindy was able to commence working with us from Term 3. Cindy brings a wealth of experience, having held this role in several international progressive schools prior to Korowal. It was imminently evident that Cindy's understanding of our values and purpose, combined with her diverse and extensive experience in leading staff, was a good fit. Cindy quickly settled in and gained the trust of our students and staff.

Then, after much consideration, I made the decision to relinquish my position as Principal, giving 6 months' notice to the School Board. While this was a very difficult decision to make, it was the right decision. I have spent 26 rich years at Korowal, the final 13 as Principal. This has been a major part of my, and my family's lives, and we are so much better for having been part of this community. It has been both a daunting and privileged position to hold; a roller coaster at times, and yet so remarkably unique.

Thankfully Cindy Barnsley was also the successful applicant for the role of Principal! I have great confidence that she will build on all we have achieved, and take Korowal to the next level. The school is in very capable hands.

### **AMONGST OUR TEACHING STAFF**

Anna Summers, our Year 2 teacher, took maternity leave and gave birth to a healthy girl, Adeline. We extend our congratulations to Anna and Harry.

As he had planned, after 11 years at Korowal, Rick Morris retired from Mathematics teaching to enjoy a life in the garden, and playing piano. Kim Poole, who had taken 12 months leave from teaching Music to work in Central Australia, made the decision to move out of the Mountains permanently and away from fulltime teaching towards permaculture; as did Jes Somerville, my personal assistant. Lisa Taylor left us to take up a position in a smaller learning support environment. Then, later in the year, a further two of our dedicated team of teachers, Anne Mashal and Karen Arkley Smith, announced that they were taking a break away from teaching. We extend our thanks to you all and wish you well in your new endeavours.

The pattern of unrest and strain felt by teachers broadly is evident in this development at Korowal. Our society is requiring more of teachers than at any previous time, and the cracks are beginning to emerge. We hold our staff in the highest regard and applaud their professionalism, the care shown to their students, and the dedication and focus they bring to student learning and wellbeing. Talulah Vane continued to lead our primary team, and our Leadership Team of Advisers continues to grow in significance as we develop our distributed leadership model. Thank you all.

## **WELCOMES**

As with all exits there are entries and renewal, and to our delight Korowal attracted very accomplished and energetic staff to fill the vacancies. Matthew Whaley joins the Executive team as Deputy Principal from Jan 2023. At the same time, we welcome Emma-Joy Reardon and Ebony MacFarlane to our primary staff, and Cristin Quinnell to Mathematics, Steve Clark to Music, Georgina Khoo to HSIE and English, and Jeremy Cook to Business Studies and Work Education.

## **ADMINISTRATIVELY**

At the end of 2022, we were close to getting the parent portal up and running for early 2023. Caroline Flack, Deb Robertson and Naomi Tipper - thanks for all you do for us.

## **STRATEGICALLY**

Throughout 2022, we continued to develop our strategic priorities and at the end of 2022 we signed off on the achievements of the Strategic Plan. In spite of the interruptions through 2021 and 2022, in some areas we exceeded our original goals. The dialogic practices of Oracy and Open Dialogue are alive and thriving, prioritising student voice across the school. We have documented our 3 year plans to guide the layering of these practices throughout the school, K-12. Staff training resources have been developed and will continue to provide sound training and review.

In January 2023, Korowal's solar panels were finally fitted, a major development towards sustainable practices at Korowal. The parent group led by Ben Silverstone got our Food Forest underway and we raised \$6594 at the Fair to assist with this development. Primary classes are now having hands-on experiences in maintaining the vegetable gardens in stage 1 of the plan. Furthering sustainable practice opportunities are to be brought into focus in 2023.

With thanks for the fine work undertaken by Melanie Williams, in December 2022 we received notification that our application for a Building Grant was approved, meaning that we can now proceed to plan for the development of Phase 1 of our Master Plan - The refurbishment of the Primary school.

## **THE KOROWAL SCHOOL COUNCIL**

We are experiencing a changing of the guard, with teachers who have held the story of Korowal close now moving into retirement. The role of our School Board has never been more significant. Our directors are responsible for sound governance and they do so graciously, and with little recognition. It is no small feat that the evolution of this small, comprehensive independent school continues as innovative and humanist, remaining true to its foundations. As we evolve, developments at Korowal align with our Constitution, and the Chair, Directors and Principal are responsible for ensuring that this continues into the future.



**KOROWAL SCHOOL**

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The Board is also responsible for the overview of the Business and Finances and we continue to be proud of our achievements in this area. I extend our thanks to our Business Manager Melanie Williams, as she continues to provide us with very fine services as a key member of the school executive team, and to Greg Lucas and Mat Spiteri as members of the Finance and Resources Committee. Thanks are extended to all of our directors for your willingness to engage at this level of responsibility for the benefit of us all.

On behalf of the School community, I extend our thanks to Chris Lee, our Chair. It has been a busy year for Chris in this role, especially with the planning that we have undertaken. On a personal level also, I thank you for your support, Chris.

2022 was a significant year, signalling a changing of the guard. Korowal will continue to go from strength to strength and navigate new and exciting waters. As I pass the captaincy of our 'tugboat' to Cindy Barnsley, I celebrate that Korowal is not only unique, but also significant. There is power in being small as we respond to the ever changing educational landscape. Uniquely at Korowal we recognise the individual within the group and our practices are intentional and focussed. This is second to none. It's a beautiful school!

Thank you for your trust in me.  
Barb Fitzgerald, 2022