

### **About us:**

We have 115 Aboriginal students enrolled in mainstream and WAVE at Wirreanda.

Our Aboriginal students are from a range of diverse and varied backgrounds.

Some have a strong connection to community and their culture, some are discovering their heritage and others don't have any connection at all.

This is due to a number of factors and can have both negative and positive impacts on their learning, wellbeing and their sense of self and their identity.

### **Our Team:**

We have 9 staff in our team – 5 are Aboriginal:

- Aboriginal Education/SAASTA Leader
- Aboriginal Education Teacher
- SAASTA Teacher
- 2 x ASETOS
- 2 x STARS Staff
- 2 x Clontarf Staff

### **Our journey of change:**

With a large number of Aboriginal students our school recognized there was a significant gap in a number of areas for us to be able to effectively support our young people.

From 2020 - our ASETO's worked tirelessly to build strong relationships with our families and were supported by our AET with classroom support and wellbeing.

Wirreanda also realised it needed to take a new approach to Aboriginal education at its site due to a significant number of our Aboriginal young people (in particular boys and young men) being referred to WAVE (our Tailored learning space) due to disengagement, attendance and behavioural issues.

### **Introduction of programs:**

In 2023 Clontarf and SAASTA Connect were added to the Aboriginal Education program at Wirreanda and then expanded to SAASTA and the STARS program in 2024.

Having seen significant success with the Clontarf program for our boys and young men our Principal felt that our girls and young women needed a similar program as they were the ones now falling behind.

### **Priority Learner Team:**

At the beginning of 2024 I invited the Priority Learner Team (who support principals and leadership teams to improve outcomes for their Aboriginal learners, children in care and other priority learner cohorts) to come visit Wirreanda to support us with our Aboriginal Learner Framework and to help consolidate our goals as the team and supports for our Aboriginal Young People had expanded significantly.

My concern as leader was that we would not be effective in our program delivery if we did not have a clearly defined role for each of our areas and from this we developed our vision and values plus a set of goals for our teams to work collaboratively on achieving together.

### **Our Goals:**

- Higher retention to Year 12.
- Higher attendance.
- Data collation and walls to track our young people more effectively
- Build connections to culture and identity.
- School of choice for Aboriginal young people in the South.

### **Our Vision:**

“At Wirreanda Secondary School, we will advocate for support for our Aboriginal Learners to have the knowledge and confidence to be aspirational in their school and wider community.

They will be inclusive, resilient, and strong in their culture, leaving school as empowered individuals who are driven to succeed.”

### **Our Values:**

Aspirational, Innovative, Connected, Inclusive, Strong

### **So where are we now?**

It has been a challenging journey but one where we have seen a number of improvements within our school site.

At Wirreanda we have been student centred in our approach and we utilise the various supports offered by the department, we engage Aboriginal mentors and regularly communicate with our young people's families and the wider community.

We are moving forward from just supporting our young people's wellbeing to now having targeted intervention through the recruitment of a new AET who has extensive experience in Inclusive learning and intervention support.

### **Collaboration and Culture:**

We work closely with not only our Intervention team but also our Wellbeing team in providing a wraparound holistic approach ensuring that Aboriginal education is everyone's responsibility.

Our Mental Health Practitioner has been instrumental in supporting our students running workshops with our Clontarf and Stars teams focusing on positive relationships, healthy bodies and ways they can look after their mental health and wellbeing.

We have made culture more visible within the school and are building on our Aboriginal young people's sense of identity, connection to culture and sense of belonging at Wirreanda.

Our staff have participated in two Cultural competency sessions with an outside agency, and have all completed the online Plink training relating to Aboriginal Business is everyone's business. Our next steps are to embed Aboriginal perspectives into our Curriculum and to undertake the Anti Racism training with Reconciliation S.A which will then be supported by a working group to further understand racism guided by Aboriginal Education and the Wellbeing team.

### **Next steps:**

We know Aboriginal Education is an ongoing journey for every site and every context is complex and unique.

For Wirreanda we are now focusing on completing our RAP, building our intervention capabilities, working with the priority learner team to ensure we meet our goals and will continue to build the capacity and confidence of our staff to effectively support our young people and teach Aboriginal perspectives within the classroom.