



Gäwa Christian School Annual Report 2014

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Vision Statement

The vision statement of NT Christian Schools is, *'We desire to be a Christian community, learning together to live life as God intended, offering hope for the world'*.

The mission of Gäwa Christian School is, *'To be a learning community where God is glorified in everything we do'*.



Principal's Message

Gäwa Christian School is a very remote school serving Indigenous homeland communities on the northern tip of Elcho Island. We are strongly supported by the local community who value Christian education that is culturally relevant and incorporates traditional language and culture.

Our focus for 2014 was one of Working Together. We have strived to strengthen our partnership with community which enables our 'both ways' model of learning. We worked to strengthen our teaching teams of Yolngu and Balanda staff in their planning, teaching, assessing and reporting. A number of new strategies were implemented in our Literacy and Numeracy programs, as well as our first language Yolngu Matha programs. The partnership we share in the gospel of Christ continues to be at the core of who we are as a school and a community living life together in this special place.

Our attendance is heavily dependent on parents and guardians choosing to live in homeland communities as opposed to the larger township of Galiwin'ku. Whilst factors such as funeral commitments and housing capacities continue to have an impact on attendance, we continued to explore ways to support our community and maintain consistent student attendance. These initiatives helped us achieve strong learning outcomes for the 50 students in our care.

It continues to be my great privilege to serve the Gäwa, Ban'thula and Gän'purra homeland communities on Elcho Island. Our strong partnership in 'both ways learning' celebrates the most unique and powerful aspect of Gäwa Christian School – the unity we have in Christ despite our diversity. It reaches deeply into the fabric of our planning, our teaching, and our learning - as together we learn to live life as God intended.

Karen Fletcher
Principal

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School Profile

Gäwa Christian School is one of the most remote indigenous schools in Australia, located on the northern most tip of Elcho Island, NT. We are one of eight campuses of NT Christian Schools. As a Christian school in an Indigenous community, we strive to learn together and offer hope for the future. Gäwa Christian School currently provides education to the Indigenous students living in three homelands, Gäwa, Ban'thula and Gän'purra.



2014 Student Profile	Primary	Secondary	Total
Girls	17	9	26
Boys	18	6	24
SWD		1	1
Indigenous only	31	14	45
% Indigenous Students	89%	93%	90%
Student attendance rate			63.2%*

Data from DEEWR Census 2014

**Data from NT Collection #5 2014*

Non-attendance can be caused by a variety of reasons, including shifting communities, funeral commitments and the availability of adequate housing and carers to provide for students. The staff member responsible for Community Liaison works alongside community members to expedite the return of students and families where possible.

We are always exploring innovative ways to minimise the time students spend away from school by considering how we can best support local families in their caregiving roles. This includes working with community members to support the provision of health care, food supply, financial management and other household needs. In doing so, we can enable them to stay in their homeland.

There were no critical incidents in 2014.

Staffing Information

All teachers have a minimum of four years training and are registered with the NT Teacher Registration Board, unless otherwise stated below.

We have actively sought to engage local community members in staffing roles. This works to increase the capacity and sustainability of the school, and provides flexibility and support within the classroom environment.



		<i>Qualification/Role</i>	<i>FTE</i>
Teaching Principal	Karen Fletcher	B Commerce (Business Systems Analysis), Grad Dip Ed (Primary) Grad Dip Christian Ed	1.0
Full-time Teachers	Suzanne David	B Primary Ed M Ed (Special Ed)	1.0
	Christa Forsyth (Additional Teacher Funded)	B Elementary Ed (Primary) B Special Needs Ed Grad Cert TESOL	1.0
Additional staff	Stephen Fletcher	Site, Maintenance & Community Liaison B Arts (English Lit) Grad Dip Ed (English/ESL)	1.0
	Salome Moes	Administration and The Arts	0.8
	Geoff David	Teacher(Sport/HPE), Teacher Aide	Casual
	Dwayne Dhamarrandji (Closing the Gap funded)	Teachers Aide	Casual
	Madeline Dhurrkay	Teachers Aide	Casual
	Rhonda Bukulatjpi	Teachers Aide	Casual
	Wendy Bukulatjpi	Teachers Aide	Casual
	Mamana Bukulatjpi	Catering Staff	Casual
	Eric Garrawurra	Catering Staff	Casual
	Stuart Forsyth	Special Projects – Community shop and garden	Casual
	Daphne Dhamarrandji (ERIS funded)	Mums and Toddlers Coordinator	Casual
	Matina Gurruwiwi (ERIS funded)	Mums and Toddlers Coordinator	Casual
Kathy Guthadjaka (Closing the Gap funded)	Language Consultant	Casual	

Highlights of the school year

The students of Gäwa Christian School participated in a diverse range of activities and experiences in 2014 that have added value, depth and meaning to their schooling experience.



The Marnggi'thirr (Knowledge and Leadership) Program was expanded in 2014 to involve students across the whole school. Multi-age groups of students chose from elective areas that included woodwork pallet furniture, sewing, cooking, traditional dance, story writing, gardening and printmaking. With support from the community, it is our hope to continue this program equipping our students with skills, abilities and opportunities for their future.

Our iPad program has continued to provide additional support for students in building literacy and numeracy skills, and supporting creative arts in a rich, multimedia format. Student confidence in the use of digital technologies has increased as a result of this program. Students have collaborated to create stories of life in their homelands, recording stories in both Yolngu Matha and English.

The opening of a small shop this year has provided access to basic food and household items for our local community. We believe this has resulted in improved consistency in families staying in homelands and children attending school with us.

This year, a number of students transitioned to Marrara Christian School to continue with senior schooling. What a wonderful encouragement to see these students blossoming with confidence and trusting in the Lord for their future as they move away from home and family on Elcho Island to further their education through the Family Group Home program in Darwin.

Our students and community enjoyed spending one week learning on country with Ian Morris, an environmental educator. They explored the local rainforest and open woodland habitats documenting flora and fauna in a rich 'both ways' learning experience.

Our Cultural Exchange program with Illawarra Christian School has continued in 2014, providing students with opportunities to appreciate and share in the diversity of communities and culture. The program has enabled blessings to flow to our whole community through a celebration of the richness of their own culture. The students continue to love developing their skills in the Creative Arts. They enjoy practising and performing traditional dances for community events and visitors as a way of celebrating and sharing culture.

A local artist continues to coordinate our art program and art exhibitions of the children's works. Our students continue to be encouraged by the wide interest in their work, with funds raised from sales contributing to the purchase of school resources.

Teaching and Learning

Our students have an engaging and comprehensive curriculum based on the Australian Curriculum (English, Mathematics, Science, History & Geography) and NT Curriculum Framework (The Arts, Health and Physical Education, and Indigenous Literacy & Culture). 90% of our students are indigenous and are taught English as their second or third language.



The NT Christian Schools Metanarrative continues to underpin our curriculum planning. God's big story drives our Gäwa school story each term as we focus on a whole school verse, staff and class devotions, and integration of scripture into the fabric of our curriculum.

A seasonal focus continues to be incorporated into our curriculum program across the school, enabling us to seize opportunities in numerous learning environments to incorporate local knowledge and experiences into the learning context. Using our Gäwa seasons calendar, learning out on country collecting photos of seasonal flora and fauna, creating and sharing of Yolngu stories appropriate to the current season were just some of the ways that the learning experience was connected with the cultural context.

The Walking Talking Text program was incorporated into our literacy program. We have worked towards integrated units of work where literacy, science, history or geography are taught in connected units of work. Combining integrated learning with the cultural context has greatly impacted student understanding and achievement. This year, classes have covered a variety of integrated units: a literacy unit on the text *Quoll* explored the local native quoll and the Island Ark ranger project, another Science/Geography unit considered Water, its sources, uses, and included local stories and an excursion to places of special significance in the local *gapu* (water) stories. In both cases, elders and yolngu staff played an integral part in the planning and delivery of a local perspective. Students were active, engaged learners as they built knowledge and understanding in a two-way learning program.

Our Indigenous Language and Culture program, incorporating the Yolngu Matha (Djambarrpuyngu) language, is also integrated into our teaching programs. With a focus on improving outcomes for our EAL/D students, we are supporting a developing understanding of both English and home language across the strands of listening, speaking, reading and writing. This has required the training and mentoring of both our teachers and teacher aides and has been supported by the NT Christian Schools EAL/D Advisor. We continue to work on ways to train and mentor our Yolngu staff, encouraging them to be active participants in the planning, delivery and assessment of the teaching program. Teaching and learning in this area is highly dependant on the availability of our Yolngu teacher aides.

Provision of Special Funding Programs

Stronger Futures National Partnership funding

Gäwa Christian School has been included in the Stronger Futures in the Northern Territory National Partnership (2012-2022). This National Partnership has two funding elements relevant to Gäwa - 'Additional Teacher' and 'Quality Teaching Initiative'. Following on from the 'Additional Teacher' measure, Gäwa Christian School has continued to employ a full-time additional teacher in 2014, which maintains the school as a 3 teacher school. The provision of this additional practitioner is critical to the ongoing progress of students at the school as it provides for more manageable class sizes and academic groupings where students can have their individual needs more appropriately catered for.

Teaching and support staff have continued to be provided with specific support for implementing literacy and numeracy strategies. A particular focus in 2014 has been training for and implementation of the Walking Talking Text program. Planning and programming for implementation has been done in teaching teams, with the teacher and indigenous assistant teacher working together. This has promoted consistency of support for all students.

EAL/D support has been provided to all teaching staff and training/strategies have again been worked through in teaching teams. This brings additional strength to all teaching and learning that takes place within the classroom. Training has happened on site as well as in Darwin.

Assessment of SWD students has been a focus and high priority during 2014. Teaching teams have been supported on site and via training in Darwin. SWD students have been identified, formally assessed and individual learning plans developed. This will continue in 2015.

Support in community engagement is a strong feature of the work of NT Christian Schools. Although informal engagement is taking place on a regular basis regarding school activities, curriculum and staffing, formal governance structures are also being developed in homeland communities. This work will continue in 2015.

A partnership between Gäwa Christian School and Marrara Christian School exists as a pathway for senior secondary education. Year 10 students at Gäwa are exposed to as many informal training opportunities (building, maintenance, hospitality) as the school is able to provide.

In 2014, Gäwa Christian School submitted an Expression of Interest in the Teacher Housing element. This is currently being assessed by a Priorities Committee and funding will be determined and prioritised on a needs basis over the next 5 years.

Smarter Schools National Partnership funding

In 2014, Gäwa Christian School has been the recipient of 'Closing the Gap' and 'Engaging Remote Indigenous Students' funding from the Commonwealth Government. This funding has been targeted towards improving teacher quality by up-skilling teachers and teacher aides in specific literacy and numeracy strategies. It has enabled the acquisition of resources that particularly focus on improving literacy and numeracy outcomes, including various assessment resources. Access to relevant professional development activities has been

provided both on-site at Gäwa and also in Darwin. Student engagement activities have included the 'Mums and Toddlers' program operating under the direction of local community members to supports pre-school aged children and their families with school readiness routines and activities.

Pastoral Care and Welfare

Students at Gäwa Christian School are connected by kinship and are always looking out and caring for each other. Despite the small size of our school, older students willingly take on roles of responsibility in supporting and nurturing younger students. We encourage this both inside and outside of the classroom. Students from both classes come together each week where the older students are encouraged in their leadership and mentoring roles.



Parents and guardians are encouraged to attend our weekly assemblies. During this time, students participate by dancing, telling a story, or sharing what they have learnt in their classes by singing a song or performing a drama piece. They continue to grow in confidence and enjoy sharing what they have learnt with each other and their parents.

Each week we meet for whole school devotions, prayer and time together. This is an important part of our week and a celebration of what God is doing in our school.

Parents and grandparents continue to play an important role in disciplining the children and caring for their wellbeing. We work closely with parents and guardians when we have concerns regarding behaviour to formulate helpful ways forward.

Nurses visit Gäwa once a fortnight to assess and treat the children for medical issues. Other visiting specialists such as dental, hearing and eye specialists also visit Gäwa periodically.

Student Outcomes

We love to celebrate the achievements and improvements of that our students are making in their learning across the curriculum in both English and Yolngu Matha. Our children continue to grow in confidence as learners as they engage with a comprehensive curriculum. In 2014 we continued to be encouraged by their willingness to share and celebrate their achievements and abilities with the wider school community through visual and oral presentations in both English and Yolngu Matha.

The average NAPLAN scores for our indigenous students are lower than the Australian average. This is due in part to the affect of inconsistent attendance at school, and in part the difficulties associated with a mainstream form of testing heavily reliant on second language. For information regarding proportion of students meeting national literacy and numeracy benchmarks for their year at 3, 5, 7 & 9 and for changes in benchmark results from previous year by % point change please see My School Website <http://www.myschool.edu.au/> .

Parents and community

Parents and grandparents are involved in the life of the school in many ways. We were greatly encouraged in 2014 by the number of parents desiring to be actively involved in the life of the school. A number are employed as teacher aides, kitchen staff, attendance officers and language consultants. Our community continue to partner with us in many aspects of school life as we build a hopeful future for the children in our community.



Our 'Mums and Toddlers' (*Amala Yothu*) program continues to provide useful preparation in school readiness and early literacy with a bilingual approach. It is also a social support for parents of pre-school age children in our community. We continue to train our Yolngu staff in the planning and delivery of a strong pre-school age program involving music, art, and early literacy and numeracy readiness through productive play.

Parents are encouraged by what the school has to offer their children. This is evident in the number of families choosing to live away from the main island township, Galiwin'ku (1.5 hours away) in order for their children to attend Gäwa Christian school. Many children live away from their parents and are cared for by grandparents or extended family members on site.

Staff at Gäwa Christian School make significant contributions to the life of the school. Many of the Yolngu staff have children enrolled in the school, with some having themselves been students here in the past. Our balanda teachers are excited about the quality of Christian education that is being offered here and enjoy living as part of the local community. These teachers and their families live life immersed in the richness and diversity of the small Gäwa community. Their own children attend the school and they enjoy seeing their children thrive in a rich cultural environment.

We continue to explore ways to involve parents and elders in the everyday life of the school to ensure the educational experience remains relevant in the cultural context.

Finance and Facilities

Income received by Gäwa Christian School in the 2014 year is listed below.

The school received funding under the Stronger Futures National Partnership and Smarter Schools National Partnership.

Private Income	\$ 48,835
Recurrent Government Income	\$1,037,532
Capital Grants	\$0



Given the remote location, Gäwa Christian School is well resourced with buildings, grounds and teaching resources. The school buildings are 6-10 years old and require ongoing maintenance due to our close proximity to sand and salt water.

Expression of Interest in the Teacher Housing element of the Stronger Futures National Partnership has been submitted for a much-needed replacement for the Principal's house that has deteriorated due to its age and proximity to the harsh coastal environment.

The classrooms are well maintained and provide an exceptional learning space for all the children. During 2014, both classrooms required the installation of new air conditioners to maintain a comfortable learning environment. Books in the library and classrooms have been added to consistently throughout the year, supported by donations from schools and community organisations all over Australia. These resources are kept in very good condition.

The grounds of our school are landscaped and continue to be adequately maintained. Shade cloths that provide essential shelter were damaged in storms and subsequently replaced.

Staff housing consists of one house, a cabin and a modified dormitory. Work was completed to the Teacher cabin to provide additional outdoor shelter, as well as some painting of the raw steel structure. The modified dormitory received some work to the additional walls to ensure that it remained watertight over the wet season.

3 stage water filtration systems were maintained in staff housing and the school kitchen facility to continue to ensure good quality fresh drinking water for staff and students. This has resulted in a reduction of water borne related illnesses.

The community kitchen facilities have also been maintained to a good standard. They continue to provide us with a valuable location for school lunches, community meeting and gatherings.

A great deal of care and time is taken to ensure that our buildings, facilities and grounds are kept to a high standard for those who serve the school now and into the future. A programmed maintenance schedule is being devised in consultation with other NT Christian Schools entities. Our staff and students are always encouraged to care for resources and take pride in their school.

School Self-Assessment

NT Christian Schools supported the Principal in ongoing monitoring and improvement in the self-audit areas of *Christian Identity* and *Pastoral Care and Wellbeing*.



Christian Identity

At Gäwa Christian School, we value the *Faith Matters* component of our strategic framework.

The NT Christian Schools metanarrative continues to be a focus of our staff devotions, classroom devotions and curriculum planning. To support this task, staff participated in the *God's Story* professional development workshop which equipped them with a holistic biblical overview.

A biblical perspective was applied to the English, Mathematics, Science, History and Geography key learning areas through the use of the NT Christian Schools programming templates. This perspective was incorporated into the planning and teaching cycle across the year.

New local induction procedures were developed and used for the induction of new staff in 2014. These incorporated school based vision, mission and other relevant policies and procedures to reinforce our unique identity as a homeland Christian school community.

Meeting together as a staff every morning for devotions and prayer is an integral part of our school life. Systematic devotions based upon the metanarrative strengthen staff spiritual growth. Praying for one another, our students and our community is an integral part of our morning meeting time.

Building a culture of peace in our school and community was reinforced with new and existing staff participating in the Biblical Peacemaking course together. This was a rich time of sharing and learning 'both ways' as a Yolngu perspective on peacemaking was integrated into the workshop. PeaceWise techniques have been used as the basis to conflict resolution with staff and students in the school as the need arises.

As a homeland Christian community, we continued with community worship and fellowship dinners throughout the year, and celebrated with our community during Easter and Christmas with open assemblies and community gatherings.

Pastoral Care and Wellbeing

At Gäwa Christian School, we value the *People Matter* component of our strategic framework.

Through growing support from our community, active participation of local aides in the classroom has increased significantly in 2014. This has had a positive impact in many aspects of classroom learning, but has particularly enabled the strengthening of our school rules around respect and behaviour. A strong partnership with community is a vital component for a positive, respectful learning environment.

The health and wellbeing of our students has a significant impact on educational outcomes. As a homeland community school, we have worked to improve health outcomes by facilitating visits of health professionals to our remote community. Whilst this has been a challenging objective, supporting and encouraging the provision of basic health services has been an important focus for 2014.

With support from the NT Christian Schools Special Education Coordinator, we have commenced visitations from specialist service providers to assess and plan special interventions for students with disabilities. Corresponding IEPs have been developed for these students.

Several initiatives were undertaken to support the health and wellbeing of our staff. The 2014 Staff Induction processes were expanded and refined to include training and workshops in cross cultural understandings and the challenges of living cross culturally. Staff then participated in a 10-week online course to further develop cross-cultural skills and understandings. A Strengths-Based training workshop was conducted to assist staff in identifying their strengths potential and to consider how these enable them to contribute effectively to our team.

In 2014, we instigated our Remote Family Relief program. We recognise the service and commitment of staff that work in our extremely remote location, and the challenges that come with this culturally diverse environment. Each term, staff families were provided the opportunity to spend time-out through an off-island break. Staff feedback on this initiative has been very positive and is another part of our commitment to the *People Matter* aspect of our organisation.

Future priorities

The School Improvement and Renewal Framework review area for 2015 is anticipated to be Community & Culture.



Endorsement

This report is endorsed by:

Karen Fletcher

Principal, Gäwa Christian School

Eric Garrawurra

Gäwa Community Representative

Debra Twartz

CEO, NT Christian Schools

