

## Improved educational, cultural, and emotional support for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students at Shore: Student Support Counsellor role and Koori Club

### **Purpose**

To improve support provided to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students at Shore, through the creation of a permanent support role and the establishment of a student support group. The permanent role of Student Support Counsellor was intended to contribute towards a positive transition for students into the school and boarding environment, as well as provide ongoing support for Indigenous student development and wellbeing.

### **Target group**

All thirteen Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students at Shore in 2020, including eight boarding students and five day students.

### **Activities**

Support provided by the Student Support Counsellor included:

- Invitation to all Indigenous students to be part of a group self-named the Koori Club.
- Facilitation of fortnightly Koori Club meetings to encourage identification of cultural and emotional needs in a supportive and social environment over shared food and laughter.
- Weekly meetings with all students either one-to-one or in small groups to build relationships, mutual aid, and respect.
- Termly meetings with all teachers of each student to case plan on an individual student basis, as well as regular meetings with House staff to highlight specific student needs.
- Working closely with other key supports, such as the Yalari Support Officer and Cultural Coach, to ensure a coordinated and collaborative approach.
- Building connections with students' families via phone and regular meetings and listening to family concerns and suggestions.

### **Outcomes**

Evidence from conversation with the students and their families, as well as staff, suggested a stronger, more connected, happy and safe group of young men. Staff demonstrated more active involvement in the management of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students in their classes and Houses and showed increased awareness of individual student academic and social history that may be influencing educational development.

### **Learnings**

The project encouraged our school to deeply reflect on the ways we could develop additional support for our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students. Improving outcomes for our boys has been memorable, eye opening and heart wrenching all at the same time. Connection, honesty, trust, respect, and collaboration are the key areas to build and maintain for the future of all of our students.

*"I am going to develop, listen, ask and challenge everyone here and in this school to find the best, most successful way of allowing these young men to flourish through their time here. For them to come out at the other end having accepted this challenge by listening to their hearts, their culture, and the wise around them." (Student Support Counsellor)*

*"Thank you for guiding my practice in the classroom with our Aboriginal boys, your recent email was brilliant and opened my eyes to language and history." (House Master)*

*"...your role has made it clear where we must head to support our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander boys completely." (Director of Studies)*

*"Thank you for all the wonderful work with our boys that this support role has developed. It is opening up the eyes of the whole school community." (Parent)*