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### **Acknowledgement of Country**

Cire Community School would like to acknowledge the Wurundjeri people, the traditional owners of the land upon which we work.

We pay our respects to elders past, present and emerging, for they hold the memories of the traditions, the culture and the hopes of Aboriginal Australia.



#### **Philosophy**

Cire Community School provides an educational environment that is framed in the emerging understandings of childhood development, including the impacts of childhood trauma on student learning. We believe that all young people should be able to positively engage in their education regardless of their life circumstances and any barriers to learning.

Education should not just focus on academic attributes but on the whole person, providing active support for their social and emotional development while supporting the development of knowledge and skills needed for a rapidly changing world.

#### **Mission Statement**

Cire Community School strives to provide a learning environment where:

- Students can create and experience success in their learning, personal and social development.
- Students can engage in structured and positive community activities to foster their sense of connection as a valued and active member of society.
- Students are supported to develop the academic and social skills to successfully transition from childhood to young adulthood and beyond.
- Individual learning needs can be met in a supportive and flexible manner.
- The highest standards of applied learning are delivered.
- Success is not just measured in academic terms but in the development of resilience and maturity.



# Message from our CEO

**Gus Seremetis**Chief Executive Officer

It is with great pleasure that I introduce you to Cire Community School's annual report for 2021.

The year under review is a significant one for the school, and Cire overall, as it marks the completion of our 2019-2021 Strategic Plan, a period in which we achieved many of our objectives and developed solid foundations to achieve future goals. Our accomplishments were captured in our inaugural Strategy Review Scorecard 2019-2021 publication.

I believe our successes were even more exceptional given the impact of the pandemic in 2020 and 2021 and Cire's ability to be agile in addressing the challenges for the benefit of all those in our reach.

Cire Community School is an integral part of Cire Services, one of the largest not-for-profits in the Yarra Ranges, unique to the region and with a growing presence in other areas, including the City of Casey.

I would like to commend Executive Manager Education, Peri Dix, for her leadership and vision for our Yarra Junction, Mount Evelyn and Berwick campuses. Peri's role is particularly challenging given the school's multiple sites, growing demand for our model of specialist education, and the complexities of our cohort. Peri is supported by her dedicated team of campus principals – Tyson McNamara, Stephen Duke and Tom Witenden – and staff who all contribute to making Cire a school of choice. Above all, I would like to acknowledge our students and thank them for trusting Cire to keep or re-engage them in their learning and personal development and help them navigate pathways to realistic employment and bright futures.

Our school prides its focus on the social and emotional aspects of learning, as well as hands-on opportunities. As one student said:

> "Cire includes you and accepts you for who you are'. They don't judge you or tell you can't be you ... it just makes me happy to be here."

> > Lola, year 7 student Berwick campus

Employing approximately 220 people, Cire Services is driven by an unwavering determination and mission to offer people of all ages, regardless of their circumstances, the opportunity to learn, grow and be the best they can be. We do this through Cire Training, Cire Early Learning and Cire Community Hubs, as well as the Community Scxhool. Given the breadth of our operations and supporting infrastructure, students have access to a range of unique opportunities which further enhance their learning and connection with the community.

Our standing is highlighted by the partnerships we enjoy with organisations such as Yarra Ranges Shire Council and City of Casey, other not-for-profits,



government bodies and philanthropic entities, and our affiliations with many local community organisations and programs. Recognition in state and national awards and accreditations further highlights Cire's credibility, leadership, innovation and bold approach.

Guided by our Strategic Plan, 2021 was a year of growth and consolidation of our operations, infrastructure and financially sustainability, further strengthening our stance in the region. This was underpinned by the synergy between our services and the ability to work cohesively, to expand and further develop what we do to meet the needs of our learners.

Despite the ongoing impact of the pandemic and ever-changing landscape, Cire was resilient throughout, meeting each challenge as they arose. We proudly retained all our staff, with our school and Early Learning sites remaining open as essential services. Cire Training and our Community Hubs operated remotely where possible to keep learners engaged and provide support.

A highlight of another challenging year was the overwhelming success of Training and Hubs Twilight Christmas Market, which was a wonderful celebration of the community coming together after such exceptional times. The Chirnside Park Community Hub event attracted about 3000 people and almost 100 stall holders, with some saying it was the best market they had ever attended.

Cire Community School and Early Learning ended the year with strong enrolments and levels of enquiries and wait lists for some sites.

In closing, I would like to thank Cire's Executive Leadership Team, who work tirelessly to ensure we provide a seamless service, and our Board and all those, both internally and externally, who play such a significant role in supporting Cire's work, mission and vision.

To our incredible Community School team, a heartfelt thank you for all that you do to support our students in every way possible to be the best they can be and optimistically navigate pathways to bright futures.



#### **Principal's report**

**Peri Dix**Executive Manager, Education

Driven by the increasing need for a positive alternative to mainstream settings, Cire Community School (CCS) has further strengthened its position in the specialist education sector in 2021 with a new campus at Berwick, the introduction of years 5 and 6 at Yarra Junction, and plans for an additional site at Lilydale.

Ending the year with a robust waiting list for 2022 clearly demonstrated our standing as a school of choice for young people who have disengaged from their education or are at risk of doing so.

The Berwick campus and the new upper primary program were exciting achievements, providing a great sense of hope and optimism for the future, particularly given the ongoing impact of the covid 19 pandemic with continued shutdowns, restrictions and uncertainties overall.

With great pride, I would like to thank and congratulate all our students and teaching, support and administrative staff for their resilience, adaptability and mutual support during these unprecedented times. Their transitioning from face-to-face to online learning and teaching was commendable, with some students excelling in virtual deliveries. Our wellbeing team and staff provided much additional support to help our young people navigate their way. This was further reinforced with campus principals, wellbeing leaders and positive behaviour specialists at each site. A big call out also to our bus drivers, maintenance crew and IT team, who continued always to go the extra mile.

I would particularly like to acknowledge our dedicated campus principals - Tom Witenden at Berwick, Stephen Duke at Mount Evelyn and Tyson McNamara at Yarra Junction - who provide outstanding leadership, expertise in specialist education and unrelenting passion for all that they do. Working with a leadership team dedicated to making a positive difference in the lives and futures of vulnerable young people is extremely rewarding.

Of significance to this report is that 2021 was the final year of Cire Services Inc.'s 2019-21 Strategic Plan with the Community School addressing its following key goals or strategically scaffolding towards them:

- Develop a targeted educational model that supports students in building skills for a successful life.
- Develop the facilities and services at Yarra Junction and Mt Evelyn to ensure greater student and community outcomes are achieved.
- Expand the service offering beyond years 7 12 to meet the needs of our community.
- Explore the options of an additional campus in a different geographic region to increase our ability to meet community needs.

The Berwick campus and the introduction of upper primary at Yarra Junction were standout achievements and provided the foundations for future growth.

Berwick, marking Cire's expansion into the City of Casey, has grown rapidly and was at capacity by the end of the year. Plans are underway to expand the campus.

The introduction of upper primary at Yarra Junction helps meet the increasing need and importance of earlier intervention to minimise the risk of children disengaging from their education.

Other strategic goals achievements in 2021 included:

# Develop a targeted educational model that supports students in building skills for a successful life.

- Introduced Years 5 and 6 at Yarra Junction.
- Greater 'hands-on' opportunities were developed to enhance student learning experiences.
- Students continued to achieve during lockdowns with online learning providing quality educational experiences.
- For their Work Related Skills (WRS) Unit, VCAL students provided volunteer support for Cire's First Impressions Clothing Exchange program for vulnerable women. WRS focuses on developing transferable skills that can be used in a range of employment settings.

#### Develop the facilities and services at Yarra Junction and Mt Evelyn to ensure greater student and community outcomes are achieved.

- Commenced upgrade of outdoor recreational spaces at Yarra Junction.
- Development of a dedicated tech and art space at Mount Evelyn.
- The fleet of school buses increased to 11, providing transport to 135 Cire students from throughout the region, the largest geographic area of any local government area in Victoria, and minimal public transport.

Explore the options of an additional campus in a different geographic region to increase our ability to meet community needs.

- Berwick campus.
- Acquired a site in Lilydale and application to Victorian Registration and Qualifications Authority (VRQA) for registration as part of the Mount Evelyn campus.

Despite pandemic restrictions impacting many CCS excursions and activities, the depth and breadth of student learning and personal development was encouraged and maximised at every opportunity.

Reaching out to the community, a Personal Development Skills beauty class visited an aged care home where residents enthusiastically welcomed the young visitors and the pampering. Student-created recipes featured in Vasili's Garden to Kitchen magazine, which has a circulation of 10,000 in Australia and New Zealand and dozens of Anzac biscuits were baked for Wandin Rotary's Anzac Day Breakfast. Student work was featured in a photography exhibition they organised at Mount Evelyn. Despite the disruptions of covid, some of our students gained their L-plates through the Changing Gears Community Road Safety Program, generously funded by the Department of Transport and an important part of our offerings.



The Berwick campus and the introduction of upper primary at Yarra Junction were standout achievements and provided the foundations for future growth.

We were particularly thrilled when one of our students, Rosie Hellicar, was named the 2021 recipient of the Warburton Yarra Junction Community Bank's Ian De La Rue Youth Initiative Award which acknowledges a local young person's positive contributions to their community. Rosie, who is passionate about the importance of the Arts to overall health and wellbeing, was indeed a worthy recipient.

Aspiring photographer Dylan Schafter was the overall winner of the Upper Yarra Community Bank's Calendar Competition and had work featured in the 2022 calendar.

In conclusion, it has been a year of challenges, progress and achievements driven daily by our determination to ensure young people have the opportunity to positively engage in their education regardless of their life circumstances and any barriers to learning. Our holistic approach focuses on the whole person, supporting social and emotional development while further enriching the depth of knowledge and skills needed for a rapidly changing world.

"It has been a year of challenges, progress and achievements driven daily by our determination to ensure young people have the opportunity to positively engage in their education, regardless of their life circumstances and any barriers to learning."

- Peri Dix,

Executive Manager, Education





#### **Wellbeing Report**

Covid continued to be a dominant force in 2021, with lockdowns and restrictions impacting the ability of students to remain engaged with their peers, teachers and learning. With many of Cire Community School's students considered "vulnerable" or "at-risk", we could provide some onsite classes and shift many tasks to online learning.

Our Wellbeing teams worked hard through the lockdowns. We were conscious of the importance of maintaining contact and, where possible, strengthening relationships with our students and their families and carers during this time. Aware of the impact of social isolation and the potential risks to our students' mental, emotional and physical wellbeing, it was essential that we used innovative ways to connect with them and support their needs. We did this through phone calls, emails and an online Wellbeing "classroom" link. We continued to connect our students and families with external services where applicable, including mental health care, food, housing and safety supports. For students who were increasingly disengaged, we arranged for them to attend school onsite on a rotating basis, in accordance with density limits and restrictions.

In Term 3, when restrictions were lifted, and students could return to campus, we were conscious of transition and adjustment difficulties for students. Each person's experience of lockdowns was different, some positive and some extremely challenging. Returning to school provoked many mixed emotions, including excitement, relief, fear, worry, anxiety, frustration and a general sense of

fatigue. Face-to-face interactions with staff and peers were warmly welcomed by some students and induced social anxiety for others. Our Wellbeing teams were integral to supporting our students with this adjustment. We facilitated discussions between home and school, shared wellbeing resources and strategies with teachers and learning assistants, and facilitated one-on-one discussions and a safe space to debrief and workshop personal concerns and solutions for our students.

Cire Community School continued to grow and expand during the year, and there were a number of staff changes involving our Wellbeing teams. With the opening of our Berwick campus in May, Iley Rushton was appointed Wellbeing Leader. At Yarra Junction, we welcomed Jodi Zaninetti as Wellbeing Leader, and at Mt Evelyn, Luella Cochrane joined as Wellbeing Leader to replace Stephen Duke, who has become Campus Principal. By the end of 2021, our Wellbeing teams continued to grow and strengthen with a diverse group of professionals to help meet the complex needs of our students. The Mt Evelyn campus was preparing for expansion to include a new site at Lilydale in 2022, with Adam Kennon as head of wellbeing on that site.

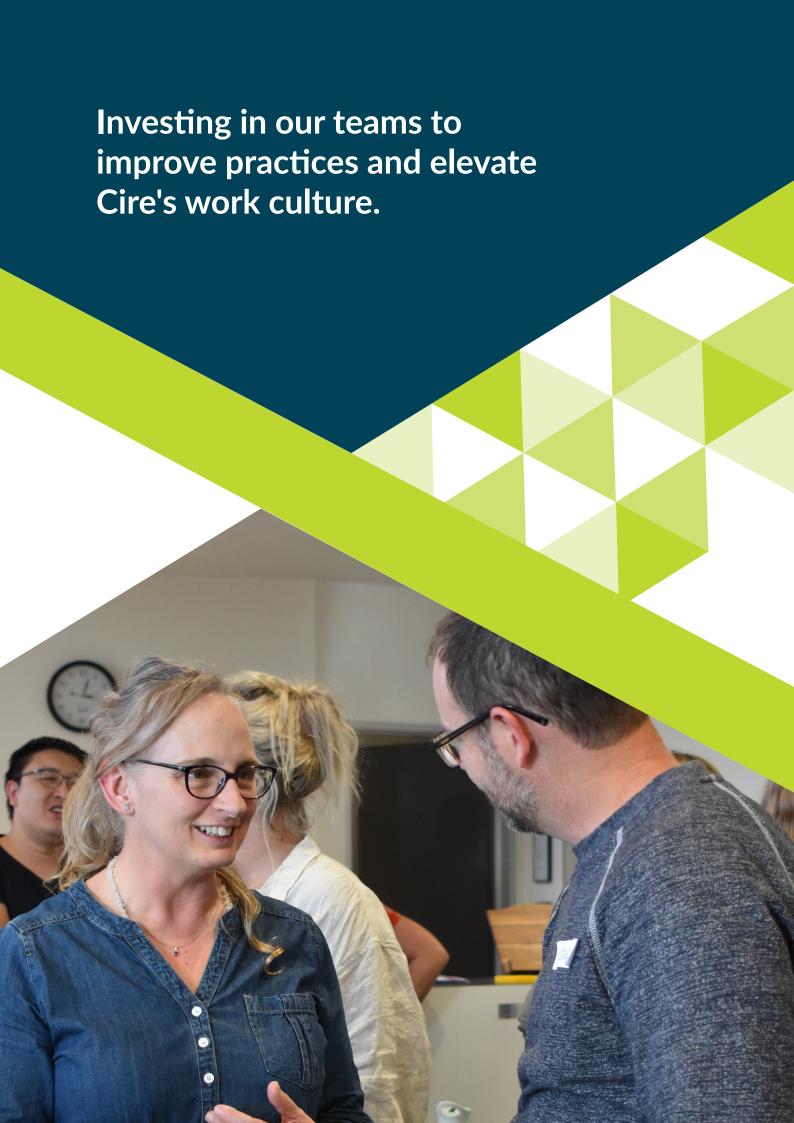


As we look forward to 2022, our Wellbeing teams are focused on shifting our time and energy more and more from a reactive space, to implementing proactive and preventative measures. With an emphasis on the benefit of wellbeing education and the goal of building capacity in our staff and students, we are excited about our new Wellbeing Curriculum. This will be taught by classroom teachers and supported by the Wellbeing team at each campus. We are also aiming to implement some student focus groups, including social skills, safety management, emotional regulation and intelligence and others as specific needs arise.

At Cire, we understand that physical, mental, emotional and social wellbeing is at the core of a positive and engaging educational experience. Relationships built on safety and respect enhance accessibility to cognitive learning, thus forming the foundation of all that we do within the school community. With trauma-informed staff members, positive behaviour support practices, a focus on restorative justice and individualised learning plans for our students, wellbeing is embedded in every aspect of Cire Community School.

We are grateful and honoured to be trusted partners in the lives of our students and to all work together to create pathways for healthy, happy and productive futures in which our young people gain a sense of worth, purpose and engagement within society. We continue to learn, grow and implement new strategies to support staff, students and families to the best of our ability.

We understand that physical, mental, emotional and social wellbeing are at the core of a positive and engaging educational experience.





#### **Professional Development**

Professional development opportunities continued to be impacted by pandemic restrictions, but staff accessed what they could, both face-to-face and online.

Staff joined online sessions with the Victorian Curriculum Assessment Authority about the new VCE vocation studies and year 10 pathways certificate, which come into effect in 2023.

Several senior staff were involved in online meetings hosted by Independent Schools Victoria and Future Schools.

A highlight of the year was the fortnightly professional learning team sessions conducted by our teaching and learning leaders.

The sessions were varied in their context and included some of the following topics:



- Exploring the new Independent Learning Program (ILP), including feedback from teaching staff
- Using Dialogue and Questioning
- Cognitive Conflict
- The Learning Pit
- Body-Based Learning including a practical session with Belinda De Guzman, a secondary teacher and yoga instructor
- Classroom Support 101
- Learning Together featuring teaching staff from each campus as guest speakers
- Cire Philosophy Building
- All staff participated in first aid and specific CPR and anaphylaxis training.



## **Staff Qualifications**

Staff Name	Role	Qualification
Lauren Brum	Administrative Assistant	Administrative Support
Audrey Greenwood	Administrative Assistant	Associate Business Degree Diploma in Children's Services Certificate IV in Training and Assessment Certificate IV in Mental Health (current)
Belinda Wilson	Administrative Assistant	Administrative Support
Kristin Woods	Administrative Assistant	Certificate III Business Administration (Medical) Certificate II Hospitality Certificate III Aged Care Certificate IV Massage Therapy (Relaxation)
Thomas Witenden	Campus Principal (Berwick)	Bachelor of Commerce (Finance and Financial Planning) Graduate Diploma of Education Master of Education (Leadership and Management)
Peri Dix	Campus Principal (Mount Evelyn)/ Education Manager Executive	Master of Education Bachelor of Arts Associate Diploma of Applied Science
Tyson McNamara	Campus Principal (Yarra Junction)	Graduate Diploma in Education (Secondary) Bachelors of Applied Science, Majoring in Psychology, Media and Statistics Diploma of Vocational Education and Training Diploma of Quality Auditing (Education) Certificate IV in Training and Assessment Mental Health First Aid (Standard & Youth) Digital Education in Vocational and Applied Education Foundation skills in Vocational and Applied Education
Suzy Murphy	Executive Assistant to the Principal	Diploma of Business Administration
Paul van Breugel	Executive Principal	Post Graduate Diploma in Education Secondary (Humanities) Honours Degree in Social Sciences (Politics and History) Bachelor of Arts, Humanities and Social Science
Bridie Millar	Lead Teacher	Bachelor of Secondary Teaching (Humanities and English)

Staff Name	Role	Qualification
Jessica Dear	Learning Assistant	Diploma of Youth Work Diploma of Alcohol and Other Drugs Work
Elise Dunham	Learning Assistant	Bachelor of Science (Psychology & Physiology)
Gail Finlay	Learning Assistant	Certificate IV Education Support
Sally Grasby	Learning Assistant	Bachelor of Social Science (Psychology) Certificate IV Education Support
Karina Green	Learning Assistant	Master of Social Work Graduate Diploma of Education Bachelor of Arts
Ollie Hackett	Learning Assistant	Diploma in Community Services Certificate IV Youth Work
Teresa Heldt	Learning Assistant	Diploma in childcare and education (Montessori Trained Teacher) Diploma in Travel and Tourism Diploma in Business administration - Continuing Diploma of Educational Studies - Registered
Amy Keysers	Learning Assistant	Certificate III Education Support
Kylie Madigan	Learning Assistant	Certificate IV Education Support
Shianne Marsal	Learning Assistant	Current - Bachelor of Education (Secondary)
Sheila Mithen	Learning Assistant	Diploma of Youth Work
Bernadette Murray	Learning Assistant	Certificate IV Education Support
Isabella Portillo	Learning Assistant	Current - Bachelor of Arts / Master Teaching Diploma of Education (Secondary)
Stacey Powierski	Learning Assistant	Diploma of Community Services
Amy Rae	Learning Assistant	Bachelor of Professional Writing & Literary Studies Current - Certificate IV in Youth Work
Lauren Riley	Learning Assistant	Diploma of Community Services Certificate IV in Education Support Certificate III in Business Admin Certificate III in Business Admin (Medical) Currently studying Bachelor of Education (Primary)
Ben Schatz	Learning Assistant	Bachelor of Youth Work
Trent Stebbing	Learning Assistant	Certificate IV Education Support
Nathalie Tesselaar- Marriott	Learning Assistant	Diploma of Sustainable Living Certificate IV Education Support Certificate IV Training and Assessment Certificate II Horticulture

Staff Name	Role	Qualification
Natasha Thomas	Learning Assistant	Certificate III Education Support
Millie Willetts	Learning Assistant	Bachelor of Education (Primary)
Marli Wilson	Learning Assistant	Bachelor Social Science Certificate IV Youth Work Certificate IV Protective Care Certificate IV Community Services
Dean Wixon	Learning Assistant	Bachelor of Primary Education Bachelor of Law
Naomi Hollingsworth	Learning Support	Certificate IV Youth Work Certificate IV Education Support
Kelly Taylor	Positive Behaviour Support Officer	Diploma of Community Services Diploma of Youth Work
Eliza Tuhan	Positive Behaviour Support Officer	Bachelor of Arts - History and Youth Work Diploma of Youth Work
Melissa Angius- Salvatore	Teacher	Bachelor of Education
Alex Bonacci	Teacher	Bachelor of Education (Prep-12)
Aurora Brokke	Teacher	Bachelor of Education
Jeremy Collings	Teacher	Graduate Diploma of Education (Secondary) Bachelor of Arts, with Honours in Music
Tristan D'Aloia	Teacher	Bachelor of Education (Geography & History) Diploma of Security and Risk Management Cert III Security Operations
Catherine Gates	Teacher	Bachelor of Arts Diploma of Education Certificate IV in Assessment and Workplace Training
Biron Hardinge	Teacher	Bachelor of Arts (Humanities) Bachelor of Education (Secondary)
Tim Holland	Teacher	Bachelor of Health Science (paramedicine) Post Graduate Diploma of Teaching Post Graduate Certificate in Teaching Children with Autism Certificate IV Workplace Training and Assessment
Rachel Johnson	Teacher	Bachelor of Education
Jacob Kennedy	Teacher	Bachelor of Education
Digna Libera	Teacher	Master of Arts, English Bachelor of Arts, English Bachelor of Education Certificate IV Training & Assessment
Annemarie O'Rourke	Teacher	Bachelor of Arts Graduate Diploma of Education (Secondary)
Prue Padmore	Teacher	Bachelor of Education (Primary) Specialist Certificate of Curriculum & Assessment Masters of Education (Special Education, Inclusion & Early Intervention)

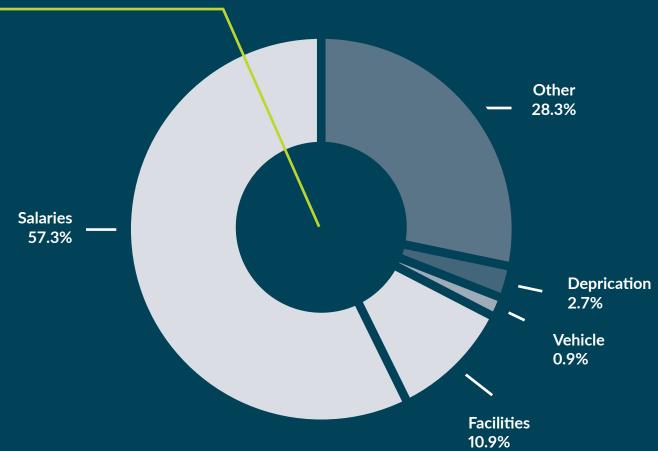
Staff Name	Role	Qualification
Danielle Panozzo	Teacher	Diploma of Education, Performing Arts
Paige Remfrey	Teacher	Bachelor of Arts (Psychology and English) Graduate Diploma Education Diploma of Audio Engineering
lan Seppings	Teacher	Certificate IV TAA40104 Certificate of Proficiency Apprenticeship Cooking
Megan Small	Teacher	Bachelor of Education and Applied Learning Certificate IV in Training and Workplace Assessment Certificate IV Hairdressing
Tom Sword	Teacher	Master of Teaching (Secondary) Bachelor of Applied Science (Secondary)
Tess Underwood	Teacher	Bachelor of Education P-12, Humanities and & Literature
Willa Vale	Teacher	Bachelor of Arts, Graduate Diploma in Education Certificate IV Youth Work
Zack Zhang	Teacher	Master of Teaching Bachelor of Science CELTA certified teacher of English as a second language
Karen Swankie	Teacher - VET & Pathways	Bachelor of Education and Applied Learning Associate Degree in Social Science Certificate IV Training and Workplace Assessment
Shann O'Grady	VASS Administrator	Administration, Graduate Certificate of Education Diploma of Arts and Design Certificate IV in Training and Workplace Assessment
Alicia Grant	Wellbeing Leader	Graduate Diploma of Education (Primary) Bachelor of Arts (Humanities and Social Science)
Iley Rushton	Wellbeing Leader	Bachelor in Arts Counselling Post Graduate Diploma Creative Arts Therapy
Stephen Duke	Wellbeing Leader/ Campus Principal (Mount Evelyn)	Bachelor of Education (Physical Education)
Megan Bell	Wellbeing Support Officer	Certificate IV Child Youth and Family Intervention Diploma of Youth Work Diploma of Outdoor Recreation
Amy Bruce	Wellbeing Support Officer	Bachelor of Community and Human Services Current - Master of Social Work Certificate in Education Support
Michele Hughes	Wellbeing Support Officer	Masters of Teaching (Primary and Secondary) Bachelor of Arts (Criminal Justice)
Adam Kennon	Wellbeing Support Officer	Double diploma Community services, Case Management Certificate IV in Alcohol and Other Drugs Trauma Informed Practice Rites of Passage Facilitation Mental Health First Aid
Kylie Skidmore	Wellbeing Support Officer	Bachelor of Physical Education/Teacher Education
Mim Stekelenberg	Wellbeing Support Officer	Bachelor of Counselling



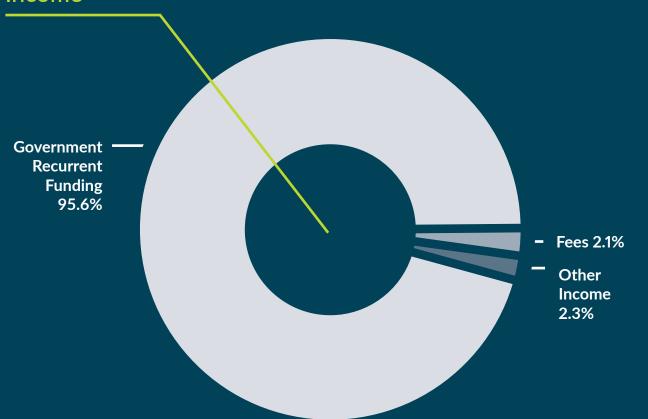


## **Financials**

#### Expenditure



#### Income





#### Number of students enrolled at each campus:



#### **Attendance**

At the August 2021 Census, Cire Community School had 266 students enrolled across years 5 to 12 at Yarra Junction and Mount Evelyn in the Yarra Ranges in Melbourne's outer east and our new campus at Berwick in the City of Casey.

Of significance to our enrolment numbers was the commencement of our campus at Berwick and the introduction of years 5 and 6 at our Yarra Junction campus. Given this expansion, our enrolments increased by almost 21% compared with 2020. We had 119 students at Mount Evelyn (up 15%), 82 at Yarra Junction (up 12%) and 54 at Berwick.

Many of our young people find regular attendance a challenge due to the range and complexities of their individual circumstances, which were further exacerbated by the impact of the Covid pandemic.

When they enrol at Cire, many of our students have already severely disengaged from education; some have not attended a normal education setting for many months, or even years.

Cire provides daily support to help keep our students engaged and at school. Teaching staff, together with campus administrative staff, monitor attendance and maintain regular contact with students and families in a variety of ways. Wellbeing staff assist where absences are high and where wellbeing concerns impact attendance and engagement. Regular calls and SMS text messages are used to communicate absences daily to families, and teachers follow up on unexplained absences. Some of these approaches, as well as additional supports and connection, continued to be critical in 2021 lockdowns and remote learning from home.

Fortunately, our attendance levels continued to improve in 2021 despite the impact of Covid lockdowns and restrictions. Many students found working from home beneficial, while those who were deemed at-risk or whose parents were essential workers, were permitted to attend on site, engaging in smaller group tasks.

It is important to note that the small number of students with very low attendance across all year levels impacts the overall figure. In reality, the majority of students attend above the rates indicated.

Further, our VCAL students work through the three levels of VCAL at their own pace and progress from Foundation to Intermediate to Senior levels when they have met the outcomes in the previous level. This supports students who are re-engaging with education to reestablish a culture of attendance and learning and to overcome what are often significant gaps and disruptions in their previous learning.



**Learn more about the Cire Community School:** 

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