



Welcome to Gawura School – an  
Indigenous school within a school



heart  
mind  
life



ST ANDREW'S  
CATHEDRAL  
SCHOOL  
FOUNDED 1885



# Acknowledgement of Country "Yiradhu Marang"

Gawura acknowledges the traditional owners of our country throughout Australia and recognises their continuing connection to the land, water and communities. We pay our respects to the Elders past, present and emerging. It is our privilege to work and learn on Gadigal land.





# A unique model of Indigenous education

## Key elements in Gawura's success:

- **Small class sizes**

All Gawura classes have exceptional teacher/student ratios, with usually between 5-10 students per class, ensuring teachers can assist with individual learning needs

- **Intensive focus on learning literacy and numeracy**

- **Partnership with families and carers of students**

is an essential element in the support of student learning. All Gawura families/carers are encouraged to join the parent advisory committee, where current learning and events are discussed.

- **A school within a larger school**

The integration of Indigenous with non-Indigenous students (within St Andrew's Cathedral School) for art, sport, science, geography, history, music and camps, and in the playground, ensures students are supported in their journey into the larger St Andrew's Cathedral School community from Years 7 – 12.

- **Learning of Wiradjuri language and Indigenous cultural lessons**

All Gawura students learn Wiradjuri and have Indigenous cultural lessons. Parents/carers are also invited to join in to share their knowledge.

- **Dedicated bus service for students**

The Gawura bus collects students each morning from their homes and returns them in the afternoon, provided they live within the 3km radius of inner city and inner west suburbs serviced by our bus (see map on pg3).

- **Cultural excursions and on-country tours**

These excursions and tours ensure Gawura students learn the history and narratives of particular Nations from Elders of that land, promoting a sense of pride in their own culture and history.

- **Large number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff**, which deepens the authenticity of the program and provides valuable role models to all within Gawura and St Andrew's Cathedral School.

- **Scholarships for all students**

Gawura's corporate and individual donors ensure students have full access to all the opportunities offered at a highly resourced independent school. (See page 8 for further details of Gawura's funding.)

- **Caring Christian learning environment**

The care and wellbeing of students is paramount at Gawura and is built on the premise that children learn best when they are healthy, safe and happy. Our staff aim to develop in students a strong sense of identity, resilience and connectedness through all areas of school life. Our approach is underpinned by a Christian culture of care based on Biblical principles regarding humanity's inherent value as beloved children of God. We therefore seek to nurture a deep respect for the human dignity of Indigenous Australians and their culture in all that we do at Gawura.

Gawura aims to give Indigenous students opportunities to participate fully in the life of the school and to 'close the gap' in educational disadvantage.



# Heads of Gawura School welcome



## Head of St Andrew's Cathedral School and Gawura School, Dr John Collier

The Gawura School is a school within a school, which is unique to all existing education models and systems. It is a separate Kindergarten to Year 6 primary school for Indigenous students operating within an independent school in the heart of Sydney, Australia.

Gawura was set up 13 years ago as a Christian social justice initiative by two Aboriginal Elders, Pastor Ray Minniecon and his wife Sharon and the previous St Andrew's Cathedral School Head, Mr Phillip Heath. All three were keen to address and correct the disadvantage that exists for our First Nations' students.

Gawura has become a leading model for Indigenous education – a day school providing local Indigenous children with an opportunity to access high quality education and to also engage in authentic cultural awareness education and Aboriginal language learning.

Gawura has delivered notable results, such as well above average school attendance rates and strong NAPLAN results. To date, some 15 students have gone on to university and one student has commenced studying a PhD. The school is nurturing a deep respect for the human dignity of Aboriginal people and their culture and also demonstrating inclusivity for all.

Our goal is that all Gawura students flourish in terms of Jesus' purpose: *"I have come that you may have life, and have it to the full" – (John 10:10).*



## Head of Gawura School, Mr John Ralph

**Gawura is under the day-to-day leadership of Mr John Ralph, who comes from the Gumbayngirr Nation and has taught at St Andrew's Cathedral School for the past 20 years.**

Thank you for considering St Andrew's Cathedral Gawura School. I would like to extend a very warm welcome to all students, parents, carers, aunts and uncles who are considering joining our unique city school.

In 2020 we have 32 students enrolled in Gawura K-6, with four teachers, two teachers' aides, and an Aboriginal mentor. Students are taught not only about Indigenous culture but also through Indigenous culture, with ten indigenous staff who work across our Gawura school.

Our students undertake not only academic studies but also learn cultural language from the Wiradjuri nation. They also attend cultural excursions where an Indigenous elder leads our students through their land and shares traditional stories and wisdom from past and present times.

All students are on scholarships, and the school selects children for enrolment from families who show the greatest willingness to engage with our educational programs. At the end of Year 6, Gawura graduates have the opportunity to proceed into Year 7 at St Andrew's Cathedral School. Our aim is that they are well prepared for Year 7 academic work in our secondary school.

Both Gawura and the St Andrew's Cathedral Junior School are under the overall supervision of the Deputy K-6 / Director of Primary Education, Mrs Rhonda Robson.

We look forward to welcoming you in person on a school tour.



# Transport to and from school

## Gawura provides a dedicated free bus service for its students

The optional bus service is only for our Gawura families and ensures students are at school on time each day. It picks up Gawura students from certain collection points within a radius of 3km from the Redfern Community Centre.

Gawura has three wonderful bus drivers who work on different days each week. Parents are provided with the drivers' mobile phone numbers so they can communicate absences with the driver and also ask about upcoming events or excursions.

Families who live outside the radius are asked to take their child to a pick-up point within the radius, such as NCIE in Redfern or Waterloo.

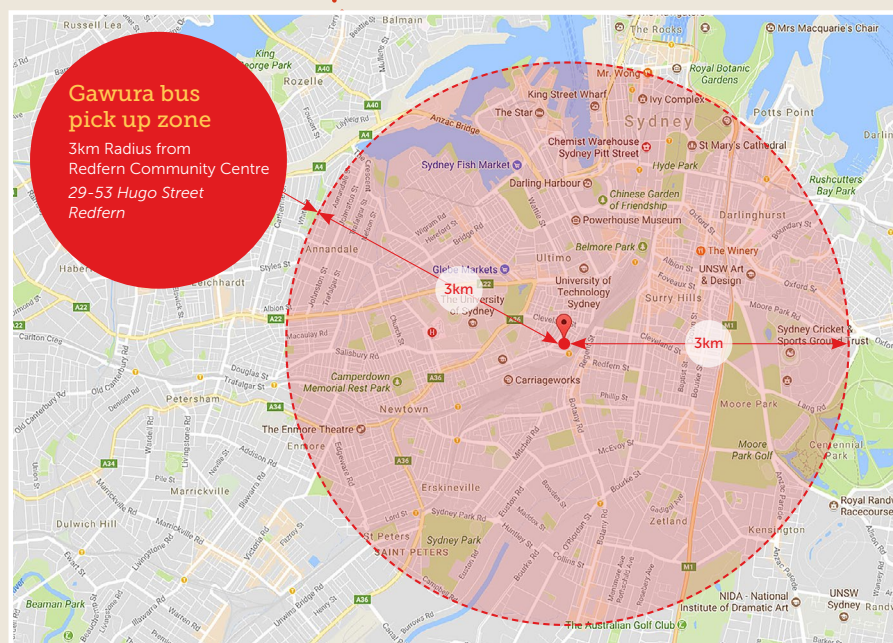
If students wish to stay after school for extra co-curricular activities, they will need to make alternative arrangements.

There is no cost for utilising the Gawura Bus. An Opal Card is not required to travel on the Gawura Bus, however, as students may need to catch public transport from time-to-time, (eg. if staying back for after-school activities), they are encouraged to arrange for a Student Opal Card to be in their school bag for such occasions.

## Before and after school care and holiday care

Before-school care operates each morning from 6.30am and after-school care operates each afternoon from 3.10pm until 6pm in the rooftop classroom and is available to all Gawura School students. It is run by Their Care, a nationally operated and fully approved provider of after-school care. All Gawura families must register with Their Care to participate in the program.

Their Care also runs vacation care for Gawura students in the school holiday periods.





# Gawura School program

All elements of the Gawura School program have been carefully developed to ensure students are engaged in learning and have pride in their heritage.

## Small class sizes

One of the keys to Gawura's success is having small class sizes, usually between 5–10 students to one teacher, in every classroom.

Our main entry point in Kindergarten usually enrolls just 4–5 students but when these students advance to Year 1 onwards, they come into a Stage class (composite Year 1 and 2 class, composite Year 3 and 4 class and a composite Year 5 and 6 class, which explains why these combined classes have larger numbers).

Key to the success of the Gawura program is the individual attention students receive from their teachers, which is afforded by small class sizes.

## Academic curriculum and Wiradjuri language

Gawura is very proud to teach an Indigenous language. Although our students come from many nations around NSW, Queensland and Victoria, the most common nation connecting our community is the Wiradjuri Nation and so it was Wiradjuri language that was chosen to be taught to students.

Mrs Leanna Carr-Smith is a proud Wiradjuri woman and teaches Wiradjuri not just to our 32 Gawura students K–6, but also teaches Wiradjuri to over 370 students in the St Andrew's Cathedral Junior School. Our non-Indigenous students truly love learning Wiradjuri language, which includes the embedded Indigenous culture and customs, as Mrs Carr-Smith proudly states that she also teaches the back story to the language. All of our students know about the Wiradjuri way of learning, incorporating all aspects of 'Yindyamarra'.

Students learn all subjects mandated by NESA (NSW Education Standards Authority).

These are literacy, numeracy, geography, history, Personal Development, Health and Physical Education (PDHPE), music, drama, science and digital technologies. As our school is a Christian school, which is affiliated with the Anglican Diocese of Sydney, our students also attend weekly chapel services and have Christian Development classes once a week.

## Reading program

The Gawura reading program runs every day from 8am to 8.30am. Students are asked to read for 10 to 15 minutes with a volunteer when they arrive at school, before they go to the roof to play. The program is run with the support of volunteers from local companies and SACS parents who give up their time to help our students with their literacy.

Gawura's reading program is one of the reasons for our students' strong academic results, especially in writing and comprehension.

## Cultural excursions and On Country tours

Each term, our K–12 Indigenous students (a total of 50 in 2019) participate in a cultural excursion. One example of this is when La Perouse Indigenous elder, Uncle Vic Simms, led our students on a bushwalk and bush medicine/food tour around Yarra Bay and spoke to our students about the mission that was located at La Perouse.

Our students have also been on the Tribal Warrior cruise around Sydney Harbour and Clark Island, where a traditional ceremony was held, and students heard stories of how our Gadigal and Cammeraygal ancestors lived around the foreshore of Sydney Harbour.

The Living Exhibition at the State Library



of NSW saw two of our students witness their Aunty and Elder speak about the Wiradjuri Nation.

Our On Country tours see Indigenous students from Year 5 to Year 12 travel to another region and connect with another 'country' over several days. Most of the activities are conducted by the traditional owners and elders of the region. In 2018, we went to Dubbo and Bathurst on the Wiradjuri On Country excursion and in 2019 we visited Nowra, Orient Point and Huskisson on the Wandj Wandj (Yuin) Nation On Country tour.

In 2021, we have the amazing opportunity to visit the Indigenous homelands of Kuku Yulanji Nation in the Cape York region of Far North Queensland, around the town of Wujal Wujal.

## Student wellbeing

All our programs and initiatives are designed to help Gawura students thrive. Our approach to student wellbeing is built on the premise that young people learn best when they are *healthy, safe and happy*. Our staff aim to develop in students a strong sense of identity, resilience and connectedness through all areas of school life.

To help with this goal, we have initiated weekly wellbeing time within each class, where we run a number of wellbeing programs and initiatives that build resilience and develop respect and understanding between students. All teachers exercise strong pastoral care and support for the children in their care.

If additional support is required, we have counselling and specialist staff available.

## City links and excursions

At Gawura, we use our unique location to assist learning through first-hand experiences of our city environment. Learning spaces extend beyond the school's buildings to institutions and facilities in the city, including Darling Harbour, various museums, libraries and

art galleries. We are also in close proximity to outdoor learning spaces such as Cook and Philip Pool, and the grounds of Sydney University.

## Specialised Learning

As a Christian school we have a responsibility to recognise a wide range of student abilities, and to provide challenging educational experiences for all students, helping them to achieve their God-given potential. This includes students of high academic potential, along with those who need additional support.

Specialised Learning in the Gawura School is led by the Primary Coordinator, who is supported by a team of teachers and aides.

It is the role of Specialised Learning to work closely with teachers, students, parents and outside professionals to cater for the individual needs of students. Our students also have access to counsellors and child psychologists as part of our program.

Services provided by the Specialised Learning team may include:

- In-class support
- Diagnostic assessment
- The development of Student Learning Plans
- 1:1 or small group academic organisational support where appropriate
- Parent information sessions
- Assistance with the modification of curriculum and assessment
- Transition programs
- Collaborative planning with teachers, students, parents and outside professionals
- Determining appropriate adjustments for students with a disability
- Collection of data to access Commonwealth funding (NCCDSWD)
- Students have access to Occupational Therapy and Speech Therapy paid for by donors, if these are needed







## Chapel and Christian Development

Chapel is a weekly event attended by all students. It provides a communal expression of the school's Christian basis and commitment, and goes hand-in-hand with the Christian Development course, which introduces students to the Christian faith as it is revealed in The Bible and provides them with the opportunity to engage in healthy discussion on both its theory and practice.

## Learning technology

Technology is an important part of the learning experience. We aim for learning technologies to be used authentically and appropriately to enrich, enhance and extend learning.

Students in Years 5 and 6 are issued with a school laptop computer. Kindergarten to Year 2 students have access to class sets of iPads and Years 3–6 students have access to laptop computers in order to develop the skills necessary for future learning.

## Uniforms

The St Andrew's Cathedral School uniform includes winter and summer options and a separate sports uniform for sport and PE. Students are expected to abide by the uniform code and wear their uniform with pride while travelling to and from school and while at school. Gawura is also proud to offer students a special Gawura cultural shirt which is worn on Indigenous cultural excursion days and On Country tours.

The cost of all uniforms for Gawura students is paid by donors.

## Co-curricular activities

Gawura students join St Andrew's Cathedral School primary students for all sports and co-curricular activities, including music and outdoor education.

At the beginning of each term, students are invited to enrol in one or more of the

many extra curricular activities offered, with the support of our generous donors. Along with the various music ensembles, these activities include: philosophy club, homework club, maths club, fitness fundamentals, chess club, book club, code camp, Theatresports, Chinese Eisteddfod, Christian fellowship and a variety of training afternoons for students involved in Saturday sport competitions.

## Music

St Andrew's Cathedral School started out more than 130 years ago as a choir school and has carried on that tradition, with the learning of music being very much a part of general school activities. Students receive an hour of classroom music per week, taught by specialist music teachers.

Many Kindergarten to Year 6 students also undertake individual tuition with one or more of the numerous vocal or instrumental tutors at the school. Students who are learning a string, wind or brass instrument are also encouraged to join an ensemble, which supplements and extends the work covered in their individual lessons.

Ensembles and individuals are provided with a range of performance opportunities during the school year, including weekly concerts and our annual Showcase concert at Sydney Town Hall.

Students are able to take lessons and hire instruments from the school. The cost of this is paid for by our donors.

## Visual Arts

Gawura students have weekly Visual Arts classes, taught by a dedicated Visual Arts teacher. Students also learn the style and practice of Indigenous painting.

## Sport

Our Kindergarten to Year 6 sport program focuses on the development of fundamental movement skills. K-2 students participate in gymnastics and swimming programs to provide foundational skills. Students in



Years 3 - 6 focus on developing a range of skills in a different sport each term. Sports included are Auskick, gymnastics, tennis, AFL, touch football, football, netball, Tee-ball, cricket, volleyball and athletics.

Students in Years 4 – 6 are invited to participate in seasonal weekly inter-school competitions provided by ASISSA (an inter-school sporting association). All Years 3-6 students participate in the school's three major carnivals for swimming, cross country and athletics.

### Outdoor education

Students from Kindergarten to Year 6 attend an outdoor education program once each year. Each program has the primary aim of enabling students to challenge themselves mentally and physically and to build strong, lasting friendships. Students in Years 3–6 attend multiple-day camps at the school's own Outdoor Education Centre in the Southern Highlands with the Junior School.

The focus in the primary ages is to have fun and give these young students a taste of the Australian bush, with time away from the normal comforts and security of home, together with some small outdoor recreation skill development.

*The camp is run by the school's own outdoor education staff.*

### Additional health screening

Gawura organises to have dental, optical and hearing assessments completed for each student, every three years.





# How Gawura is funded

## The generosity of Gawura's corporate and individual donors enables the school to offer scholarships to all students

The operating costs of Gawura are substantial, in part because of our very small class sizes. We are proud to offer students everything they need to succeed at school so that all students can participate fully in the life of Gawura and St Andrew's Cathedral School.

For Kindergarten to Year 6 Gawura students, 80 per cent of the cost of their education is government-funded. The additional 20 per cent is donated by generous donors, foundations, local companies and SACS families.

Gawura secondary students do not get the same level of government assistance to attend school, with 90 per cent of their school fees at St Andrew's Cathedral School being paid by private donors, foundations and local companies.

The support of our generous donors means that we can take students on their annual On Country tour and also on a cultural excursion each term. Donors pay for uniforms, emergency lunches, music lessons, assist with the running of the bus and pay for our annual NAIDOC Assembly and other cultural learning. When the need arises, donors occasionally pay for specialist services such as occupational and speech therapy, as well as music lessons and co-curricular activities.

Our donors and supporters also provide students with careers advice and help, opportunities to attend special events and tickets to cultural activities. Without the support of every volunteer, organisation and donor, our Gawura School would not operate.

## Volunteers

Gawura is very fortunate to have many volunteers. Most serve with the Volunteer Reading Program held each morning in the classroom before school. Volunteers come from all walks of life. Some are current parents of our Gawura School, Junior School, Middle School and Senior College. Some are retired teachers who still like to give back to the community. Many work for our corporate sponsors and donors, who encourage their employees to volunteer their time to help our community.

All volunteers must have a Working With Children Check (WWCC) and complete a St Andrew's Cathedral School Staff Induction, which informs them about our school's policies and procedures.

## How to volunteer

To volunteer your time, please sign up online at [Gawura.nsw.edu.au](http://Gawura.nsw.edu.au) (click on the 'Volunteer' tab). Alternatively, you can call Catherine Gunning on 9286 9500.







# Gawura School:

Located within St Andrew's Cathedral School in Sydney's CBD, Gawura is a Kindergarten to Year 6 day school for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students.

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