



Djerriwarrh  
Community College

# Annual Report 2024



# Acknowledgement of Country

Djerriwarrh Community College acknowledges the Wurundjeri - Wathaurong People as the Traditional Owners of the land, skies and waterways on which our school is located. We acknowledge that sovereignty was never ceded.



## Diversity Statement

At Djerriwarrh Community College, we are not all the same, and that is our greatest strength. We value our diversity in who we are and our life experiences. We support all members of our community and celebrate our differences.

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The College is committed to supporting every student to reach their personal, social, and educational potential. Through a trauma-informed and strengths-based approach, we equip students with the tools to reflect, set goals, plan for their futures, and build the skills needed for lifelong learning.

Both the VPC and VM pathways provide valuable learning experiences through vocational education, structured work placements, and community engagement. These certificates support students to build practical skills and confidence as they prepare for further education, training, or employment.

At the College, we foster a culture of high expectations, continuous improvement, and personalised support. Our staff are committed to delivering evidence-based practice, ongoing professional learning, and data-informed decision-making to enhance student outcomes.

The College was officially registered with the Victorian Registration and Qualifications Authority in 2020. It is an initiative of Djerriwarrh Community & Education Services (DCES), led by CEO Trish Heffernan, and forms part of the broader organisational structure of DCES.



## School Background and Context

Djerriwarrh Community College is an independent, specialist senior secondary school located in Melton, delivering the Victorian Pathways Certificate (VPC) and the VCE Vocational Major (VM) to young people aged 15–19 years. The College provides a safe, inclusive, and flexible learning environment for students who have disengaged, or are at risk of disengaging, from mainstream education.



# School Council Chair's Report

**It is with immense pride that I present the School Council Chair's Report for 2024, reflecting on another year of steady governance, strategic planning, and student success at Djerriwarrh Community College.**

Firstly, I would like to extend my sincere gratitude to our student representatives on the School Council, Bailey Long and Erin Davies. Their insights, contributions and commitment to representing the student body have been invaluable and informed the College's decision-making processes. Student participation in decisions helps shape the school's student-centred culture that prioritises student achievement, growth, and wellbeing.



**Peter Blunden**  
School Council Chair  
Djerriwarrh Community College

The governance of the College remains strong, guided by our strategic planning framework and our partnership with DCES and its Board. This continues to shape the strategic direction of the school. This year, we have remained steadfast in our commitment to provide a community college that encourages and inspires students to take control of their own learning and lives. Our new 2025 strategic plan, I am sure will continue to include these important principles.

A major highlight this year has been the funding and planning for our purpose-built new school building. Construction will begin in 2025. This is exciting step forward for the College providing a facility that supports our approach to student learning, personal development, and pathways in life. Importantly, it will also provide a needed education resource for the Melton community.

Positive student outcomes is a primary goal. I congratulate our students who have successfully completed the Victorian Certificate of Education – VM and VPC. These students have shown determination, resilience, and dedication to their studies. We are incredibly proud of their achievements. They are now taking their next steps into employment, apprenticeships, and further studies. We wish them every success in their future endeavours.

We believe that education does not end with school but is a lifelong journey. Our goal is to instil a love of learning in our students that will continue to guide them throughout their lives. Whether pursuing further education, entering the workforce, participating in community, or embracing new opportunities, we welcome and invite our graduate students to stay connected.

This will be my last Chair's report as I will be retiring from College Council. I give my heartfelt thanks to our principal Amy Farrell and our acting principal Jamie Ozga. Their dedicated leadership ensures that the school will have a long and successful future. I also thank our College Councillors, staff, families, and the broader school community for their resolute support and collaboration in making Djerriwarrh a place where students can learn, grow, and connect. Thank you all for your continued work and support.

It will be with immense pride and pleasure to witness the continued development of our school and the personal success of our students.

# Principal's Welcome

**2024 was a year of growth, achievement, and preparation for an exciting future at Djerriwarrh Community College. With a clear focus on student-centred learning and community connection, the College continued to build strong foundations for student success while planning for the next chapter in its development.**



**Amy Farrell**  
Principal  
Djerriwarrh Community College



**Jamie Ozga**  
Acting Principal  
Djerriwarrh Community College

Throughout the year, the College maintained a strong emphasis on fostering a supportive and inclusive learning environment. A significant highlight was the implementation of School-Wide Positive Behaviour Support and the Respectful Relationships programs, both led with passion and expertise by Learning Specialist, Lucy Dowell. These initiatives have strengthened the College's whole-school approach to wellbeing and engagement.

Another major focus for 2024 was the planning and preparation for a new purpose-built school facility. The new building will reflect and enhance the College's commitment to flexible, inclusive, and future-focused education.

During term 4, principal Amy Farrell commenced family leave and I stepped into the Acting Principal role, ensuring the continuity of leadership and the ongoing success of the College. The College community thanks Amy for her strong leadership and acknowledges the commitment of the staff, students, and broader community during this period of transition.

The year was also marked by vibrant community events that strengthened connections across the College. A standout highlight was the Amazing Race, a day full of teamwork which was led by College teacher, Kim Snooks. The day was challenging and fun, which showcased the spirit, enthusiasm, and energy of the students and staff.

Student achievement remained a central focus. The College celebrated a particularly strong year for its senior students, achieving a 100% completion rate for students undertaking the Victorian Certificate of Education – (VM). This exceptional result reflects the resilience, hard work, and determination of the students, supported by the dedicated staff team.

At the end-of-year graduation ceremony, individual student excellence was celebrated through the presentation of the following awards:

## **Accountability Award – Erin Davis**

Erin consistently demonstrates a strong sense of responsibility in all areas of school life.

## **Respect Award – Brodie Plumridge**

Brodie treats others with kindness, fairness, and dignity.

## **Academic Achievement Award – Chloe Hutchison**

Chloe consistently produces work of outstanding quality, demonstrates critical thinking, and actively seeks opportunities to extend her learning.

The College is incredibly proud of all its students for their achievements throughout 2024.

Special acknowledgment is also given to student representatives Bailey Long and Erin Davies, whose leadership and contributions on the Student Representative Council and School Council this year have been invaluable.

As Djerriwarrh Community College moves into 2025, there is a strong sense of optimism, excitement, and commitment to continuing the work of empowering every student to learn, grow, and connect.

The College would also like to thank the College School Council and DCES Board for their ongoing support throughout the year.

# Governance

## School Council

DCES Board



**Peter Blunden,  
Chair**

Peter brings over 35 years of leadership experience in education and local government, primarily in Melbourne’s western region. He was the principal of Kurunjang Secondary College and later led community and lifelong learning initiatives with the City of Melton, helping Melton become Australia’s first UNESCO Learning City. Peter has extensive governance experience, having served as Chair and Deputy Chair of the Brimbank Melton Local Learning and Employment Network, Executive Officer and Chair of Melton City Council’s Community Learning Board, and Secretary of the Djerriwarrh Community and Education Services Board for 17 years. He is currently the Chair of Djerriwarrh Community College’s School Council.



**Don Nardella,  
Treasurer**

Don served as the Member of Parliament for the Melton seat from 1999 to 2018. He joined Djerriwarrh to support its purpose of providing life-changing educational opportunities and building social capital within the community. Don is passionate about helping individuals and families thrive, aligning closely with Djerriwarrh’s values.



**Meg Clements,  
School Council Member**

Meg is an experienced executive leader with a diverse background spanning government, not-for-profit, and private sectors. She has held senior roles in corporate services, human resources, and social policy. Meg is passionate about strengthening communities by empowering people within organisations to reach their full potential at work.



**Erin Davies,  
School Council Member**

Erin is the student representative on the Djerriwarrh Community College School Council. A lifelong Melton local, Erin joined the college in 2022 and is currently completing the VCE Vocational Major. She is also an active member of the Student Representative Council, contributing to student voice and leadership within the school community.



**Tony Kopestenski,  
School Council Member**

Tony is the parent representative on the Djerriwarrh Community College School Council and has his child attends the College.



**Paula Reynolds,  
School Council Member**

Paula is the staff representative on the Djerriwarrh Community College School Council and works as the Education Support Coordinator at the College. A Melton local for nearly a decade, Paula is a passionate advocate for disability inclusion.



**Bailey Long,  
School Council Member**

Bailey is the student representative on the Djerriwarrh Community College School Council. Originally from Geelong, Bailey moved to Melton a few years ago and enrolled at the College in 2022. Currently completing the VCE Vocational Major, Bailey is also an active member of the Student Representative Council, contributing to student leadership and voice.

**The School Council is a subcommittee of the DCES Board and would like to thank the Board for their ongoing support.**

## DCES Board

**Christine Pilbeam,  
Chair**

**Stuart Deagan,  
Deputy Chair**

**Don Nardella,  
Secretary**

**Denise Lumsden,  
Treasurer**

**Jeremie Nguyen,  
Director**

**Meg Clements,  
Director**


**Jane Trevaskis,  
Director**

**Aaron  
Valasinavicius,  
Director**

# Vision


To provide a community college that encourages and inspires students to reach their individual personal, social and educational potential.

# Values




**Caring**

We provide a safe and supportive learning environment for all students.




**Inclusive**

We put the needs of our students first and welcome diversity in our school community.




**Respectful**

We treat all members of our school community fairly and equally.



**Accountable**

We take responsibility for our decisions and follow through on our commitments.




**Adaptable**

We respond to students needs in creative and flexible ways.

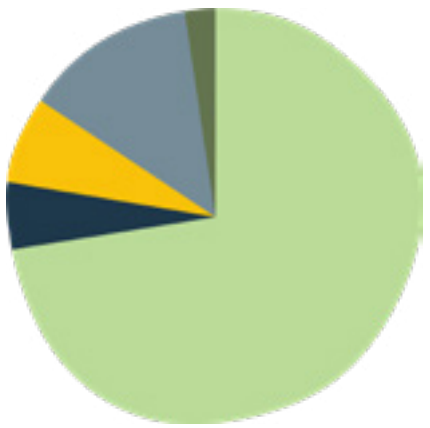
# Financials

Revenue



Federal Government Funding	75.4%
State Government Funding	20.1%
Other Funding	4.5%

Expenditure from Operating Activities



Staff Salaries & On-costs	72.3%
Curriculum	4.9%
Student Safety & Welfare	6.1%
Facilities & Resources	13.9%
Governance & Compliance	2.8%

Federal Government Funding	75.4%	\$1,773,640
State Government Funding	20.1%	\$472,471
Other Funding	4.5%	\$104,852
<b>Total Revenue</b>		<b>\$2,350,963</b>

Staff Salaries & On-costs	72.3%	\$1,358,102
Curriculum	4.9%	\$91,585
Student Safety & Welfare	6.1%	\$115,242
Facilities & Resources	13.9%	\$261,442
Governance & Compliance	2.8%	\$51,936
<b>Total Operating Expenditure</b>		<b>\$1,878,307</b>
<b>Total Operating Surplus</b>		<b>\$472,656</b>



# Students Characteristics

As of August 2024, the College recorded 44.6 full-time equivalent (FTE) student enrolments, a slight increase from 43.4 FTE in August 2023.

Figure 1 provides a breakdown of student gender identities in 2024.

In addition, 8.7% of students identified as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander, as shown in Figure 2. This reflects the College’s continued commitment to fostering a culturally safe, respectful, and inclusive environment for all students.

Figure 1:  
Gender Identities of  
Students (2024)

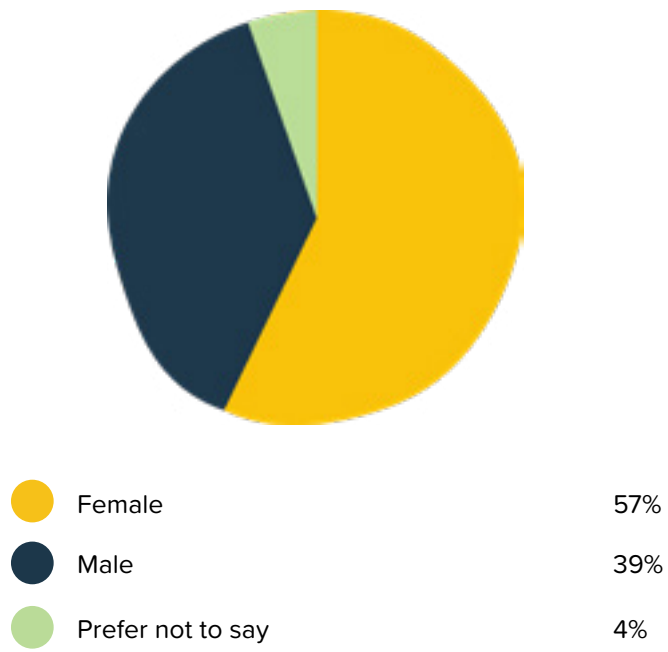
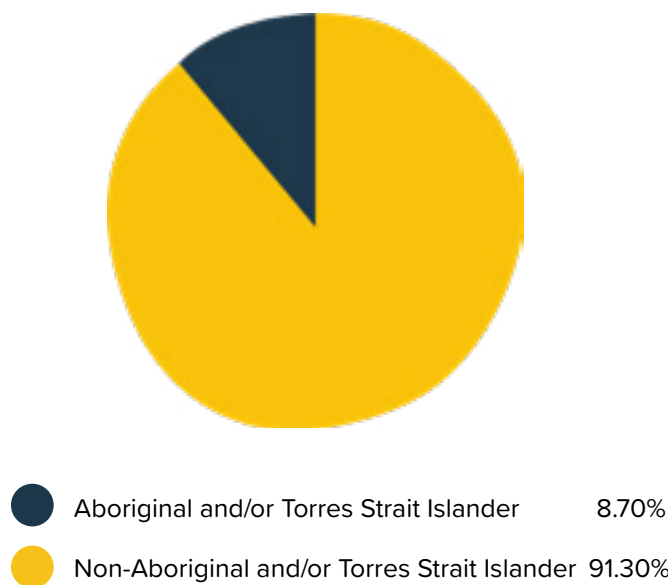


Figure 2:  
Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait  
Islander Student Enrolments (2024)



# Statement of Commitment to Child Safety

**Djerriwarrh Community College is committed to the safety and wellbeing of children and young people. Our school community recognises the importance of, and the responsibility of ensuring our school is a safe and supportive environment that respects and fosters the dignity and self-esteem of all young people attending the College.**

This Child Safety Code of Conduct outlines appropriate standards of behaviour for all adults towards students. The Code serves to protect students, reduce any opportunities for abuse or harm to occur, and promotes child safety in the College environment. It provides guidance on how to best support students and how to avoid or better manage difficult situations.

**We have zero tolerance for child abuse.**

The College is committed to providing a child safe environment where children and young people are safe and feel safe, and their voices are heard about decisions that affect their lives. Particular attention will be paid to the cultural safety of Aboriginal students, students with culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds, students with a disability, international students, students who are unable to live at home and lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex (LGBTIQ+) students.

Every person involved in Djerriwarrh Community College has a responsibility to understand the important and specific role they play individually and collectively to ensure that the wellbeing and safety of all children and young people is at the forefront of all they do and every decision they make.



# Student Attendance Rates

Student attendance remains a key priority at the College, as regular engagement is essential for academic progress, wellbeing, and future pathways. As shown in Table 1, attendance rates vary across year levels and continue to be an area of focus for the College.

To support improved attendance, the College implements a range of strategies including monitoring attendance data to identify patterns of non-attendance, providing tailored wellbeing support, maintaining close communication with families, and collaborating with external agencies to address barriers. Staff ensure accurate record-keeping and respond promptly to any concerns related to student safety or wellbeing.

Through a safe, inclusive, and flexible learning environment, the College remains committed to helping all students re-engage in education and attend consistently.

Year Level	Attendance Rate
VPC	65%
VM 1	55%
VM 2	56%
Whole school	59%

Table 1  
Student Attendance Rates for 2024

# Staffing

Staff at the College are deeply committed to supporting students to build resilience, grow in confidence, and thrive in their personal and educational journeys. They foster a caring, respectful, and inclusive environment where all students, staff, and community members feel valued and supported.

Further details can be found in Figure 3: Staffing Composition 2024.

In 2024, no staff members identified as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander.

The teaching staff is comprised of 88% female and 12% male educators.

Table 2 provides a summary of the FTE of staff.

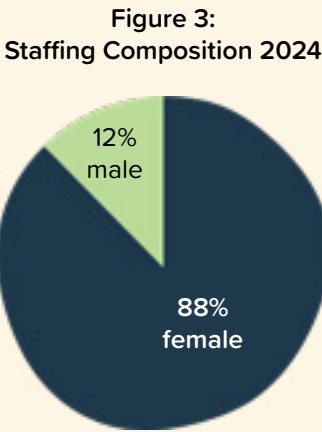


Table 2  
FTE summary of staff

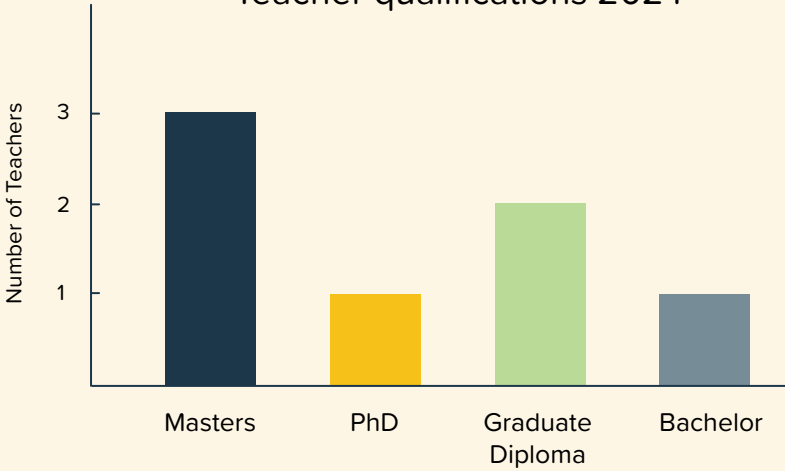
Role	FTE
Principal	1.0
Assistant Principal	1.0
Youth Worker	1.0
Teacher	1.0
Teacher	1.0
Teacher	0.6
Teacher	0.4
Administration	1.0
Education Support Worker	1.0
Education Support Worker	0.8
Education Support Worker	0.8
Education Support Worker	0.8
Compliance Manager	0.2
Finance Manager	0.4
IT Manager	0.4

## Teacher Qualifications

To be registered to teach in Victoria, teachers need to be registered with the Victorian Institute of Teaching (VIT) and meet the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers. All teachers at the College hold a current registration with VIT and meet the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers. All non-teaching staff hold a Working with Children Clearance (WWCC).

The College employs seven teachers, all holding formal university qualifications. Among them, three staff members hold a Master's degree, one holds a PhD, two have completed a Graduate Diploma, and one holds a Bachelor's degree. This reflects the College's commitment to employing highly qualified staff to support student learning and outcomes.

Figure 4: Teacher qualifications 2024





# Staff Profile



**Lucy Dowell**  
Learning Specialist  
School-Wide Positive Behaviour Support (SWPBS)

I joined the College in 2024, bringing over 14 years of experience in mainstream education as an English and Psychology teacher, and as a pastoral leader in student wellbeing.

At the College, I lead the SWPBS initiative, designing and implementing strategies to promote our positive behaviour expectations. I also coach teaching staff to develop skills in creating safe and engaging learning environments. My focus in this area include student collaboration, restorative practices, counter-trauma approaches, and understanding how nervous system regulation impacts behaviour. In my time at the College so far, I have expanded my knowledge in supporting students' behaviour and social-emotional development and have enjoyed integrating the

Berry Street Education Model into my teaching.

In addition to overseeing SWPBS, I teach VPC and VM Literacy, and lead the Respectful Relationships implementation team, promoting a culture of respect, inclusion, and emotional safety. I am passionate about helping students build and maintain healthy relationships. One of the highlights of the College for me is the small school community, which allows me to interact with and get to know every student - something that is harder to achieve in larger schools.

Originally from Tasmania, I now live in the Macedon Ranges. Outside of work, I enjoy powerlifting and watching as many movies as I can, from blockbusters to arthouse.



# Teaching and Learning

In 2024, we successfully completed the rollout of the VM and VPC, a two-year vocational and applied learning program designed to support students as they transition into apprenticeships, traineeships, further education and training, or directly into the workforce.

As part of their studies in core subjects, all students participated in a Vocational Education and Training (VET). For the first time, students were offered a choice between two on-site VET options: Active Volunteering and Hospitality. In addition, several students enrolled in external VET programs, including Animal Studies, Beauty, and Carpentry.

During Semester 1, our Professional Learning Community (PLCs) focused on enhancing the consistent use of the College's instructional model. This followed an internal review that revealed gaps in application of the model. Targeted professional development sessions were delivered, and staff received individual coaching from Learning Specialist Lucy Dowell and Assistant Principal Jeanette Williams.







## SWPBS

In 2024, the College launched the SWPBS team to promote a structured, values-based approach to behaviour support. The team developed an Implementation Plan, reviewed and updated current policies, and introduced a comprehensive Behaviour Matrix after engaging in consultations with both staff and students. Key initiatives included refining behaviour management protocols, increasing recognition of positive behaviours through Compass and tangible rewards, and improving the system for tracking incidents to ensure timely and effective follow-up.

In term 3, the PLC team piloted a new Behaviour Support Flow Chart as part of the SWPBS rollout. This tool was created in collaboration with staff, students, and Okay Therapy—an external organisation specialising in supporting individual wellbeing. Feedback from this consultation informed several revisions before the chart was trialled in classrooms. The feedback was overwhelmingly positive, with many noting that the updated flow chart is better aligned with the needs of our classrooms and supports our learners more effectively.



# Student Engagement and Wellbeing

## Student Voice and Agency

Empowering student voice and agency continued to be a strong focus. Through meaningful participation in decision-making and student-led initiatives, students demonstrated ownership, leadership, and pride in their learning environment.

Two student representatives from the College actively participated in School Council meetings throughout the year, providing valuable insights and feedback on student experiences and school culture. Their contributions shaped discussions around school improvement, and they advocated for more inclusive spaces and increased opportunities for student engagement. Notably, they shared:

*“What this school does really well is it makes us feel comfortable to tell the truth. This is a better environment.”*

A highlight of the Student Representative Council was the student-led and initiated cupcake decorating event. The initiative encouraged social connection and wellbeing, and was well received by both staff and students. It provided a relaxed setting for students to connect, de-stress, and support each other.

Through these initiatives, students demonstrated increased confidence, teamwork, and leadership. The College is proud of the students' voices being heard and valued, and we remain committed to providing authentic opportunities that empower them to shape their school experiences.





# Careers and Pathways

## Post-school Destinations

As a result of our robust career support programs and dedicated initiatives, we have a wide variety of pathways in 2024, **33% of our graduating students have successfully enrolled in TAFE courses**. These students will pursue studies at renowned institutions such as Victoria Univerity, Victoria Polytechnic, Djerriwarrh Community and Education Services, and The Gordon Institute. Additionally, **33% of our graduates are waiting for their full-time apprenticeships**, while **33% have transitioned into part-time and full-time employment**. Popular industries for our graduates are still health, youth services, education, automotive, and the trades. These remarkable statistics underscore the effectiveness of our Career Education Program in preparing students for meaningful and sustainable careers.

The extraordinary achievements of our students stand as a testament to the power of ambition, resilience, and a strong support system. As our graduates embark on their unique journeys, we extend our warmest congratulations and unwavering encouragement. May they carry with them the knowledge that **the College remains a source of guidance, support, and advocacy** whenever they need it.

Together, let us celebrate their accomplishments and look forward to the boundless opportunities that await our graduates.

**Marianne Santos**  
Teacher and Careers & Pathways Coordinator  
Djerriwarrh Community College



of our students have successfully completed their VCE – VM

## Senior Secondary Certificates

90% of our students have successfully completed their VCE – VM. Their dedication, perseverance, and commitment to excellence have been commendable, and this milestone stands as a testament to their hard work and resilience, as well as the unwavering support from our College.

## VET

VET plays a vital role in preparing students at the College for further education, training, and employment. VET programs offer students the opportunity to develop industry-specific skills, gain hands-on experience, and build confidence in real-world settings.

In 2024, 64% of VM2 students graduated with a fully completed VET certificate, in addition to their senior secondary certificate. This significant achievement reflects the College's commitment to equipping students with practical skills and recognised qualifications that support successful post-school pathways.

By integrating VET into the senior secondary program, the College continues to strengthen student readiness for the workforce and foster long-term success beyond the classroom





# Key Career Education Highlights

## Successful School-Based Apprenticeship Program (SBAT)

2024 marks the formal and highly successful integration of the SBAT initiative. We are incredibly proud to celebrate the achievements of Dylan K and Erin D, who have successfully completed their SBAT with Melton Waves in partnership with Leisure and Employment Australia. Their exceptional performance in their respective workplaces exemplifies the synergy between academic learning and real-world training. Notably, Erin has been nominated for the **VIC School-Based Trainee of the Year Award for 2025**, highlighting the excellence and dedication of our students beyond the classroom.

## Career Expos

Our students actively participated in the **Melton Youth Careers Expo** and the **International Women's Day and Career Expo**, both of which generated excitement and inspiration among students and staff. These events provided an opportunity for students to explore a wide range of career options, engage with industry professionals, and gain valuable insights into tertiary education and vocational pathways.

## Careers Week

Term 3 commenced with an engaging and insightful **Careers Week**. This event was designed to provide students with deeper insights into various career pathways and opportunities, ensuring alignment with their interests and aspirations. To enhance the relevance of this event, we invited representatives from Registered Training Organisations and TAFE institutions. We extend our sincere gratitude to Ballarat VET Highlands Cluster, Winslow Constructions, Academy of Interactive Entertainment, Victoria University, and Djerriwarrh Community and Education Services for their invaluable contributions.

# Opinion Surveys

## Student Survey

The College conducted an anonymous student survey to gather feedback that will inform future planning and school improvement initiatives.

The results highlight a positive school environment where student safety, wellbeing, and learning are prioritised. Students acknowledged the support they receive from teachers, particularly in meeting individual learning needs and promoting academic success.

Key findings include:

- 100% of students reported that staff always or usually respond appropriately to incidents of bullying.
- 95% of students agreed or strongly agreed that they feel safe at school.
- 95% of students indicated that their parents or guardians expect them to attend school regularly.

These results reflect the College's commitment to fostering a supportive, inclusive, and high-expectation learning environment.

*Student quote: 95% of students stated that their parents/guardians expect them to attend school.*

## Parent, Carer, Guardian Survey

The College is committed to forming strong, collaborative relationships with parents, carers, and guardians. One way we strengthen these partnerships is by seeking their perspectives through regular surveys. We value their feedback as an essential part of our ongoing reflection and school improvement processes.

In 2024, the College conducted an anonymous parent, carer and guardian survey.

The results highlighted several key strengths, particularly in the area of community engagement:

- 100% of respondents agreed that they are given the opportunity to speak with teachers.
- 100% agreed that they have opportunities to find out how their child is progressing.
- 97% strongly agreed or agreed that the school uses a broad range of communication methods to keep families informed.

These findings reflect the College's strong commitment to building meaningful partnerships with families and fostering open, two-way communication to support student success.

*Parent quote: "Just glad my child is finally happy to go to school."*







Djerriwarrh  
Community College