

# Statement of Philosophy and Aims

v.2021

This Statement of Philosophy and Aims, was reviewed and formally adopted by the school's governing body on 27 June 2022.

The Kooralbyn International School's philosophy and aims, are aligned with the *Alice Springs (Mparntwe) Education Declaration* and can be embraced in three aspirations:

*Safety, Excellence and Equity.*

**Safety:** To provide a secure school environment, in which students and staff can feel confident about their safety, security and wellbeing every day. A safety-first, no-physical-contact school, where anti-bullying and respect for one another are concepts that are ingrained into our culture.

**The Quest for Excellence:** To provide a challenging yet supportive school environment in which the quest for academic, artistic, sporting and personal ('being the best that I can be') excellence is woven into the fabric and structure of the school.

**Equity:** To provide an inclusive environment where equal opportunity, self-belief and respect for others are integral parts of the school's existence. (See our Equity Pledge.)



**Discipline:** If you were to ask our past graduates, we hope that their main recollections of Kooralbyn would be to smile about the high discipline expectations the school placed upon them, combined with the genuine 'small school' friendliness, care and belief that their teachers and staff shared with them and how these two influences combined to shape them into the confident and successful young people they are today.

We believe...that a *well-disciplined yet caring environment* is the key to delivering our three aspirational goals.

*Safety* will remain only a well-intentioned aspiration, unless it is supported by clearly-communicated rules; immediate and transparent feedback to students (and parents); well-documented behaviour management processes with positive encouragement for those who seek to comply as well as real repercussions (e.g. being removed from the school) for those who fail to support the school's safety mission.

*The Quest for Excellence* is nothing more than a platitude, unless it is supported by structure, discipline and ongoing, measurable tasks and trials...guiding our students through a sequence of small achievable personal tests (like our demanding dress and uniform expectations) into far more meaningful and beneficial challenges...the kind that when achieved, foster positive, life-changing habits that build improvements in a young person's time management, work ethic, tenacity, empathy, integrity and our famous: '*being the best that you can be*' self-confidence. Integral to our *Quest for Excellence*, is the school's own student-driven curriculum (the famous **TKIS Mastery Programs**) designed to foster in our high school students, the quest for personal excellence and mastery across a broad range of sporting, artistic and career path disciplines alongside the standard QCAA Senior Studies and P-10 Australian Curriculum.

*Equity* flourishes in a friendly, 'small-school' environment that is also structured and guided by clear, compassionate expectations with transparent rules that embrace procedural justice and fairness. Being '*the best that you can be*' starts with discovering and accepting who you are and how you can make the world a better place.

This three-goal **philosophy** is supported by a day-to-day working management model that always balances strong discipline with a soft heart. This student management model (which provides continual feedback to students through what we call our **Honours System** of merits and demerits) aligns with our aspirational goals and embraces a number of practical strategies including the need to encourage in our students, the **school values** of *Tenacity, Kindness, Integrity and Self-Belief*.

Our management model also incorporates simple devices like our school **motto**: *Absol Fiducia* (absolute self-belief); our **student pledge**: *'As a Kooralbyn student I pledge, to believe in myself, and strive to be the best that I can be, because anything is possible, when I'm the best that I can be'* and a school song that is sung with the *National Anthem* and recited with the *Acknowledgement Of Country* at our weekly assemblies.

**Choice**: Families are offered a wide range of schooling options in this state, and it is true that the disciplined and challenging environment that supports our *Safety, Excellence, Equity* philosophy might not be the right choice for everyone.

There is no place at Kooralbyn, for example, for anyone who hurts, harasses, threatens, victimises or vilifies another person, regardless of the reason...even if that reason is related to the offender's disability or other attribute protected under Anti-Discrimination legislation. The promise of a safe learning-teaching environment is a fundamental responsibility of this school and an enrolment place at Kooralbyn will be removed immediately from anyone who can't help the school meet that responsibility.

In pursuit of Excellence for our students, the school has created a multi-level framework of rules and regulations that are (among other things) designed to present our students with achievable but not always popular challenges. These sometimes unpopular rules/challenges start with simple but non-negotiable expectations about uniforms and dress standards. Students who for example, seek to wear make-up, jewellery, non-approved uniform items or hair styles or anything else that is in breach of the school's strict dress code, should consider what we call: *'The price students pay to become a Kooralbian'*. Our rules and regulations extend to no-physical-contact rules, respectful behaviour rules, no swearing and no offensive language rules, having to complete homework and study rules, following teachers' instructions rules. At times our rules might feel quite restrictive for some children and teenagers. There's no hard feelings. There are plenty of other great schooling options in this state that are less disciplined-based and with less restrictive dress codes, etc. In the school's defence, parents are reminded that at Kooralbyn we believe that developing the tenacity and resilience to rise above and do the things that their peers don't *want* to do...almost guarantees Kooralbyn students' success in their chosen academic and career pathways. It is little wonder then, that Kooralbyn purposely tries to set simple challenges for our students to overcome. We have seen over the years, that when our students learn *the habit* of following rules about trivial things like a dress code, they become more likely to follow the more beneficial rules like focusing in class, doing homework, being safe and respectful, pursuing the quest for personal excellence, etc.

- The school makes an Equity Pledge, which is its commitment to all students who are prepared to take-on the school's high standards of dress, behaviour and work ethic, that it in return, will do its best to provide an environment free from classroom disruption, harassment or discrimination.
- The school fully subscribes to *The Alice Springs (Mparntwe) Education Declaration* to support the well-being, mental health and resilience of our students. Its school rules, though challenging and outwardly non-negotiable, are never intended to infringe a student's rights under state or federal Anti-Discrimination laws. The school is able to

consider case-by-case situations and will always do its best to accommodate the needs of all young people.

- If the reason for not meeting a dress code expectation (or any school rule) is purely financial, then parents should discuss the matter with the school principal. (Affordability is one of the many ways that the school seeks to be inclusive.)

Following on from the point above, Kooralbyn is a small private school that charges fees and though, for inclusivity reasons, we try to keep those fees as affordable as possible, we ARE still charging fees. As such, we have a moral/ethical duty to inform parent/carers if we don't see evidence that their child is benefitting from the small class sizes, the well-structured discipline and the commitment to teaching-learning that the school is providing and charging fees for. We do our best to motivate all our students and inspire them to actively participate in their learning, but if a student isn't participating in class to the best of their ability, isn't completing their homework and assigned home tasks to the best of their ability and (in effect) isn't 'buying what the school is selling', then we have an obligation, not only to the parents of the current student (who is not obtaining value for money) but also to the parents of the next student who might be waiting for a chance to attend Kooralbyn and who might be able to better use what the school is offering.

## Conclusion:

The school is always happy to discuss its Philosophy and Aims with current and potential families to explore whether Kooralbyn might be the right choice for you and your family.

In accordance with the *Education (Accreditation of Non-State Schools) Regulation 2017*, this Statement of Philosophy and Aims is used by the school's governing body, as the basis for the school's educational program and a guide for the school's educational and organisational practices.

Education Program: The school provides the P-10 Australian Curriculum; the QCAA Senior Secondary curriculum and allocates all discretionary timetable to its own elective Mastery Programs (in sports, arts and technology disciplines) in Grades 7-10.

The school seeks to comply with all relevant legislation, including:

- *Child Protection Reform Amendment Act 2017*
- *Education (Accreditation of Non-State Schools) Act 2017*
- *Education (Accreditation of Non-State Schools) Regulation 2017*
- *Australian Education Act 2013 (Cwlth)*
- *Education and Care Services Act 2013*
- *Work, Health & Safety Act 2011*
- *Education (General Provisions) Act 2006*
- *Copyright Amendment Act 2006*
- *Education (Queensland College of Teachers) Act 2005*
- *Surveillance Devices Act 2004*
- *Working with Children (Risk Management and Screening) Act 2000*
- *Childhood Protection Act 1999*
- *Disability Discrimination Act 1992 (Cwlth)*
- *Anti-Discrimination Act 1991*
- *Privacy Act 1988*
- *Copyright Act 1968*