

# ANNUAL REPORT 2020



# WAKAKIRRI

Australia's Largest Performing Arts Event for Schools

## MISSION STATEMENT

Wakakirri is an education program for schools that develops student engagement and wellbeing through the sharing of stories and participation in the performing arts.



# 2020 SUMMARY

2020 was shaping up to be one of the best years for Wakakirri. The 'Call for Registrations' campaign from November 2019 through to March 2020 had yielded 260 registrations of which 25 were enrolled in the Best Start program. Wakakirri had also managed to raise \$23,609 from the 2019 Donation Program meaning approximately 1000 students could participate at a subsidised rate or at no cost at all. Approximately 48 live shows were scheduled along with a Careers Day event for Secondary students in Victoria and national Masterclasses. Emma Watkins, Kat Hoyos, Andrew McFarlane and Luke Carroll were locked in as the 2020 National Panel.

In April, the lockdown and social distancing restrictions caused by COVID-19 had a devastating impact. The Wakakirri head office was shut down, all staff went onto Job Keeper and had to work from home. All Wakakirri live events were reformatted for limited audiences and rescheduled to October. During this time Wakakirri developed 'Waka in Da House,' a performing arts project for students in lockdown.

Although most students returned to school in term 3, the ongoing restrictions on public gatherings forced the cancelation of the October live events. Wakakirri schools were encouraged to instead enter Wakakirri Video. This was a viable alternative for all schools except for students in Victoria who hadn't returned to school due to their extended lockdown.

The ongoing disruptions meant Wakakirri registrations were significantly reduced (49 entries) but the quality of work and innovation by schools to produce their Wakakirri Video entries was notable. A huge positive to come out of 2020 has been the prospects for the future of the Wakakirri Video format. Other positives include a new website and style guide, an independent research project studying Wakakirri outcomes, a new school database and up grades to our school resources including Careers Day and teacher masterclasses.

Wakakirri finished the year with its annual TV special published on an upgraded Wakakirri YouTube Channel. Wakakirri had significant success on social media in 2020 with the YouTube channel attracting 78,000 views in Term 4.

2021 is set to be a challenging year for Wakakirri. Whilst restrictions are easing and venues are re-opening the prospect of a second Covid-19 wave means every plan can change at the last minute. Currently Wakakirri has plans for a Live show format with a zero audience option should that be required.

# GREAT STORIES CAN OPEN HEARTS & MINDS AND INSPIRE CHANGE

## WAKAKIRRI ASSOCIATION INC.

The Wakakirri Story-Dance Association Incorporated is a not-for-profit organisation (since 2004) that uses storytelling, the oldest form of learning, as it's focus for providing innovative educational programs to schools in a manner that resonates with contemporary youth culture.

## WHY STORIES?

Storytelling is the oldest form of learning.

*'When stories are exchanged, tellers and interpreters share their differing understandings of events and experiences. This sharing can result in rich and deep alignments. Stories provide a road to empathy, understanding and acceptance because when we share stories we become characters in our own stories as well as those of others. Simultaneously, we come to deeper knowledge of content, of others and of ourselves'* (Lowe, 2002, p. 75).

## AIM

- To provide an education program for schools that develops student engagement and wellbeing through the sharing of stories and participation in the performing arts.

## OUTCOMES

- An exchange of cultural expression and understanding between schools and communities across Australia
- Increased student awareness of community issues including bullying, mental and physical health, homelessness, and the environment.
- Development of students' self esteem, educational outcomes and healthy lifestyle choices in a manner that resonates with contemporary youth culture
- Providing Australian communities with an understanding and respect for Indigenous cultures through the process of sharing of stories
- A hands on learning approach to sustainability

# WAKAKIRRI STORY- DANCE ASSOCIATION INC.

## 2020 COMMITTEE MEMBERS



**PRESIDENT**  
DARREN TASKER  
Management Consultant



**VICE  
PRESIDENT**  
MATTHEW SAMUEL  
Co-Founder of Wakakirri



**TREASURER**  
GERRY GILCHRIST  
Accountant



**TEACHER REP**  
VALERIE HARROLD  
Primary Teacher

## FESTIVAL DIRECTOR



ADAM LOXLEY

## FESTIVAL PATRON



PROFESSOR TOM CALMA AO



# EVENTS

## WAKAKIRRI LIVE

Performing in Wakakirri Live is an experience students never forget. Schools spend Show Day rehearsing and meeting other schools and that same night walk the Red Carpet with the Panel Reps and perform on the big stage. Every schools' story is filmed for Wakakirri TV as part of the search for 'Story of the Year'.

## WAKAKIRRI VIDEO

Schools that cannot make it to a Wakakirri live venue can send their entry in by video. Wakakirri Video takes all the traditional aspects of a Wakakirri performance and incorporates them into a creatively filmed and edited end product!

## FOR ALL SCHOOLS

Wakakirri is open to ALL students from Primary, Secondary and Dance schools nationally. Students with all levels of experience can participate. An emphasis is also placed on creative movement and drama rather than technical dance.

## EVENT DESCRIPTION

DOES YOUR SCHOOL HAVE A STORY TO TELL? A great story can change the way people think about the world around them. Wakakirri is a performing arts festival where schools aim to do just that.

WHAT IS A STORY-DANCE? A Wakakirri Story-Dance is a 3-7 minute performance by a group of students that theatrically tells a story using a combination of dancing, acting and creative movement to pre-recorded music. Schools can tell any story and use any combination of dance, creative movement, acting, music, props, costumes, sets, and in some cases; film, projections and singing. The possibilities are endless! Schools are also able to incorporate the annual signature item into their story for an extra challenge and every school's story is filmed for Wakakirri TV as part of the search for 'Story of the Year'.



## 2020 SIGNATURE ITEM (DRAGON)

**Each year Wakakirri has a different Signature Item. Schools are encouraged to incorporate this item into their Wakakirri entry in a creative way.**

# SCHOOL PARTICIPATION

## 2020

## 2019

### LIVE

	PRIMARY	SECONDARY	DANCE	TOTAL
ACT	0	0	0	0
NSW	0	0	0	0
QLD	0	0	0	0
SA	0	0	0	0
TAS	0	0	0	0
VIC	0	0	0	0
WA	0	0	0	0
TOTAL	0	0	0	0

	PRIMARY	SECONDARY	DANCE	TOTAL
ACT	15	0	0	15
NSW	74	17	0	91
QLD	42	3	0	45
SA	35	3	0	38
TAS	0	0	0	0
VIC	46	19	0	65
WA	18	2	0	20
TOTAL	230	44	0	274

### VIDEO

	PRIMARY	SECONDARY	DANCE	TOTAL
ACT	2	1	0	3
NSW	5	5	0	10
QLD	9	0	0	9
SA	12	0	0	12
TAS	2	2	0	4
VIC	3	2	4	9
WA	1	1	0	2
TOTAL	34	11	4	49

	PRIMARY	SECONDARY	DANCE	TOTAL
ACT	0	0	0	0
NSW	1	0	0	1
QLD	1	0	0	1
SA	3	0	0	3
TAS	3	3	0	6
VIC	1	0	0	1
WA	3	0	0	3
TOTAL	12	3	0	15



# STUDENT PARTICIPATION

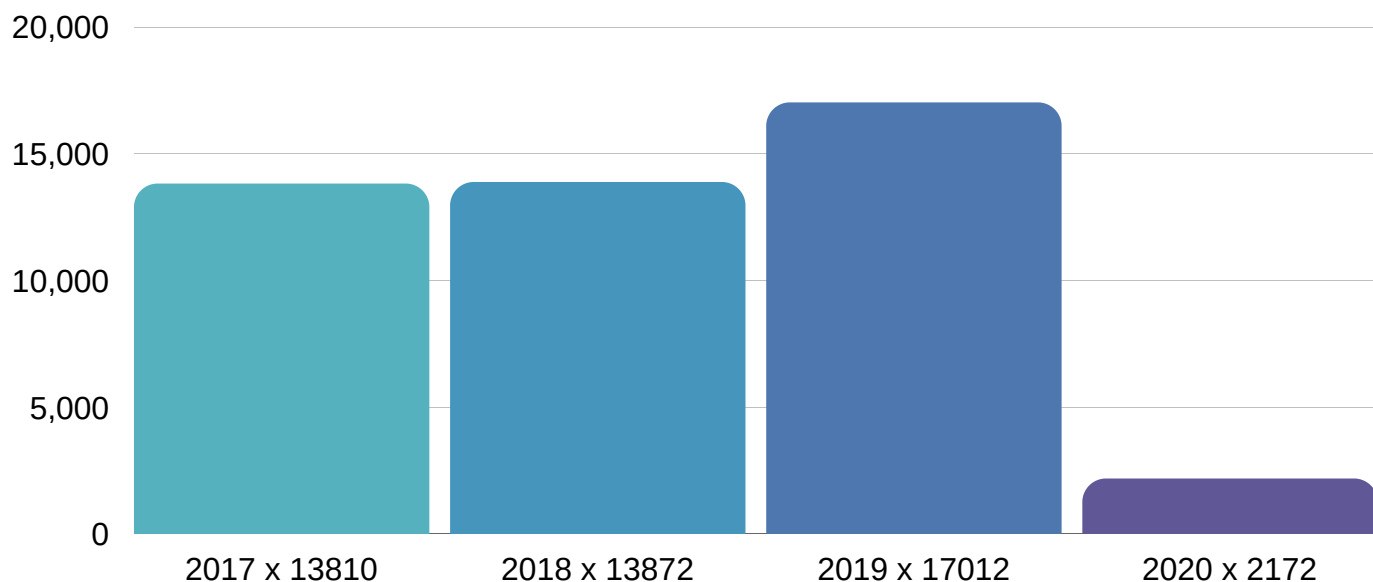
## 2020

## 2019

	PRIMARY	SECONDARY	DANCE	TOTAL
ACT	109	56	0	165
NSW	319	110	0	429
QLD	396	55	0	451
SA	722	0	0	722
TAS	80	33	0	113
VIC	160	54	32	246
WA	35	11	0	46
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>1821</b>	<b>319</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>2172</b>

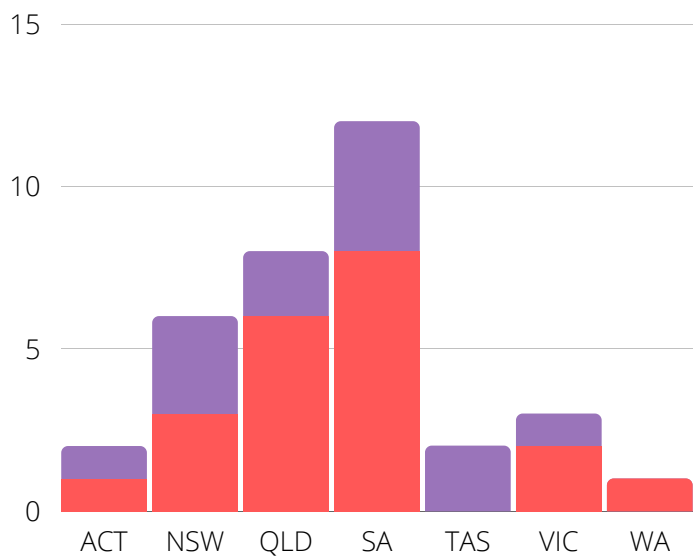
	PRIMARY	SECONDARY	DANCE	TOTAL
ACT	769	0	0	769
NSW	5255	903	0	6158
QLD	2571	123	0	2694
SA	2243	55	0	2298
TAS	365	36	0	401
VIC	2609	749	138	3496
WA	1157	39	0	1196
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>14969</b>	<b>1905</b>	<b>138</b>	<b>17012</b>

## TOTAL STUDENTS



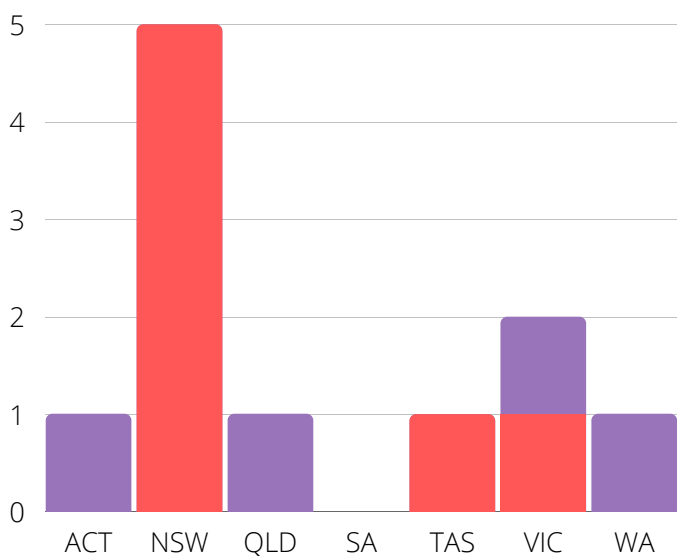
# SCHOOL STATISTICS

## PUBLIC VS PRIVATE



PRIVATE  
PUBLIC

### PRIMARY



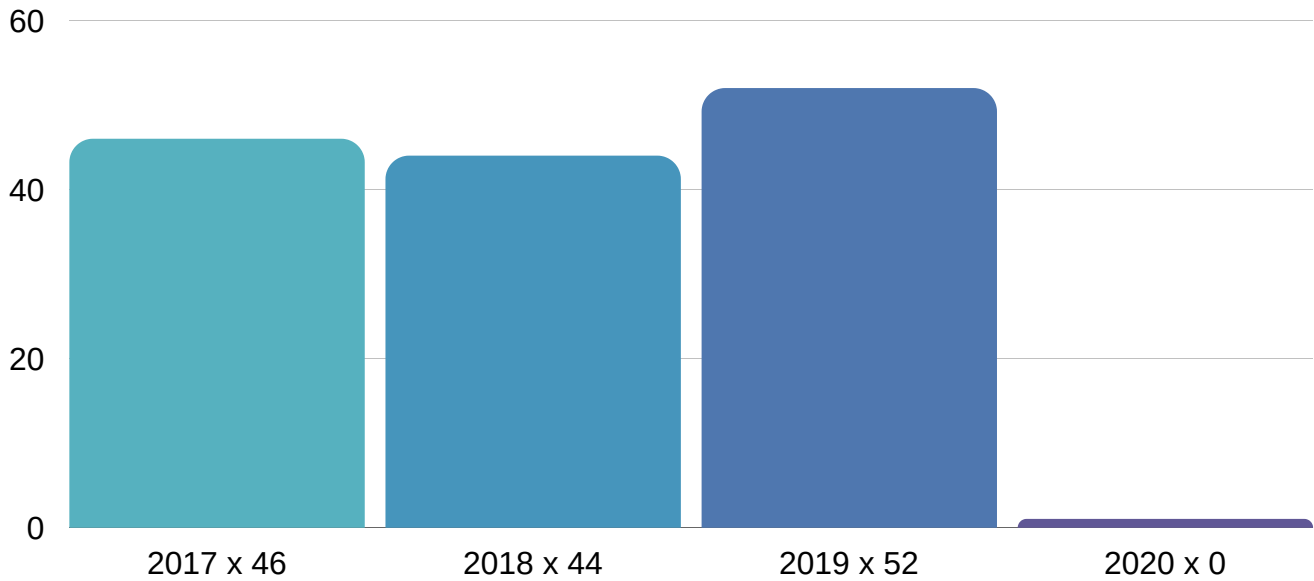
PRIVATE  
PUBLIC

### SECONDARY

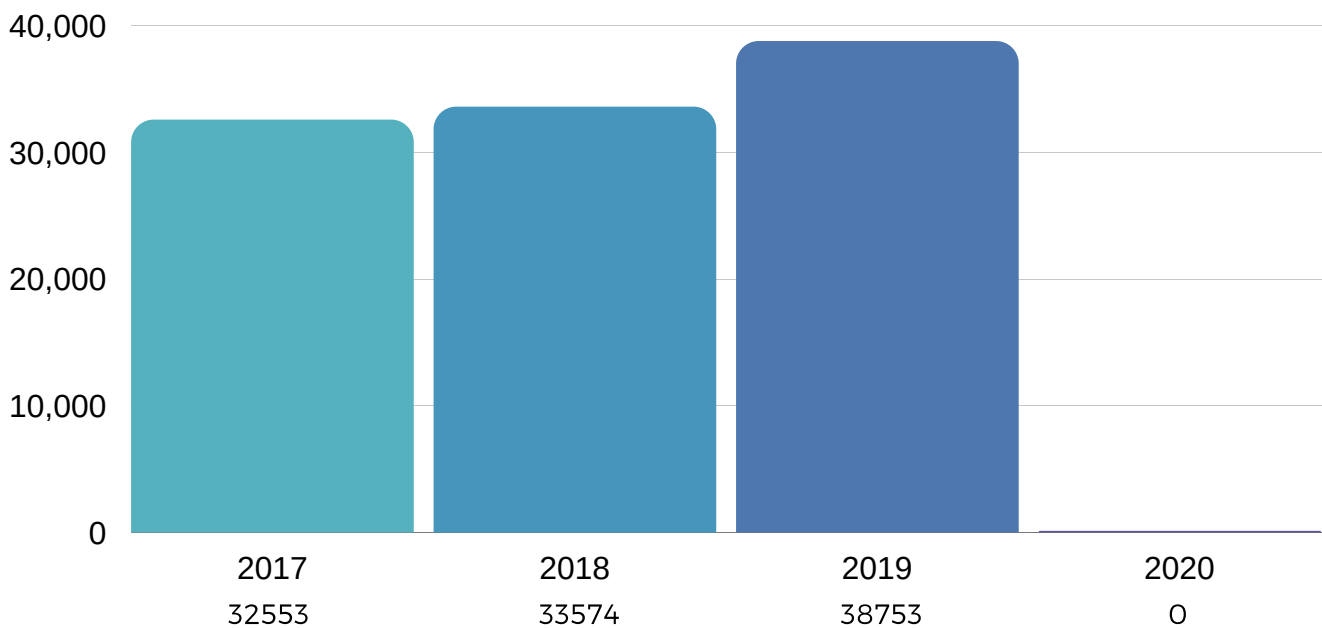


# VENUES & DATES

## SHOWS



## AUDIENCE



# 2020 SPONSORS & PARTNERS

## MAJOR PARTNERS



## SUPPORTING PARTNERS



### DANCE PARTNERS

- Footsteps Dance Company
- Jason Coleman's Ministry of Dance

### MEDIA PARTNER

- Dancetrain Magazine

### MUSIC PARTNER

- Australian Children's Music Foundation

### PRIZE PARTNERS

- Biome Eco Stores Australia
- Enhance TV
- Sennheiser
- Costumes Without Drama
- Pan Macmillan
- Studio 7 Dancewear
- Schoolyard Stories



# 2020 NATIONAL PANEL

## LEAD PANEL



### KAT HOYOS

Kat is an accomplished actor, singer and dancer who was nominated for a Most Popular Actress in the 2018 TV Week Logie Awards for her role in Here Come The Habibs. Kat has performed on stage in shows such as Jersey Boys, Xanadu, Bring It on, Fame and Hairspray. In 2021, Kat is starring in the new Channel 9 drama “Amazing Grace”.



### EMMA WATKINS

Emma Watkins is best known for her role as the yellow Wiggle and the first female in The Wiggles, the world’s favourite children’s entertainment group. The effervescent singing, dancing, drum playing, French speaking, bow wearing Wiggle has charmed audiences across the globe and is a passionate advocate for sign language.



### ANDREW MCFARLANE

Andrew has had an extensive career in film & television. He has starred in some of Australia’s most successful TV dramas including The Sullivans, Home & Away, Neighbours, and Underbelly: A Tale of Two Cities. Andrew is a regular presenter on PlaySchool for the ABC.



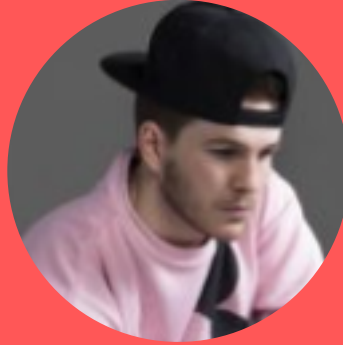
### LUKE CARROLL

Luke Carroll is a seasoned theatre, film and television performer and has been nominated for several AACTA Awards. Stage credits are many and include Black is the New White, The Torrents, The Harp in the South and The Cake Man (Helpmann nominated). Luke’s screen credits include the upcoming Upright, the recent Total Control, as well as Redfern Now, R.A.N, Australian Rules, The Gods of Wheat Street, Heartbeat, The Alice, Stingers, All Saints and Water Rats.

# PANEL MEMBERS



**ALEX  
PAPPS**



**JAMES  
ELMER**



**JUSTINE  
CLARKE**



**MICHALA  
BANAS**



**JASON  
COLEMAN**



**KRISTIN  
AGNOLI**



**RACHAEL  
BECK**



**PETRA  
GLIESON**



**TODD  
MCKENNEY**

# 2020 STORY OF THE YEAR WINNERS

## SCREEN CHALLENGE

### PRIMARY

NEWTOWN NORTH PUBLIC SCHOOL, NSW

### SECONDARY

THE PONDS HIGH SCHOOL, NSW



#### AWARDS

- Story of the Year
- Best Biographical Story Award



#### AWARDS

- Story of the Year
- Best Comedy Story Award

"A well layered piece with an excellent dramatic opening scene to grab your audience."

- Petra Glieson

#### GRETA

The kids are coming! We tell the story of internationally recognised environmental activist Greta Thunberg and highlight what Greta describes as her superpower of Aspergers.

"Terrifically entertaining story with outstanding performances and production quality!"

- Petra Glieson

#### WEDNESDAY AT SCHOOL

Chaos is unleashed when Wednesday Addams enters a normal school classroom. Upon the teacher calling Morticia for assistance, the mayhem takes an unexpected turn.



# 2020 STORY OF THE YEAR WINNERS

## VIDEO CHALLENGE

### PRIMARY

**WHITEFRIARS SCHOOL,  
SA**

#### AWARDS

- Story of the Year
- Best Blockbuster Story Award



"Powerhouse performances, excellent staging and set design all to support great storytelling"  
- Petra Glieson

#### THROUGH THE SMOKE

A dragon awakens and its fire licks around the mountains. Firefighters appear 'through the smoke', to fight the dragon and save the community.

### SECONDARY

**DARAMALAN COLLEGE,  
ACT**

#### AWARDS

- Story of the Year
- Best Adapted Story Award



"What a fun and colourful spectacle your audience is invited to enjoy!"  
- Petra Glieson

A LIFE LIVED IN FEAR IS A LIFE HALF-LIVED  
Open the doors and enter the Daramalan ballroom, a place where sequins and feathers dazzle, mirrors glide, feet stamp and love is in the air!

# DONATION PROGRAM

The Wakakirri Donation Program raises funds to help schools in disadvantaged communities to participate in Wakakirri. Any school can apply for funds, they simply need a letter from their Principal outlining their request.

Schools can apply for funding which can be spent on;

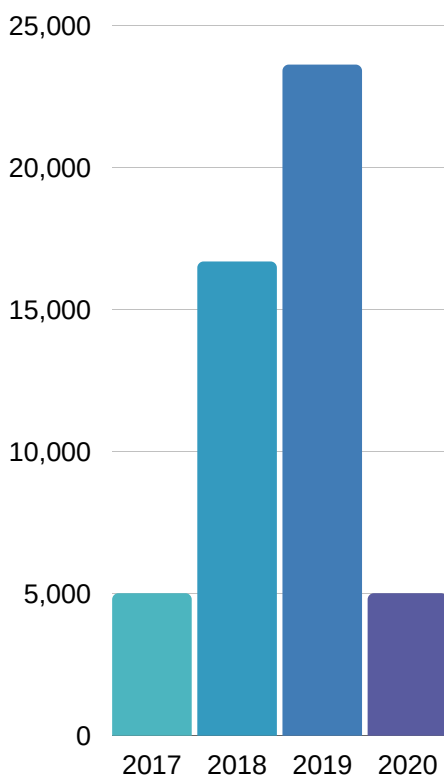
1. Subsidising a Wakakirri Best Start Program
2. Subsidising Wakakirri student registration fees

Wakakirri is a registered charity. Funds are raised via the following ways:

- Asking for donations from the audience at live shows
- Donations submitted on the Wakakirri website
- Applying for grants from funds and trusts
- Applying for sponsorship from corporations

All funds raised go directly to participating schools.

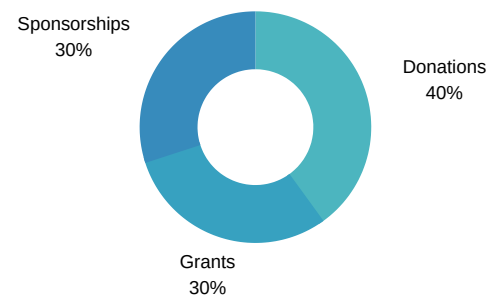
## FUNDS RAISED BY YEAR



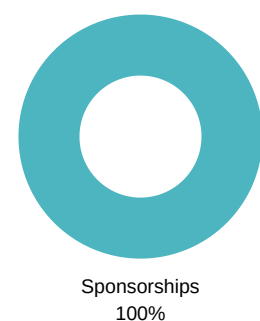
## 2020 DETAILS (CANCELLED DUE TO COVID-19)

- In 2020 only \$5000 was raised due to cancelled live shows and high competition for grants

## TYPICAL DONATION BREAKDOWN



## 2020 BREAKDOWN





# CAREERS DAY VICTORIA

All participants in the Secondary School Challenge in Victoria are invited to attend this significant FREE Wakakirri Career Day event. This event is the Season Launch and is hosted by some of our talented, prominent Industry Professionals who also make up our team of National Panel Reps. Schools can bring along a team of their students and teachers to a prestigious venue where they are inspired, encouraged and informed as they begin their Wakakirri Story.

Industry professionals will reflect on their career, talking about career pathways that they have taken and discussing in depth how the students can use Wakakirri to enhance their own career prospects.

"A very worthwhile experience for our school. It was also really great for the students to interact with industry specialists and not just listen to their memoirs. This was a fantastic day - thank you very much!"

- Teacher (2019 attendee)

## 2020 EVENT DETAILS (CANCELLED DUE TO COVID-19)

- Venue: Jason Colemans Ministry of Dance
- Date:
- Guest Speakers: Jason Coleman, Justine Clarke



# CERT II IN DANCE

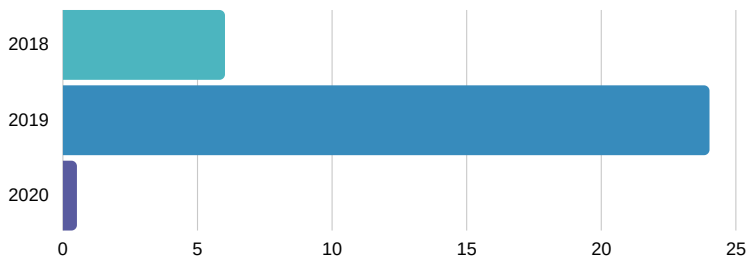
## VICTORIA

Secondary Students participating in Wakakirri can now earn a Certificate II in Dance. Planning, designing, choreographing and rehearsing a Wakakirri Story is a lot of hard work! Students can now double their reward for this work and earn a tertiary qualification at the same time. Secondary Students can now earn units of competency for each year of participation in Wakakirri and work towards earning a Certificate II in Dance or similar qualification.

For every year that a student participates in Wakakirri they will receive a Statement of Attainment for each unit completed that can grant them credits in their further studies. Units of work completed can be used towards a variety of certificates and become part of a student's permanent educational record. After 3 years of participation in Wakakirri students can earn a Certificate II in Dance.

Cost & Registration - Students must register in order to take part in this program. Registration for the first year is free for the 6 members of your schools creative team. The cost is \$130 for each student per year after that. The Certificate 2 is part of the CUA Creative arts and culture package.

### ENROLLMENTS



### 2020 EVENT DETAILS (CANCELLED DUE TO COVID-19)

- In 2020 students could earn their units by being assessed at Wakakirri live shows, Careers Day and via Zoom meetings. The aim was to make the process easier for teachers to coordinate and save time and money.
- Students were due to enrol on Careers Day so unfortunately no registrations were recorded





# BEST START PROGRAM

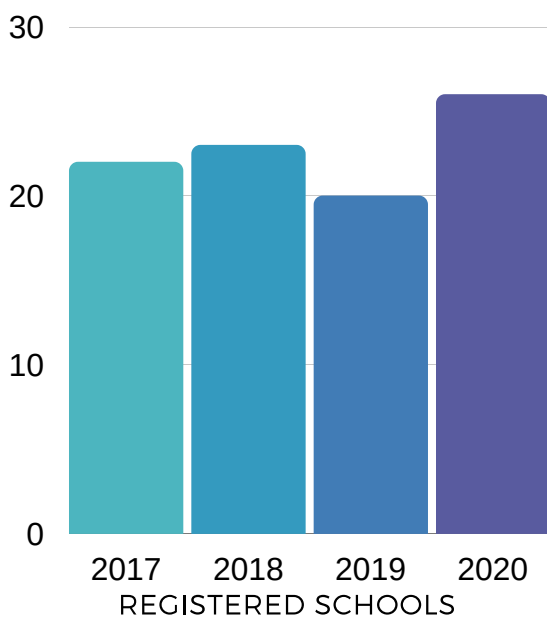
Wakakirri has accredited Wakakirri Facilitators that visit participating schools once a week for 10-12 weeks and do a lot of the heavy lifting required to get a schools' Story-Dance on stage. Teachers are still involved but without the pressure of being in charge creatively!

## HOW IT WORKS

- Begins with a phone consultation to choose a suitable story that aligns with each schools values.
- A Facilitator is matched with the school and initial face-to-face meeting is organised prior to rehearsals beginning.
- Includes weekly rehearsals, creating music, and choreography to make your Wakakirri a positive and sustainable experience.
- Program runs across term 2/3 preparing for a term three performance.
- Most rehearsals are run during class time or after school.
- Wakakirri's teacher will also escort each school to performance day.
- Rehearsals can be run as in-school activity or as an optional extra curricular activity.

"It has been a fantastic experience! Our students have loved working with Julia [Wakakirri Facilitator]. She is extremely diligent, professional and enthusiastic. The College would highly recommend the Best Start Program to school's that are considering it".

- Lyndhurst Secondary College, VIC

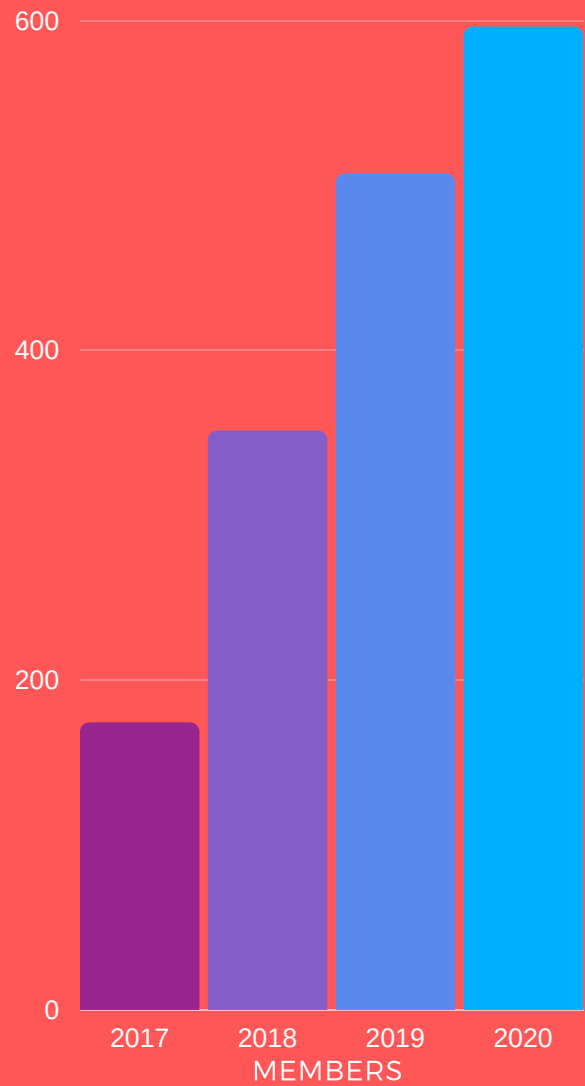


### 2020 DETAILS (CANCELLED DUE TO COVID-19)

- 26 registrations
- 21 Primary 5 Secondary

# TEACHER FACEBOOK GROUP

The Wakakirri Teachers facebook group is designed to provide teachers with fresh ideas, new skills and Wakakirri's insight to what makes a successful Story Dance. Teachers who join the Wakakirri Teachers Facebook Forum are better prepared and have reported a smoother process in Wakakirri.



## STATISTICS

### TOP 3 CITIES

Sydney x 165  
Melbourne x 115  
Adelaide x 63  
Brisbane x 56  
Perth x 31

### GROWTH

15% increase in  
the last 12  
months

### ENGAGEMENT

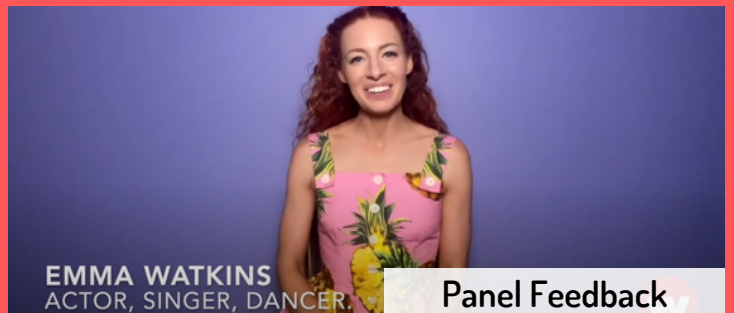
88% of members are  
active group  
participants

# WAKA TV

Waka TV includes all of the video that Wakakirri produces in association with its annual season. Waka TV is broadcast from the Wakakirri website, YouTube, social media and email subscriptions. 2020 Productions include;

- Annual results TV special
- State results
- Waka In Da House
- School feedback
- Teaching resources
- Promotional adverts

## WAKATV 2020





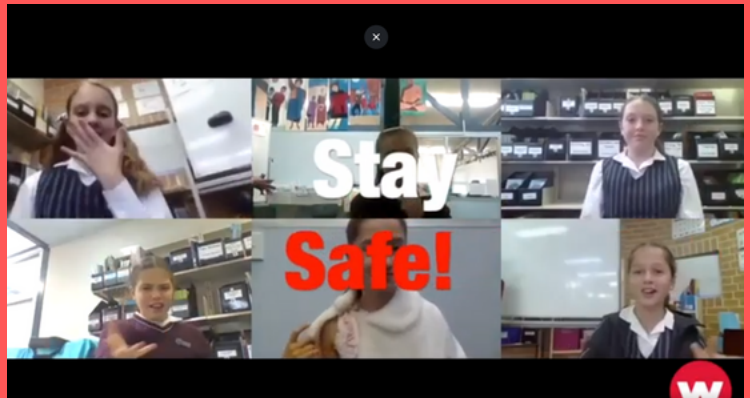
# WAKA IN DA HOUSE

When schools went into lockdown we wanted to find a way to keep kids creatively engaged with their arts education. We gave students a script and tutorials and asked them to make a collaborative video with their classmates using Zoom or another video meeting platform. The resulting performances were shared on our YouTube page.



**Wakakirri  
during lockdown 2.0**

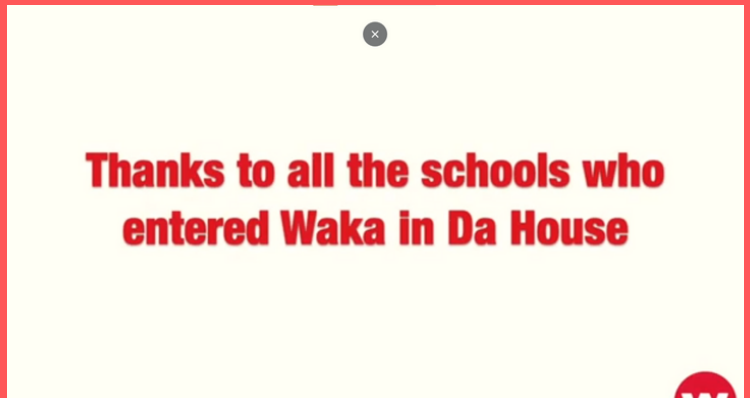
**Schools created Waka  
stories using Zoom!**



**Keep on  
Dancing!**



**Thanks to all the schools who  
entered Waka in Da House**



# MEDIA PRINT & DIGITAL

# 38

## MEDIA ARTICLES INCLUDED

- GEELONG ADVERTISER
- DANCETRAIN
- THE WEST AUSTRALIAN
- EDUCATION TODAY EDITORIAL
- CATHOLIC EDUCATION
- DANCE INFORMA

Several factors affected our media coverage this year. A decline in regional news outlets, competition for coverage against pandemic news and a lack of live events all impacted our media coverage when compared to previous years.



### EDUCATION NEWS

#### The show goes on for one Sydney school despite COVID-19

When stage one restrictions were announced for Covid-19, Primary School teacher Jyoti Kendrigan's heart sank.

MAY 14, 2020



Gemma Yi 5 St Patrick's Catholic Primary School Sutherland NSW in Wakakiri rehearsal

When stage one restrictions were announced for Covid-19, Primary School teacher Jyoti Kendrigan's heart sank. Her Wakakiri team consists of 96 St Patrick's Catholic Primary School students who had already spent the first term learning their routines for the 2020 Wakakiri Story-Dance Challenge. The Sutherland students look forward to the school's biannual tradition and this would be the only chance for many of them to participate. They'd be devastated to miss out on this year's event because of a lack of opportunity to practice.

Kendrigan was already experienced with Google Classrooms so with Principal Phillip Tax's blessing she set about switching her practices to a digital format. The first step was gathering content for her online rehearsals but she had an excellent resource available in the form of St Patrick's College students who filmed themselves performing warm-ups, stretches and choreography for the team of students to follow from home. When she uploaded the videos to her virtual Wakakiri classroom, she received an immediate outpouring of support and gratitude from students and parents. "When first creating the Wakakiri Classroom for the participating students, many students responded to the resources that were posted, they were grateful for the content as it gave them assurance that dance at our school will continue remotely. We received parent emails thanking the team for their quick response and hard work."

Primary student Taryn was especially glad to keep up her Wakakiri practices. "I enjoyed having the dance routines to practise during isolation because it gave me an opportunity to learn the routine. It also was good for fitness and keeping me healthy and active. Another thing about having the routine online was that it was a fun activity to break up the day and stop the boredom." Many of the students are not only practicing their routines with their families but also joining their classmates on video apps for a virtual dance class.

Wakakiri Festival Director Adam Lovley knows the pressure that teachers and students are both facing while students are stuck at home. "Movement is essential to children's well-being and so is creative expression. Teachers have done a wonderful job at adapting their methods to digital tools and keeping kids going with their Wakakiri practices. Both teachers and students have shown remarkable resilience in the face of a really difficult school year."

Wakakiri is Australia's largest non-profit Performing Arts Festival for schools holding annual events across Australia since 1992. Every year 20,000 Primary and Secondary students participate from every state and territory. Students create and present original 3-7 minute Story-Dances that explore themes important to their community such as Reconciliation and Climate Awareness. St Patrick's Catholic Primary School hope to perform their Story-Dance at Riverside Theatre in Parramatta this coming October.

Wakakiri registrations are open for Term 4 Performance Season, find out more at [www.wakakiri.com](http://www.wakakiri.com)



### WYNDHAM

Home > In Business > Students, teachers hitting all the benchmarks

#### Students, teachers hitting all the benchmarks



Hoppers Crossing Secondary College promotes a culture of improvement for students. (Photo supplied)

Alana Richards

Hoppers Crossing Secondary College Principal, Keith Halge is proud of the achievements of his students, especially over the past few years.

With the support of the college staff and wider community, Hoppers Crossing Secondary College is producing students who are happy, self-confident and successful young people who can demonstrate independence and a sense of career direction.

The college promotes a culture of improvement, where students are encouraged to strive for their best and use feedback to progress academically.

"We understand that not every day is going to be a student's best day, but with our Improvement Policy, every student who submits a task can seek feedback and work towards improving their results," Mr Halge says. "This builds a child's confidence in their own learning and resilience when faced with a challenging task."

Hoppers Crossing Secondary College has a comprehensive grade 6 to year 7 transition program, including opportunities for a number of school experience days. In-depth consultation with grade 6 teachers enables educators to learn about every student's their strengths and weaknesses, what they need to know to assist students prior to them starting at the college.

Mr Halge says Hoppers Crossing Secondary College ranks above state benchmarks in the Attitudes to School Survey, answered by students, in every area of the study including student effort, managing bullying, respect for diversity, motivation and interest, self-regulating and goal setting, effective classroom behaviour, stimulated learning, sense of connectedness, student voice and agency and sense of confidence.

"2019 in particular was an amazing time at the college as we achieved our highest ATAR score of 96.95, which is the highest in the history of our college," Mr Halge says.

"Continuing the successful journey, this year we were recognised and awarded The Age 2020 Schools 'That Excel' Award for western Melbourne due to having the greatest VCE improvement over the last 10 years.

"The college was also named state and national champions in Wakakiri, with the story 'Be careful what you whisper'. The story recognises the impact rumours and the digital world can have on individuals ... and the preferred behaviours for young people to display instead.

"Our school community excelled in the challenge of moving to remote learning due to COVID-19 restrictions within a very small time frame," Mr Halge says. "The smooth transition to remote learning is a testament to the dedication, skill, commitment and hard work of all our staff and students."

Students, parents and guardians can access the school's online open day presentation to help guide students through their journey and see what awaits them.

Hoppers Crossing Secondary College, 2 Fraser Street, Hoppers Crossing, VIC. Inquiries: 9574 777 or [www.hoppersc.vic.edu.au](http://www.hoppersc.vic.edu.au)

### Study Work Grow



Wakakiri National Screen Challenge

Wakakiri National Screen Challenge

Wakakiri National Screen Challenge

Wakakiri National Screen Challenge

Wakakiri National Screen Challenge

Wakakiri National Screen Challenge

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## Performers awarded

A GROUP of performers from Frankston have claimed an award at the 2020 Wakakiri competition. Bam Arts Inc, which runs programs for people with disabilities, took out the award for best social story with their show *BAMDEARIC*. The show was completed via Zoom while stage four restrictions were in place. Wakakiri is an annual performing arts competition for schools. This year the event was held online. Head member Kat Hoyov said "in a year like this one, it's incredible that students and teachers have created such solid stories and performances. Despite all of the unexpected obstacles this year, these Story-Dances are every bit as moving and inspiring as the ones performed in theatres at previous Wakakiri Festivals. Check out to everyone who participated."

BAM Arts Inc performers. Picture: Supplied





## Zoo escapade earns top Story

School's creatives hip-hopped online to win a 'Waka' award

GAIL ANTHONY

A Perth primary school has grooved its way to a special award at Australia's biggest performing arts event for schools.

Years 5 and 6 students from Kalamunda Primary School received a Story Of The Year Nomination plus a Story Award for their story-dance, which was called Escape From the Zoo! This light-hearted, feelgood performance tells of a girl who decides that animals confined to cages would be better off free. Wakakirri's judges, wowed by the school's teamwork, clever costuming and creative set-building, chose Kalamunda Primary School as the winner of the Story Award for Best Wildlife Story.

Wakakirri is an education program for schools that engages students and promotes wellbeing through participation in the performing arts. This year's online Wakakirri Story-Dance Challenge has been a highlight for many schools dealing with

lockdowns and virtual learning.

Schools across Australia developed and rehearsed story-dances to compete for a Story Award and a chance to win the top National Story of the Year prize. The Wakakirri Challenge normally takes place in theatres but this year it changed to an online-only format because of COVID-19 restrictions.

Kalamunda Primary School pre-primary teacher, Tarah Ameduri also teaches dance at the school. She and students started preparing a performance last year but when the pandemic hit they weren't going to do it. In the end, because she didn't want Year 6 students to miss out in their last

year at primary school, she decided to proceed on a smaller scale, with just Year 5s and 6s.

She wrote a story, choreographed a mix of jazz and hip-hop moves to convey the tale, and created costumes from the art room's fabric remnants.

"I got the kids to bring in a plain-coloured top and pants, and around that I made the rest just out of what I had out of the art room," Ms Ameduri says. "So a lot of felt and leftover materials - I think the bird was wearing one of my old bed sheets.

dance and performing on stage in front of an audience.

"I liked getting filmed, it was fun," says Summer, who played a lion. "I liked how if we mucked up on the video, we could do it again to get it right."

She was more comfortable doing it at school because she felt safer and less nervous than going to another venue such as the Perth Concert Hall.

"It was really impressive seeing the finished video," she adds. "It made me feel all excited that it was going on the internet."



Summer Ajduk as a lion.



### FINCH'S PLIGHT A CLASS ACT

St Mary McKillop Primary School's Wakakirri performers (from left) Layla, 6, Ellie, 7, lead black-throated finch Taliah, 12, Sophia, 9, and Amelia, 11. Picture: ALISON WYND

NATALEE KERR

A BANNOCKBURN school has won Australia's largest inter-school performing arts competition - despite spending much of the year in isolation and out of class.

Bannockburn's St Mary McKillop Catholic Primary School took out the Best Raising Awareness Story Award

and the National Environment Award at the 2020 Wakakirri challenge.

The school used sustainable practices to create their story-dance and demonstrate their commitment to "reduce, reuse and recycle".

"Through our story-dance telling we were able to create an awareness and appreciation of an Australian native species, the black-throated

finch, whose habitat is under real threat due to the mining industry of Australia," the school said.

"We shared the sustainable initiatives we made with our students and our wider community to celebrate the achievements we were able to make and to inspire others to take more care of our planet."

Geelong's Karen Feldman's Dance

School also had two successful entries, taking home the Best Mental Health and Best Motivational Story-Awards with its performances exploring the impact of life in lockdown and emotions.

Wakakirri traditionally takes place in theatres across the country, but due to COVID-19 was forced to an online-only format.

# MEDIA

## RADIO

2

### RADIO INTERVIEWS INCLUDED

- ABC CANBERRA - MORNINGS WITH ADAM SHIRLEY
  - INTERVIEW WITH DARAMALAN COLLEGE
- ABC CAPRICORNIA - MORNINGS WITH PAUL CULLIVER
  - INTERVIEW WITH KIN KORA STATE SCHOOL





# MEDIA TELEVISION

1

## TELEVISION INCLUDED

- WIN NEWS CANBERRA





# SOCIAL MEDIA FOLLOWERS

10418  
FACEBOOK

3211  
INSTAGRAM

1225  
YOUTUBE

736  
TWITTER

255  
LINKEDIN

TOTAL 15,845

# ENGAGEMENT

**Wakakirri**  
Published by Wakakirri HQ · November 22 at 7:48 PM · 🌐

Does your school have a story to tell? Register for the Wakakirri Story-Dance Festival 2021! Learn more about our live performance season or our options to send a Story-Dance and participate digitally, find the venue closest to you and register today or request more information at <https://www.wakakirri.com/get-involved/>.



6,803 People Reached      761 Engagements



**wakakirriofficial**

wakakirriofficial It's announcement day!

Are you ready to find out which schools have been awarded Story of the Year and our National Award winners?

Our Waka TV episode will go live across our social media pages and website at the following times:

NSW, VIC, TAS, ACT - 12:30 PM  
QLD - 11:30 AM  
SA - 12 PM  
WA - 9:30 AM  
NT - 10 AM

3w


👍🗨️📌

Liked by katyohs and 48 others

NOVEMBER 12

**Wakakirri**  
Sponsored · 🌐

Check out the Wakakirri 2020 Story of the Year announcement in this special Waka TV Episode hosted by James Elmer! ...See More



WWW.WAKAKIRRI.COM  
**WAKA TV - 2020 RESULTS ANNOUNCEMENT**      [LEARN MORE](#)

👍❤️👏 Mignon ...      13 Comments      10 Shares

👍 Like      🗨️ Comment      ➦ Share



21 days ago  
Lovely bring back memories.

22 days ago

24 days ago 🙌🙌🙌

25 days ago Congratulations everyone and a big thank you to Wakakirri! What an amazing adventure! We are so proud of ourselves to be nominated! Go Woodend!! x

25 days ago Wakakirri Congratulations to you and the students Kellie! We were so glad to be able to provide a creative outlet for the kids in such uncertain times. Hope to see you back again next year!

25 days ago

25 days ago

25 days ago hy Amie Wadsworth Ally J Bruce we got nominated guys!!! Well done TEAM WILDCATS- what an amazing recognition for all of your hard work! Well done to all the winners!

25 days ago

25 days ago WHOOO! So good that everyone's hard work paid off 🙌

# SOCIAL MEDIA

## YOUTUBE

78.2K  
VIEWS

1700  
HOURS  
WATCHED

1.2M  
IMPRESSIONS

957  
LIKES

263  
SHARES

# FOLLOWERS 1225

YouTube is a relatively new platform for Wakakirri but one that we are very excited about. We want to share Story-Dances with a huge audience of community, friends and family. All of this years' Video entries were published online and in-full and we plan to continue and expand on this development for our 2021 season. When we will be live-streaming and posting our Story-Dances direct from theatres across Australia. We're thrilled that this will make Wakakirri more equitable and accessible and offer a COVID-Safe way to share the Wakakirri experience.

## VIEWER AGES

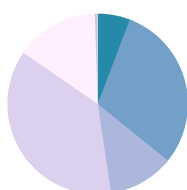
45-54  
14.9%

13-17  
5.8%

18-24  
30%

35-44  
37%

25-34  
11.8%



## TOP VIDEO

WAKATV RESULTS WITH JAMES  
ELMER & ANDREW MACFARLANE



1.4K  
VIEWS

# WAKAKIRRI WEBSITE REBRAND AND REMODEL

In 2020, Wakakirri completed a rebrand that included a new logo, new brand colours and a new website. These changes were made to refresh and update our look along with making the website more functional for schools, students and supporters. Additionally, in 2020 Wakakirri applied for and received a Google Ads Grant which awarded us with ongoing in-kind advertising support. These digital enhancements have helped us boost capacity without increasing operating expenses.



**WHO WE ARE**

The Wakakirri National Panel

The Wakakirri Story-Dance Association Inc

What is the WSDA? What Does Wakakirri Mean? Our Aim

### Outcomes

Wakakirri fosters a range of positive outcomes for not only students but also their schools and broader communities. These outcomes are measured and analysed via a number of sources including teacher interviews and surveys, school case studies and observation reports.

<p><b>Student Engagement</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Encourage enthusiasm for learning through creativity</li> <li>Increase school pride, strengthen student relationships, build community within the school</li> <li>Opportunities for students to accept responsibility and demonstrate leadership</li> <li>Boosts student inclusion, there are roles for a broad range of physical and creative skills</li> <li>Provides an opportunity to explore career pathways and develop career aspirations</li> </ul>	<p><b>Emotional Wellbeing</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Students experience the feeling of achievement and increase satisfaction that comes from creating something significant</li> <li>Encourage personal growth including resilience and acceptance of responsibility</li> <li>Engagement in rehearsal and performance fosters a strong sense of camaraderie and teamwork</li> <li>Performing onstage in front of an audience creates lifelong memories and improves students' self-esteem</li> </ul>	<p><b>Physical Wellbeing</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Introduces new forms of physical expression including various dance or dramatic movement forms</li> <li>Provides a fun alternative to traditional PE or sport and similarly fosters physical fitness</li> <li>Provides student recognition as an individual as well as similar to district sports centres</li> <li>Students learn the value of physical 'social' fitness and that aspects of all activities can contribute to the team effort</li> </ul>
<p><b>Community Impact</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Engage students to explore and develop a deeper understanding of social issues relevant to them</li> <li>Provide a platform for students to express their ideas and opinions to a large audience</li> <li>Teaches agency when advocating for a meaningful cause</li> <li>Promotes respect, empathy and awareness of cultural diversity, human rights &amp; sustainability</li> <li>Establishes identity and a sense of engagement with society</li> </ul>	<p><b>Social Engagement</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Provides a hands-on experiential learning approach that actively engages students in authentic practices</li> <li>Enables students to respect and embrace difference, and to establish identity and a sense of engagement with society</li> <li>Promotes cross-cultural appreciation, valuation of their own and other communities' ideas</li> <li>Greater empathy and awareness of cultural diversity, human rights &amp; sustainability</li> </ul>	<p><b>Arts Education &amp; Curriculum</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Artistic skills not necessary to deliver arts education are provided with an equitable and accessible system that builds their creative capacity</li> <li>Develops creative and innovative thinking</li> <li>Students develop a deeper understanding of their story themes through the process of creating and sharing their Story-Dance</li> <li>Provides a positive life experience that fosters a lifelong love of art</li> </ul>

### Meet The WSDAI Committee Members

The Wakakirri Story-Dance Association Incorporated Committee (WSDAI) is made up of independent board members from business, the arts and education sectors. As an incorporated association, Wakakirri produces an annual report and is publicly accountable.

Download the [2020 Annual Report](#) | [2019 Annual Report](#) | [2017 Annual Report](#)

 ADAM LIDDLE Pastor / Creator	 TOM O'LEARY Pastor / Editor	 VALERIE HARROLD Teacher / Rep	 MATTHEW SAMUEL Teacher / Co-Producer
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# WAKA FEEDBACK



“Wakakirri has a long and proud history of providing opportunities for thousands of Australian students to design Story-Dances that encourage creativity, collaboration and citizenship as well as fostering a wonderful sense of community through the power of movement, drama and contemporary narratives.”

**-Darren Wallwork - Assistant Regional Director Capability and School Performance, State Schools — Performance, Queensland Department of Education**

"We are very grateful for the immense care, guidance and flexibility that you have provided to not only our school but other Victorian schools during such a trying time. Nonetheless, we are adamant on enrolling back into the live shows for 2021 as it is a huge hit at Lyndhurst Secondary College."

**-Veronica Thay, Performing Arts Teacher, Lyndhurst Secondary College, VIC**



“Performing arts are now more important than ever before. What Wakakirri celebrates is the power of telling stories in the universal language of music and dance for our emotional wellbeing. I have been blown away by creativity and talent in children’s performances. I can’t wait for the next show. Viva Wakakirri!”

**-Pasi Sahlberg, Professor, University Of NSW, Gonski Institute For Education**

"I truly appreciate the fantastic opportunity you provide for our students to share stories relevant to them and their communities through this event."

**-Lisa Rodgers, Director General, Department of Education WA**



"Our school was very grateful for the innovation and persistence you & all the Wakakirri team has displayed this year."

**-Linda Jennings, Health & PE Teacher, Belmont High School, VIC**



# CASE STUDIES

## Kingswood High School, NSW

### Wakakirri Donation Program School, 2019

#### Pathway to the arts for disadvantaged schools

Involvement in the arts has wide ranging benefits for young people, both in and out of the classroom. However schools from disadvantaged communities often have barriers to access.

Wakakirri has provided an accessible opportunity for Australian schools to perform in professional theatres and share their stories for 28 years. The Wakakirri Donation Program helps schools from low socio-economic areas to participate in the performing arts. Kingswood High School in Western Sydney was one of twenty-two schools nationally who received vital funding in 2019.

The Wakakirri experience provides Kingswood High School students and staff with opportunities for growth mentally, academically and economically,” says teacher Ms Danielle Remaili, who coordinates Wakakirri at the school.

Danielle explained that Kingswood High would struggle to participate in the performing arts without the funding, “I have seen a decrease in families willing to place their students in extracurricular activities purely based on the fact that they couldn’t get together the funds. Parents and guardians are eager to see their children excel in these opportunities, however the financial strain most families experience acts as the hindrance.”



The school first received funding in 2018, and according to Danielle at the time “...many of the families of students entering were overwhelmed with the generosity of the donation. This has given their child an unforgettable experience and opportunity for success.”

“By participating in Wakakirri, we have seen our students build their skills and gain the confidence needed to further their studies at tertiary level. Students have gone on to audition for local community performances and private performing arts colleges, with most successful in their applications.”

The school is one of many that uses the Wakakirri Story-Dance Challenge to allow its students to explore issues that affect their communities. Last year Kingswood High tackled the topic of domestic violence, and this year students are taking on climate change. “Kingswood High School students are exceptionally passionate about their future and if Wakakirri is one of their platforms on which to speak so their voices are heard, then we must continue to provide these opportunities; we must continue to fund their right to be heard,” says Danielle.



# CASE STUDY

## Hoppers Crossing Secondary College, VIC Secondary Challenge, 2019

### Performing arts participation skyrockets at VIC high school

At Hoppers Crossing Secondary College in Victoria, demand to be a part of the school's performing arts program has skyrocketed. In 2019, more than 250 students were beating down the door to be part of the school's Wakakirri Story-Dance production.

The school's Wakakirri Coordinators, Kate Elmer (Junior Programs Manager & Dance/Health and Human Development Teacher) and Jemma Lowther (Dance/Health and Physical Education Teacher), talked about the demand to be part of the program, which has run at the school since 2013.

"Students love the connections they make with other students in different year levels. Our Wakakirri team becomes a big family through the ongoing rehearsals," they said. "The older students become role models through their leadership in choreography and backstage production, whilst also becoming a familiar face to the junior students in the yard building which builds our students' connectedness to the college."



"It's great to see the students work together as a team and grow as individuals. The joy this program brings to our students is the reason we continue to come back every year. Wakakirri provides leadership opportunities for our students, builds student confidence and allows students the opportunity to celebrate success outside of their academics. Every year our numbers grow, with new students bringing ideas to the table and we love that there are so many different roles for the students to get involved in (dance, singing, costume design, set design, etc.)."

The school routinely tells stories on stage that unpack experiences the school community faces, from mental health to race and privilege. They're staying tight-lipped about what story the team will tell this year, however Ms Elmer and Ms Lowther did say the overall theme will be about "recognising the impacts rumours and the digital world can have on individuals and the behaviours we would like young people to display instead".

"The Wakakirri program gives students from all backgrounds and academic levels the opportunity to feel successful within the school... Studying dance allows our students to develop their performance skills, confidence and technique to a higher standard, which has resulted in some of our graduates undertaking tertiary dance courses."

# BUDGET

- Wakakirri operates on a calendar year budget.
- Due to COVID-19 and national lockdowns Wakakirri was forced to cancel all events in May.
- At this time Wakakirri had just completed its major 'call for entries' marketing campaign and the majority of its preproduction.
- All employees went on Job Keeper, the head office was packed away into storage and operations continued with staff working from home.

2020 Budget	2019	2020
<b>Income</b>		
Funding - Government	\$ 200,000.00	\$ 200,000.00
Funding - Corporate	\$ 16,000.00	\$ 0.00
Funding - Donation Program	\$ 21,839.00	\$ 28,609.00
Best Start Program Fees	\$ 22,500.00	\$ 0.00
Ticket Sales	\$ 830,400.00	\$ 0.00
Merchandise sales	\$ 9,760.00	\$ 0.00
School Participation Fees	\$ 249,000.00	\$ 1,470.00
<b>Total Income</b>	<b>\$ 1,349,499.00</b>	<b>\$ 230,079.00</b>
<b>Costs</b>		
Venue costs & Crew	\$ 804,000.00	\$ 0.00
Licences & APRA Fees	\$ 27,400.00	\$ 1,500.00
Production	\$ 93,000.00	\$ 37,750.00
Best Start Program teachers	\$ 25,050.00	\$ 500.00
Donation Program - School subsidy payments	\$ 23,000.00	\$ 28,609.00
Careers Day	\$ 7,500.00	\$ 1,500.00
National Panel	\$ 10,000.00	\$ 1,100.00
School Resources	\$ 90,530.00	\$ 38,720.00
Insurances	\$ 35,000.00	\$ 14,583.00
Marketing	\$ 87,770.00	\$ 42,570.00
Administration	\$ 56,000.00	\$ 24,333.00
Book Keeping and Accounting	\$ 16,820.00	\$ 7,000.00
Office Rent & Overheads	\$ 40,500.00	\$ 16,875.00
Research	\$ 5,000.00	\$ 7,000.00
Waka TV Production	\$ 27,500.00	\$ 8,000.00
Misc	\$ 429.00	\$ 39.00
<b>Total Costs</b>	<b>\$ 1,349,499.00</b>	<b>\$ 230,079.00</b>
<b>Balance</b>	<b>\$ 0.00</b>	<b>\$ 0.00</b>

*Paid into 2021 Donation Program*



MARKET RESEARCH  
CONSULTANTS

# Wakakirri

*Preliminary Research Report*

# 1. Background and Objectives

Wakakirri is Australia's largest annual performing arts festival for schools, running Australia wide across primary and secondary year levels.

While Wakakirri have first-hand and anecdotal evidence of the myriad benefits of the program, independent research was required to:

1. Formally demonstrate its value to current / potential sponsors.
2. Support Wakakirri's long-term strategy

Research sought to explore:

- Satisfaction with the program amongst teachers and students
- The link between Wakakirri (and the Arts in general) and positive wellbeing outcomes for students
- How participation may inspire or further develop career pathways
- Perceptions of, and satisfaction with the Accredited Training Program
- Improvement opportunities



# 2. Summary of Methodology

A qualitative methodology was adopted for this project to allow an exploratory approach with a deep level of insight.

- A series of focus groups were held in October to December 2020 via Zoom (due to the restrictions of Covid-19).
- Wakakirri invited schools to participate in this research.
- Focus groups moderated by TKP.

In summary, participants (all involved in Wakakirri) included:

- **5 teachers** (3 Vic, 1 NSW and 1 Qld) in a teacher only-session
- **5 teachers** (from Vic, NSW and SA) who sat in on student sessions (while these were predominately student discussions, they also provided additional valuable insight)
- **9 primary students** across 3 schools from Vic, NSW and SA
- **7 secondary students** across 2 schools from Vic and NSW

## Qualitative Research

- Used to understand thoughts, feelings and behaviours at a deep level through exploratory open discussion.
- Semi-structured 'lines of enquiry' used to guide discussion.
- Information collected using observation and interviews either one-on-one or in small groups.
- Collected data (descriptive language) is not measured numerically. Common themes are analysed.
- Findings are reported using the language of participants.

Preliminary findings within are based on the above participants. More secondary student participation is expected in early 2021. Participant numbers and findings will be updated accordingly in the full report.



### 3. What is Wakakirri?

Wakakirri was described (unprompted) by teachers as a story dance where students convey a short story through dance, acting, stage production etc. It is seen as a way for students to socialise, as a gateway to the Arts, and as being a student-centric program that encourages students to develop and take ownership of numerous aspects of their production.

*"I describe it as a Rock Eisteddfod without the money. It's a dance and drama eisteddfod where students have a short amount of time to tell a story in the most creative way they can" - Vic Teacher*

*"It's a story dance. You're trying to tell a 7-minute story with a number of scenes, song changes, to demonstrate a story."-Vic Teacher*

*"It's great to encourage kids in the performing arts and it helps them go onto secondary school and not be afraid to be in productions." - Vic Teacher*

The student-led aspect is key to the teacher-appeal of Wakakirri, particularly for secondary participants; it is an educational tool that breaks the boundary of a traditional classroom (although teachers argue that students often carry learnings through to school subjects as well, for example time management, communication, team work etc.) and engages them on important issues or topics.

*"In the secondary schools we have the 60-40 rule.... It's really good because I have been able to embed it into my program with the year 10s, and our program is actually 80-20 (80% student, 20% teacher) and they take ownership of it. And the 60-40 rule, makes sure especially in the secondary division that it is student focussed, student led, and student developed. It's not just an external teacher coming in and telling them how to move and what to do. They really take on the direction part and the choreography part and teaching other students who are either year 11 and 12 or year 6 to 9."-Qld Teacher*

*"It's good because it challenges kids to use their English literacy skills to put together a logical story."- Vic Teacher*

*"It usually has a political or social justice focus, or an environmental focus. That's good to teach kids about humanitarian things, and they get really passionate about what their story is."- Vic Teacher*

Students also described Wakakirri as a performing arts program where they got to creatively tell a story and be involved in the Arts. The social aspects (especially mixing with people from other year levels) and learning opportunities were also frequently mentioned by students unprompted.

*"I'd say it's like a performing festival where you do dancing, drama... it's a great community group thing with your school to showcase your talents...and it brings kids together from different grades that don't usually hang out"- NSW Primary Student*

*“Wakakirri is the best thing is if you have the passion for dance and acting because you have the opportunity to do it. You also get to spend more time with friends”- SA Primary Student*

*“Wakakirri is great to hang out with kids from other grades. We get to learn about the things we never knew about them and experience new friendships”- SA Primary Student*

*“It translates to a dance so you have to make a story through dance and you work together with your school. Most of it is done by the students and we all work together to put something together”- Vic Secondary Student*

*“A fun event that you work towards together. Something that you look forward to and that gives you the motivation to get involved more in dancing and drama”- NSW Secondary Student*

## 4. The Value of Wakakirri

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Teachers were not short on the list of values that Wakakirri provides to their students. In their experience there are many benefits to participation which span all students (not just for the ‘theatre kids’).

Similarly, students offered up a list just as comprehensive which tended to echo teacher perceptions, albeit in a different light.

Benefits appear wholistic in nature; they span myriad areas (some of which have been touched on in the descriptions of Wakakirri) from nurturing an appreciation of the arts, through to using skills learned at school, developing life skills, personal development, and promotion of overall wellbeing.

Generally, the most valuable outcomes of Wakakirri can be grouped into the following key themes:

- Inclusivity and providing opportunities for students from all walks of life and abilities
- A gateway to the Arts which encourages involvement and appreciation, and or passion
- Development of life skills
- Supporting personal development and wellbeing

### *Inclusivity and Opportunity*

Teachers and students spoke about how Wakakirri is inclusive and can provide opportunities to kids of all walks of life, personalities, and skill-levels.

*“Everyone’s allowed to be in it and put in ideas, there’s no discrimination”- Vic Secondary Student*

It is not just a program for ‘theatre kids’ but rather...

- It is described as being a particularly important program for schools with a higher number of disadvantaged families, or individual students who are disadvantaged in some way. These students may not have the means otherwise to be involved in Arts programs or take classes outside of school. Some may have never stepped into a theatre before; Wakakirri provides that opportunity.

*“Our school is in a low-socioeconomic area and a lot of kids can’t afford to take singing or dancing classes. Wakakirri gives them the opportunity to do it, to make memories, to be on a stage... the buzz” – Vic Teacher*

*“Having that experience on stage that a lot of students never get the opportunity to do in their life. Just with the demographic where we are, a lot of parents can’t afford to put their kids into singing and dancing and all that. Just giving them that opportunity and that buzz of the night and the performance, rehearsals and having an audience... I think that’s what I feel that the kids gain most, and that memory that they just won’t forget”- NSW Teacher*

- It encourages non-theatre students of all abilities to have a go, potentially broadening horizons

*“At our school all of 5 and 6 have to participate but if you don’t really like the whole acting or performing you can do like props and set things on stage and things like that”- SA Primary Student*

*“You don’t really have to worry about your ability. It’s what you can do, and you can just do your best”- NSW Primary Student*

- Provides an alternative activity for students who are not academically engaged

*“Lots of my kids are from a low socioeconomic demographic and even though they’re promoting academics a lot at my school the kids that are not so academically inclined jump into the dance program and they love it.”- Vic Teacher*

- Provides an alternative activity to sport

*“I did Wakakirri instead of regular sport. Rehearsals are run during sport time so we can choose it as a sport subject”- NSW Secondary Student*

- Engages students who may have disciplinary issues

*“For kids that are in trouble all the time...they do Waka and they know they better not get a detention this week or they’ll get kicked off the team. They live for our heats and our performances. They absolutely pull themselves in line. We had a couple that were on the brink of being cut out and they pulled themselves together” - Vic Teacher*

*“Some of your worst behaved students in English and Maths are the best behaved in Wakakirri or all the arts subjects because of all the creative mind, they’re active all the time and putting their energy into something” - Vic Teacher*

- Encourages socialisation across year levels and outside of regular peer groups

*“Our school has brought kids that don’t usually hang out together, like the grade 6’s like us we don’t usually hang out with some of the kindy grades but with Wakakirri we can hang out with them because we’re trying to teach them a dance or the emotion to express and that kind of thing”- NSW Primary Student*

*“We’ve got the thrill of being with people we might not have hung out with yet and we kind of get to see other people’s personalities that we might see again throughout the rest of our life or childhood”- NSW Primary Student*

*“We’re a split campus and Wakakirri brings us closer together, we work together”- Vic Secondary Student*

## A Gateway to the Arts

A key benefit of Wakakirri is its gateway to performing Arts; it encourages involvement in the Arts, but also has a role in building a passion for, or at least appreciation of, the industry.

In some cases, the program may be responsible for newly introducing the Arts to students, and/or spurring career aspirations. This has wider implications for the Arts in general; increased appreciation for the Arts in by a wider number of people may lead to broader funding of Arts programs down the line.

*“You might not enjoy drama and dance and then you do Wakakirri and you go I actually like this so you find your passion for it and it makes you feel happy and you enjoy it”- SA Primary Student*

*“We have an academy of dance near which some of the stronger students are part of and that means they don’t usually do Wakakirri because they have other commitments, but for some of the other lower students you find that they have never been to the theatre. So the fact that they can get the elements of design and costuming and arrive at a theatre... their eyes just open like big saucers and they get an appreciation for the Arts” – Vic Teacher*

*“For students going to see a show they can relate to performers on stage... they think oh I’ve been on a stage before...I did a concert and production, I’ve been where they’ve been and I know the angst, the butterflies. That side which you really can’t get when you’re just an audience member alone. It opens up a whole new love for the world of arts” – Qld Teacher*

As mentioned earlier, the Arts may not be readily accessible to some students through means, or location. Wakakirri allows greater exposure to the Arts for these students.

*“For me personally my family can’t afford dancing classes on top of what I already do. Wakakirri means I can also do other stuff I’m interested in even with financial stuff going on. I still have to save money for insurance and costumes but doing Wakakirri is much more affordable than dance classes and I can do it all through school”- Vic Secondary Student*



*“We’re 2 hours from Melbourne but very isolated culturally, so we’re very appreciative to have the opportunity to be involved in the Arts” – Vic Teacher*

## Development of Life Skills

There was agreement that the learnings of Wakakirri flow through to school subjects. In addition, it was felt that the program provides deeper learning that prepares students for life generally through the development of key life skills.

*“The kids have ownership and their ideas come to life... they experience a deeper level of learning. I love watching kids teach other kids” – Vic Teacher*

Key skills mentioned frequently include:

- Teamwork and leadership. Such as:
  - Collaboration and cooperation - working with an array of different people with varying skillsets
  - Dealing with conflicts and adversity, making compromises etc.
  - Tolerance / acceptance of differing ideas or opinions
  - Patience
- Responsibility and accountability
- Discipline e.g. following rules (e.g. safety, stage), commitment
- Time management
- Problem solving and overcoming challenges
- Social skills

Secondary students touched on these skills more so than primary students given their higher degree of responsibility and ownership. Primary student skills were softer (e.g. making friends, teamwork, helping others) and teachers highlighted that they are carried through to secondary school.

*“You gain a lot of confidence and skills with cooperating with people through Wakakirri that you otherwise wouldn’t just doing normal school.”- Vic Secondary Student*

*“You definitely learn skills that you don’t learn during regular school classes. A lot of these skills you can use in the workplace, and just in general. You learn to be able to work with anyone”- Vic Secondary Student*

*“You can use a lot of the skills you learn in life. For me personally my time management skills have definitely improved.” - Vic Secondary Student*

*“It helps you build teamwork and you learn to work together and cooperate with people that you might not always get along with”- Vic Primary Student*

*"I think one of the most important skills in life is helping others. Wakakirri teaches you to help others in a way that a lot of things can't"- NSW Primary Student*

As touched on earlier students greatly valued the social aspect and friendships built; they recognised that without Wakakirri they probably would not have gotten the opportunity to socialise and make connections with others outside their year level, for example. This is intertwined not only with life skills (e.g. relationships and networking, but also wellbeing in general)

*"If you do dance outside of school you're with the same age. With Wakakirri you do work with other kids, younger kids, and we get to teach them steps and moves, and they can follow in your footsteps and teach other kids later"- NSW Primary Student*

## Supporting Personal Development and Wellbeing

Teachers and students alike strongly agreed that the program has a positive impact on personal development and wellbeing.

Broadly, the Wakakirri program is thought to nurture development and wellbeing by:

- Encouraging personal growth, including building self-esteem and confidence
- Giving students a sense of achievement, which is acknowledged by peers, teachers, and family
- Instilling pride in the work done
- Offering a sense of purpose
- Allowing self-expression and feeling like students have a voice. Topics chosen by students often deal with issues faced by them and can be therapeutic / a form of expression which they may not realise is happening.
- Building social connections with people; feeling support from, and supporting others

*"For ones that are anxious too, they get endorphins and get a real lift. You'll see in their personality they'll come out of themselves a lot more." – Vic Teacher*

*"Often some of the topics they choose are to do with depression and anxiety. When we make the concept they come out with all these things about anxiety and social problems and it's good because they start addressing those which might actually relate to them... it's therapeutic for them. And they get to express that without them knowing it" – Vic Teacher*

*"You can really let out your expressions and it makes you feel you're doing something important. When you do other sports it's great but when I did Wakakirri I felt as if it's a tradition and something I'm holding onto and I'm following the footsteps of others"- SA Primary Student*

*"It's something to be proud of... You learn to get out of your own comfort zone, get out of your skin and you meet new people and learn how to make more friends." Vic Secondary Student*

*“Personally, and from my friends’ experiences, you can do it and have been quite shy and now you want to do more of this kind of stuff like dance and acting or music or something in performing arts. Or it just makes you feel more confident because you know you can get out there and do it”- NSW Primary Student*

*“I remember coming to school and being quite shy and not as confident as I am now.” - NSW Secondary Student*

*“The hardest thing is stepping up and challenging yourself. Once you decide, you do it and you feel good”- SA Primary Student*

*“It gives you something to look forward to. It’s such a rush, and all you feel great afterward because of what you’ve achieved”- NSW Secondary Student*

Teachers shared numerous anecdotes of past students who by their observation have flourished through their participation in Wakakirri. Particularly, the positive impact was most evident across disadvantaged children (e.g. low socio-economic) as well as the disengaged (academically, behavioural or otherwise).

*“It gives kids from a low socioeconomic demographic who are not so academically inclined that opportunity to be like... this is what I excel at, watch me do something great. It also gives them great interactions with the teachers who they haven’t previously bonded with...the teachers all come and watch them do their performance and they finally have something that says look I shine I this moment... you know that self-esteem.”- Vic Teacher*

*“We had a bot who would run out of school every day. They were forever chasing him so he was called Forest Gump... and he came and did Wakakirri and he just flourished and settled right down.” – Vic Teacher*

*“You need to rely on each other which is really important for disengaged kids. I had a boy who was on the cusp of expulsion in 2008. His mum was an alcoholic and he had trouble getting to school, so I used to pick him up. He did Wakakirri and we gave him a specific part, a main role... he had to show the importance of the ecosystem and the water [in the story]. I saw him again last year and he literally stopped me and said if it wasn’t for Wakakirri and bringing me to school, I wouldn’t be studying law. He said it kept him in school, gave him a purpose to come because other kids relied on him”- Vic*

*“We know which kids struggle with connecting or wellbeing in amongst other kids who might be overconfident. When they’re put in Wakakirri you can find them a little friend that’s similar to them then they’ve got a buddy. It might not be someone from the same year level but they’ll find some little connection over say Cosplay or something. At our school they’re with the same home room for three years so when you get them out of that and say look at the whole world with all these other kids they can find connections, just that social aspect gives them a world of people to help them flourish and come*

## 5. Career Pathways and Accredited Training

Teachers and students recognised that Wakakirri program can provide a first look into the Arts as an industry or profession, whether that be on or off stage.

*“In Victoria Jason Coleman’s Ministry of Dance offers scholarships and I know a couple of Wakakirri boys have gotten scholarships for full time dance. They’re both cultural kids who would have never been able to afford something like and one of the boys wasn’t particularly academic. For him to get that opportunity and be a success story for my school was, as a teacher, rewarding” – Vic Teacher*

*“Some students have decided to continue their performing arts. I have a student hoping to be a high school dance teacher.” – NSW Teacher*

It was common for teachers of secondary students, and for students themselves to view Wakakirri as a form of work experience, particularly those contemplating a career in the industry. It allows them to broaden their knowledge of the Arts as an industry and gain experience across numerous areas such as performance (if on stage), creative work, prop building, multimedia etc.

*“I have a student who wasn’t sure if she wanted to be a classroom dance teacher or a studio dance teacher. Then she directed Wakakirri in year 10. She found there’s a big difference between a classroom teacher that teaches dance and a studio teacher that teaches dance... you cannot break a classroom student because you have to mould them, whereas the studio student you can push harder because parents expect it. Wakakirri made it clear to her that she wanted to become a studio teacher because you can push.” – Qld Teacher*

*“There’s one ex-student who did Wakakirri and became a teacher and she was so excited to tell me they’re doing Wakakirri and to see each other on show day. It wasn’t about the outcome, it was about our school helping theirs and her being excited to tell her kids I was her Waka teacher back in 2008. That’s powerful. It’s not about the outcome, it’s a journey that you want to be a part of because you’ll never forget it” – Vic Teacher*

*“I think it gives us a lot of experience and I definitely gained a lot from doing it. And it broadens our knowledge of the industry, helps with creativity, and you meet new people.” - NSW Secondary Student*

*“If you don’t really enjoy acting or dancing when you do Wakakirri if you enjoy it and you want to keep doing it could be the start of a career or something in your life”- SA Primary Student*

A few teachers cited students who have gone on to work in the Arts professionally, but on the whole the consensus was that Wakakirri provided a valuable means to pique interest. Some will continue, and other won’t. Either way (and as mentioned previously) the program tends to foster an appreciation of the Arts.

*“I’ve got three kids who are doing professional theatre now who did Waka. That was the first thing they ever did in the Arts. One’s doing musical theatre Aus-wide and others are doing dramatic arts and musical theatre courses. Waka gave them the taste.” – Vic Teacher*



## The Accreditation Program

Awareness of the Accreditation program amongst teachers was low, however this is not surprising given its pilot nature and availability (to date) in Victoria only. Victorian teachers were more likely to be aware, and one Victorian school had students actively involved.

The value of the program was apparent especially for regional or small schools.

*“Through the Ministry of Dance in Melbourne we were able to do VET modules. We jumped on the opportunity to do that primarily because as a regional school we don’t offer VET or VCE dance, we don’t have the numbers. So for us to be able to have the kids participate in the Ministry and also participate in their Mod Star program, and it being subsidised... the students wouldn’t have been able to do that without the wonderful support of the Ministry of Dance and Wakakirri” – Vic Teacher*

For those aware of or who have participated the Accredited Training Program it was viewed as a positive offering especially for regional schools which did not offer some Arts subjects. Wakakirri not only extended that opportunity to those students, but also allowed participation in the Accredited Training. Students appreciated that being involved in Wakakirri counted as being a part of the Ministry for Dance, for example.

*“It was really good. To do VET dance we would have had to go to Melbourne on a Wednesday which took it out of your week but through the Ministry we were able to have our practices, our heats and our grand final all count towards the practical side of the course. And we also had a booklet to fill in which was all based on performing arts.” – Vic Secondary Student*

*“I can’t say anything was bad or there’s anything to improve. If we didn’t have it would take time out of our week to do VET. It was really good that being part of Wakakirri counted as being part of the Ministry of Dance.” – Vic Secondary Student*

*“Is that they the Cert II? For Queensland we don’t get that offer but I have a cert IV in workplace training and assessment so I’m writing a Cert II for our school because we are a RTO. I want to link that up so it can be offered in Qld. Wakakirri don’t seem to be spreading that soon any time up to Queensland.” – Qld Teacher*

Students struggled to suggest improvements to the Accredited Training, but the teachers suggested:

- Touch base with teachers more regularly about the modules. Zoom could be used to hold more connections with the Ministry teachers. This would be good to minimise Ministry teacher travel time to regional schools
- The ability to film assessment performances
- More clarity about how workshops will function in 2021 given Covid

*“We were lucky because one of the MoD teachers came down to see us for rehearsals... that’s a 3 hour trip for her... and she was able to see the girls implement their teaching. Covid has shown us how we can communicate more globally so one thing that could make lives easier is maybe we could hold more Zoom connections with the teachers. For example, we could film some of the rehearsals we have, and that would help the teacher assess the girls, or they could touch base with the teacher over some of the modules.” – Vic Teacher*

*“We would go to Melbourne for workshops but I’m not sure how that looks with Covid still hanging over our heads.” – Vic Teacher*

Should the program be more widely rolled out, teachers would need to be made aware of its existence and educated on its workings, including deadlines.

*“When the information comes out in late Jan or Feb a lot of the students had already picked their subjects so the timing of it sort of doesn’t work I think..” – Vic Teacher*

## 6. Opportunities for Improvement

On the whole teachers and students feel that the program is well-run and organised, and the level of satisfaction and enjoyment is high.

*“It’s all well run. You get a pack and instructions on how to check your music is cleared by APRA and the dates you need to do all the steps by. It’s really clear. On the day the Wakakirri staff are good at ushering kids to where they need to be...” – Vic Teacher*

However, opportunities for improvement were voiced across:

- Competition and scoring criteria
- Cost
- Show day inter school socialisation
- Videography

### *Competition and Scoring Criteria*

The competition aspect is not the driving reason for participation in Wakakirri, however teachers brought this aspect up as an area of frustration.

There was agreement that friendly competition was a positive and that perhaps Wakakirri had lost its way (though this could be the chosen strategy) in some respect. Much of the criticism was around opacity in the scoring criteria, and the perception that it was set up so everyone can get an award.

*“Back in 1999 it was really good and competitive. They loved competing and they’ve taken away all the competition. I don’t know what they score you on now because a lot the awards don’t make sense. I actually liked it when it was a competition... you know exactly what you were trying to achieve, and the kids liked it. They liked to compete and bonded with other schools.” – Vic Teacher*

*“Everyone gets one [an award]. They might not give the best set award to the school with the best set because XYZ hasn’t got an award yet. I get it’s nice to get an award and take it back to your school but...” – Vic Teacher*

*“They don’t even call it a final anymore... it’s a Showcase so it’s not even... I don’t think they pick the best to go in. They pick stories that are a nice show, some that are weak” – Vic Teacher*

There may be an opportunity to better communicate the scoring system in place for how prizes are awarded, how school winners are chosen etc. In addition, some schools merely just wanted to know how they could improve.

*“As teachers we’re used to having a criteria sheet... you know this is what’s included and it’s worth this many marks. We don’t have that part” – Vic Teacher*

*“There definitely needs to be criteria. In the last three years we haven’t gotten through to the next level and we don’t know why. We’ve received awards but yeah it was like oh we better give you an award” – NSW Teacher*

*“Awards should be on merit I think. Last year our kids didn’t get anything and when I rang later on... not that I wanted an award, but I wanted to get some feedback and know what we did wrong. They said it was an oversight that you didn’t get something which I don’t think is right. I don’t mind if we don’t get awards, I just want to know what your criteria was” – Vic Teacher*

*“They used to have criteria... so much was for music so much was for dance... but they’re made it all wishy washy now” – Vic Teacher*

## Cost and Budgets

Teachers mentioned that Wakakirri encourages a ‘reduce, reuse, recycle’ mantra, which is praised as an environmental measure and also has the benefit of keeping costs down. However, even with this guideline some schools find operational costs a challenge.

*“The reduce, reuse, recycle theme is really fantastic because the kids have to look at the waste management side so the whole aim of the production is to keep the costs down and it’s every principal’s dream to be able to do that. But still we’re at \$4000 just to get to the venue and be part of it. That’s not even putting anything together” – Qld Teacher*

*“We try and do it every year on a zero budget because we’re just a primary public school and are very tight on money...we just reuse what’s in the shed, reuse props we’ve had” – Vic Teacher*

Public and regional schools in particular noted that costs are creeping up. The cost increase to \$35 per student was described as steep, and teachers said this could be a hurdle for future participation. They may benefit from additional support (from Wakakirri or another source) to fund their programs particularly in subsequent rounds which require travel.

*“They were saying that that next year they’ll film it but it’s going to cost \$35 per head to do it and that’s really steep if you’re a public school and the kids have to pay. They charge you so much a head to enter. Normally it’s only \$20” – Vic Teacher*

*We’re not doing it next year because we do it every 2nd year but based on that new cost my principal would probably not want to. I charge my kids \$70 which is quite high already, but it covers everything...we’re not allowed to fundraise. Being a catholic school anything fundraised needs to go to charity. – NSW Teacher*

*“We’ve already put in budgets for next year before that price rise came in, so we’re going to have to look at that. The budget’s tight!” – Vic Teacher*

*The regional one is fine but [for travelling to metro] if we make it to the next round, we then have to find extra money; it doesn’t come into our budget and it’s really taxing on us. Our principal can’t give us any more money to get into the next section, so we have to fundraise right after we’ve just fundraised. It’s just been a bit hard...we’re a cast of 70 so 2 buses, trucks” – Vic Teacher*

## *Show Day and Inter-School Socialisation*

Findings suggest that the social aspect is fundamental to the Wakakirri experience. Both teachers and students frequently mentioned connections made not just within their own school, but across other schools also participating.

Some of the most exciting social interactions are on show days, but some felt that this has been stifled in recent years, perhaps as a result of the venue (such as the Palais/Luna Park).

*“We were stored at the Luna Park in rooms and came across to the Palais. Previous years the schools mixed so well but we felt it lacked that and the lustre. The atmosphere was lacking” – Vic Teacher*

*“I had a safety problem with it... I was at Luna Park as well and getting the kids to cross the road to the theatre.” - Vic Teacher*

In addition, some questioned whether venues such as NIDA or Hamer Hall, while providing a unique and ‘magnificent’ opportunity to perform in a professional setting, may be too formal and thus also prevent the level of social interaction desired. Some recommended the idea of a Rock Eisteddfod style dance party or celebration, which may help to boost excitement and socialisation on the day.

*“Wakakirri came across as very professional... maybe too much so at the final stages. It was missing the hype and interaction, the dance parties. Kids enjoy performing in amazing places like NIDA but at those venues the kids aren’t allowed to leave change rooms...maybe that’s their rules.” – NSW Teacher*

*“My constructive criticism... we have really enjoyed performing in some magnificent places like the Arts Centre and the Elizabeth Murdoch Centre. But I don’t think it’s actually necessary to have such an amazing venue. They could perhaps notch it down a bit to include some of those Rock Eisteddfod social aspects because that’s the vibe that’s missing. And you couldn’t do that at the Arts Centre” – Vic Teacher*



## Videography

Teachers raised concerns with the videography over recent years. Namely, that in some cases the video was zoomed into one or two people and did not show the whole stage. They feel the inclusivity of Wakakirri should extend to this recording as well so that anyone who watches it can see all who are involved on stage.

*“I’m concerned about the videos over the last few years. Last year when it literally zoomed in on the 2 main characters and we lost all the dancing...the whole stage production was lost. I have a big push that the whole stage is the canvas. Unless it’s a solo, zoom in, fine. But when there’s more people keep the consistency of videography to a full screen so you don’t miss certain things. It’s Wakakirri story telling not Wakakirri video hits”. You can sometimes tell that the videographer is not a performer. He’s a film and tv guy” – Qld Teacher*

*“Normally would purchase the video at the end of Wakakirri and showcase it at the school’s awards night. Last year I couldn’t do it because there are so many people on the team and only saw 4 people at one time” – Qld Teacher*

*“The videographers don’t know your crucial moments and if they zoom in and miss something then your story doesn’t make sense” – Vic Teacher*

*“I’ve been getting videos now for 22 years and the old ones they used to do from right back. They’ve only started zooming in over the last few years. I tell the kids that if you want to do Wakakirri then you can do it... we even had a girl in a wheelchair. I tell them that we’re all equal and working together as a team. No one is better than anybody else so that’s why if they’re not showing the whole thing... And most of them buy the DVD... if they don’t see themselves on there it’s devastating” – Vic Teacher*

## 7. Summary

It is clear that Wakakirri has a lasting impact on both teachers and students who participate, eliciting fond memories. There is high a high level of satisfaction with the program, and both teachers and students are very likely to recommend it to others.

*“Memories last throughout high school and beyond. People talk about it for years”*

Teachers and students thought the program’s values were wide, varying and in many cases interconnected. In summary Wakakirri:

- Serves as a gateway to the Arts, fostering an appreciation for the industry and in some cases forming a path to a career (including the chance for Victorian students to earn credit for their participation).
- Provides students with opportunities in the Arts, or for personal development and wellbeing they may not otherwise get.
- Students form social connections and bonds with others, and value that this is across year levels and outside of regular peer groups.
- Teaches life skills such as teamwork, leadership, time management, problem solving etc. at a level not often covered through traditional classrooms. Classroom learnings are also leveraged in Wakakirri participation, through use of literacy skills, for example.

- Encourages wellbeing through the opportunity to be involved (particularly for the disengaged or disadvantaged), a sense of achievement and pride in work, expression, support and connections.

The interconnectedness of benefits we suggest combine to form a program that is wholistic and individualistic in nature; it appears that students benefit from areas which relate most to their individual circumstances (i.e. participation benefits may be more profound for someone suffering disadvantage).

While some recommendations were made (mostly by teachers), the value and positive benefits to students outweighed these. Nonetheless, opportunities included:

- Transparency of scoring criteria
- Greater funding support
- Consistent videography
- Show day improvements such as interactions and venue concerns