

# **Annual Report for the year ended 31 December 2023**

**Kamaruka Inc.**

**ABN 82 267 854 859**



**K A M A R U K A**

**Respect for Self**

**Respect for Others**

**Responsibility**

# Annual Report 2023

## Chair's Message

2023 was an incredibly busy and successful year for Kamaruka. Our Principal, Michelle 'Zinny' Zintschenko, and the team have worked tirelessly to implement the Strategic Plan (approved by the Board in June 2023) and to further improve the experience for our students.

The Strategic Plan has the safety and wellbeing of our staff and students at its heart and focuses on six key goals:

1. Teaching and Learning
2. Pathways and Opportunities
3. Campus Development
4. Marketing
5. Community Relationships
6. Data Safety and Technology

Kamaruka has made significant progress in each of these six areas.

From a safety perspective, we have had 14 staff complete first aid training and a defibrillator was purchased. Safety policies and procedures have been further embedded into our way of working with the result of no injuries to staff or students throughout the year.

Our Director of Pedagogy, Samantha Baker has led the implementation of a standard curriculum and assessment program. There has been an increased focus on professional development for staff.

Kamaruka commenced the design and planning of a Career Action Plan in 2023, which students will see the benefits of in 2024.

Long term lease access has been secured for the Kamaruka campuses and an investment program for the facilities has commenced with new carpet and chill out furnishings already in place.

The Board is well aware of the need for a school like Kamaruka in our community. Zinny has led the charge in expanding Kamaruka's engagement with the community by building relationships through the Small Schools Network and Like Schools Network and engaging with paediatricians, speech pathologists and occupational therapists. The school's website was revamped resulting in increased numbers of inquiries from potential students.

Kamaruka recognises the importance of cyber security and has implemented cyber strategies and policies that will minimise and manage the risks that it is exposed to.

A couple of specific acknowledgements. Kath Johns, our Finance Director, has done an amazing job in managing the school's finances and putting the school in a position where we can now reinvest in the school and its people to further improve the experience for both students and staff. Also, a big thanks to Brandon Marsh for your input, leadership & motivation in establishing a Reconciliation Action Plan. We look forward to embedding it in the DNA of the school.

The process of renewal on the Board of Kamaruka continued this year with the retirement of Deneille Sutton in May and the appointment of Brayden Stone.

Deneille is a parent of a former student at Kamaruka and has spent over five years on the Board. I would like to express my thanks to Deneille for her calm and steadfast contribution over what has been a challenging period.

We welcomed Brayden to the Board in September. Brayden has a wealth of experience in education and is currently Director of the Ivanhoe Institute at Ivanhoe Grammar. Brayden was previously Principal at St Augustine's College Kyabram and holds a Bachelor's degree in Education and a Master's degree in Leadership. Brayden's experience has already proven to be of great value to Kamaruka.

Finally, I would like to thank all the staff at Kamaruka for their immense efforts and dedication. The Board looks forward to another year of growth and success at Kamaruka.

**Darren Giri**

**Chair of Kamaruka Inc.**

## Philosophy & Rationale

Kamaruka is a specialist school located in South Yarra. Kamaruka caters to boys from Years 2 to Year 10. The Kamaruka approach is designed for neurodivergent boys, such as those diagnosed with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) and Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD). Students generally have an IQ of 80 or above.

Students who enrol at Kamaruka have often found it difficult to navigate the mainstream education system, which may not have been able to accommodate and support their unique needs. Through a modified curriculum, positive experiences, and a sense of belonging at Kamaruka, self-esteem is restored and a pathway towards a rewarding future becomes possible.

The Kamaruka approach, proposes to address the social/ emotional, as well as the academic and behavioural challenges, often exhibited by the students enrolled. Adopting a multi-modal approach, the teachers collaborate with parents and carers, as well as external professionals (where applicable), to increase on-task behaviour, reduce anxiety and aggression, improve wellbeing, as well as behavioural and academic progress.

Expectations are clear and firm, and all activities are designed to be slightly beyond their zone of proximal development, whilst taking into consideration the individual's capabilities and capacity. The clear boundaries and routines within the school allow every student to feel safe, accepted and valued.

Empowerment and self-determination are the ultimate goals that Kamaruka staff strive for as educators of any student with a learning challenge. Therefore, at Kamaruka we ensure that student wellbeing is addressed by providing students with access to two School Counsellors, as well as weekly Social/Emotional Aspects of Learning (SEAL) lessons.



Research has demonstrated that complex physical activity, such as martial arts, strengthens neural networks within the brain, enabling young people with ADHD to practice self-control and manage symptoms like impulsivity and distractibility. In addition to this, the martial arts program also enables young people to develop their physical coordination, provides opportunities to release energy and enables young people to focus on their own individual growth. Consequently, Kamaruka has incorporated martial arts into its educational program and throughout the years many students have developed their self-esteem and be extremely proud of what they have been able to achieve from participation in this structured physical activity.

## Governance

The Kamaruka Inc. is a Public Benevolent Institution, registered as a Charity. The Board acts as the governing body, establishing and monitoring the strategic direction of the school. The operation of the school is delegated by the Board to the school principal.

The Board meets at least once per term to review policies and oversee the general operation of the school.

The elected members for 2023 were as follows:

Darren Giri – Chair

Deneille Sutton – Treasurer (until 1 May 2023)

Cameron Crampton – General Member

Sue Ellen Macintosh – General Member

Rachel Meisner – General Member

Brayden Stone – General Member



## Staffing

The teaching staff at Kamaruka are committed to maintaining a stable environment with minimal disturbance to the daily routine. Building a rapport with students and understanding each student's individual needs is vital to the successful implementation of the behavioural program. Being a small staff, regular communication guarantees a unified approach to teaching and the use of consistent consequences assists in maintaining an orderly classroom environment.

Twenty staff were employed over the 2023 school year. No staff member identified as Aboriginal and/or of Torres Strait Islander background. All teaching staff are registered with the Victorian Institute of Teaching. All other staff including teacher's aides have a current Working with Children Check.

Principal:	Michelle Zintschenko	(Bachelor of Education/Arts)
Finance Director:	Kathryn Johns	(CPA, AICD, Bachelor of Economics)
Director of Pedagogy:	Samantha Baker	(Bachelor of Education/Early Childhood)
Director of Student Welfare:	Huw Norris	(Post-grad Diploma of Education, Bachelor of Theology)
Teaching Staff:	Gerry Burns	(Degree in Education and Degree in Food Technology)
	Nicole Stylianou	(Bachelor of Education, Bachelor of Applied Science)
	Tessa Sibbel	(Masters of Teaching Early Childhood, Masters in Educational Studies, Grad Diplomas in Primary and Special Education)
	Nikki Eykman	(Masters of Primary & Secondary Teaching)
	Yoki Han	(Grad Diploma of Secondary Education, Bachelor of Psychological Science)
Teacher Aides:	Robert Shook	
	Charmaine Bravo	
	Natasha Kotova	
	Luke Induni	
	Olivia Frim	
	Brandon Marsh	
	Ethan Saks	
	Tessa Yucel	
	Ash Turner	
School Counselors:	Emma Tyler	Bachelor of Social Science (Psychology) Graduate Certificate of Counselling, specialising in Child, Youth and Family Therapy Masters of Counselling Registered with the Australian Counselling Association, Level 2
	Krystle Westhorpe	Bachelor of Arts (Psychology) - The University of Melbourne Master of Social Work - The University of Melbourne Certificate in Cognitive Behavioural Therapy with Children and Adolescents Certificate in Rational Emotive and Cognitive Behavioural Therapy with Children and Adolescents Member of the Australian Association of Social Workers (AASW)

## Professional Development

All registered teachers at Kamaruka are required to engage in at least 20 hours of professional development (PD) activities each year in order to renew their registration. All staff participated in weekly staff meetings and briefings which often present areas related to professional development. They also have access to the PD offered by ISV and other professional development organizations.

## Curriculum

Despite possessing an average or above average IQ, the boys typically referred to Kamaruka have experienced social, emotional and academic hardship in mainstream school settings. To improve the educational experience for young people referred to Kamaruka, the academic curriculum focuses on literacy and numeracy. Written language, reading comprehension and mathematics make up the foundation of all other subjects. Attaining competences in these subjects enhances self-competence and can assist in improving engagement in education.

Kamaruka provides a personalised learning approach and students are challenged according to their ability level rather than age or year of schooling. To allow students to develop their self-esteem outside of a traditional academic sphere, students also take part in Martial Arts, a physical education program called Advanced Motor Skills, Drama, Music and Visual Art.



## Student Progress at Kamaruka

Kamaruka is a registered special school. Each student has an Individual Education Plan with their own personalized goals. All students are assessed at the time of enrolment and regularly thereafter.

The Kamaruka program targets students with low self-esteem and social/emotional difficulties. It is our belief that subjecting such children to national testing procedures, such as NAPLAN, would only exacerbate their condition. Consequently, with parental support, students enrolled at Kamaruka are granted exemption from such testing.

## Student Attendance

Overall school attendance was 71% (Primary: 64%, Secondary 76%). Semester 1 had 75% and Semester 2 had 71% attendance.

Kamaruka families are required to notify the school of an absence. All absences are recorded daily and systematically by the school. We encourage regular attendance as it is important if appropriate levels of progress are to be made. Kamaruka will work with parents and specialists to support a student's regular school attendance.

Student non-attendance across the school during the year related predominantly to illness and/or medical concerns as well as counselling and allied health appointments.

## School Operations

### Income:

Fees and levies	312,952
Interest	42,581
Donations	1,093
Government Grants	2,130,103
Other	22,962
<b>Total Income</b>	<b><u>2,509,691</u></b>

### Expenses:

Salaries and Associated Costs	1,541,130
Operating Expenses	353,162
Depreciation	336,056
<b>Total Expenses</b>	<b><u>2,230,348</u></b>
<b>Surplus</b>	<b><u>279,343</u></b>



## Contact information

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