This report is prepared by Western College Alesco Learning Centre to meet educational and financial reporting requirements for the 2014 reporting year, in accordance with the Commonwealth Government's Schools Assistance Regulations 2009 and the NSW Board of Studies, Teaching and Educational Standards requirements for Registered and Accredited individual non-government schools.

Western College Alesco Learning Centre would like to thank;

- The Australian Government Department of Education
- The NSW Department of Education and Communities
- The Board of Studies, Teaching and Educational Standards NSW (BOSTES)
- The Association of Independent Schools NSW
- The Board of Directors and staff of Western College Inc.
- The Students of Western College Alesco Learning Centre
- The Parents & Guardians of Western College Alesco Learning Centre students

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We hope that as you read this annual report you will embrace the passion we share in engaging young people with finding success in our unique educational setting.
Message from key school bodies

Chairman’s message

As I reflect on 2014, important foundation stones have been laid with commitments made by the board and Western College to our community for the years and generations to come.

Western College Alesco Learning Centre began tuition third term 2014. With the hope of achieving the minimum enrolments needed to be viable, we achieved this and exceeded it beyond our first year’s dreams. As the year continued, more and more members of the community saw that the programs offered filled a void the current educational landscape does not fill. When school students are taking the initiative to enrol into the school with their parents in tow, surely this is a great start to realising the child’s educational opportunities.

We thank our students, parents and guardians, partner community organisations and concerned individuals who placed their trust in us, we look forward to working with you to ensure the Western College Alesco Learning Centre remains a genuine education alternative focussed on meeting student and community needs.

Our strategic plan has been developed with a commitment to a multi-campus offer not just in Dubbo but in key locations throughout the Orana region. Thoughtfully, we will work with community partners in key locations where there is an identified need for an Alesco program. As occurs with business growth, we faced the necessary challenge of settling into a new physical environment for our staff. The board recognises the need for further development in this area and our challenge is to finalise the master plan for our college and school and commence its rollout.

Rod Crowfoot
President
Principal’s message

At Alesco, we place the student first and in turn we are honoured with their engagement. The school encourages students to value respect, responsibility and community with a clear emphasis on the development of a social conscience within the cultural context of our community.

Our learning programs are integrated with student welfare and reflect student choice and needs. Importantly, there is a strong focus on flexibility. It is the aim of the school to ensure all students achieve their potential, while at the same time, being stimulated, challenged and encouraged to embrace possibilities that allow them to grow and develop.

This report provides a snapshot of the exciting educational and well-being programs we offer and the unique culture of the Western College Alesco Learning Centre.

Valerieanne Byrnes
Principal

Our Board for 2014

Rod Crowfoot – President
John Dixon – Treasurer, Alesco Working Party
Patricia Logan – Secretary
Michael Adams
Warren Frew - Alesco Working Party
Mark Gardner - Alesco Working Party
Geoff McKechnie

Honorary Life Members

The Late Bill Hornadge
Gai-Ellen Palmer
Jenny Heather
Andrew Boog

Board members with Board Assistant Ingrid Stuart, CEO Valerieanne Byrnes and Life Member Andrew Boog.
Contextual information about the school

History of Western College

Western College Alesco Learning Centre (ALC) is a part of a multi-faceted not for profit community college situated in Dubbo, NSW. The community college was established in 1948 with a clear purpose: to address low levels of literacy and numeracy among citizens with no formal schooling and to build community capacity by offering vocational and personal interest training and education to all. Some 66 years later, the college remains true to its founding purpose and has expanded its youth outreach service to include the newly established ALC.

We have a VISION for education as the foundation for social justice and for strong, healthy communities in the Orana Region. Our MISSION is to be an inclusive community college providing educational services in concert with other capacity-building, community-focused organisations throughout the region. We VALUE innovation, respect and inclusivity as we strive to support marginalised students to learn, grow and succeed in a smaller, more informal and supportive individual-focussed learning environment.

The beginning of Western College Alesco Learning Centre

The school opened its doors in July 2014 with four Year 9 classes. The school is registered as:

- Independent;
- Accredited for Record of School Achievement (RoSA) and can offer an alternative pathway through our transition and vocation classes;
- Co-educational;
- Non-denominational;
- Special assistance school;
- Years 9 and 10;
- Application has been made to expand the school to offer Year 11 in 2016 and Year 12 in 2017.

Turning strategic thoughts into robust reality is never without its challenges but if the ultimate goal is a worthy pursuit then any discomfort experienced along the way is fuel for further learning. The strategic desire of the Western College board to offer a permanent pathway for at-risk youth, combined with staff passion for inclusion through learning, created the direction and energy to build a school. We found an independent school model that was born out of the same community need as our own youth at-risk programs and over a two year period with the assistance of WEA Hunter, we created the Western College ALC.

The purpose of the ALC is to consolidate and extend the college’s impact in the field of social inclusion. Alesco provides young people who are unable to find success in traditional educational models the opportunity to learn, grow and achieve. Members of our talented teaching staff place the student first, encourage them to explore, investigate, research and respond to
learning through writing and discussion, visual arts, technology and vocational education and training.

• We are guided by student needs, community needs, research and innovation. Relationships are at the core of our work. Our relationships are based on a respect for personal dignity and recognition of difference.
• We aim to reduce engagement barriers through the selection and delivery of the syllabus
• We engage students by making ourselves available and seeking collaboration. Collaboration supports reasoning, the generation of new ideas, creativity and the transfer of knowledge from one situation to another. Importantly, collaboration also fosters a sense of being valued.

The Western College ALC philosophy necessitates a multi-learning facility approach to ensure the environment supports participation. To commence our 2015 year two campuses were established, one at the main college premises Cobbora Road and the other within the grounds of TAFE, referred to as our White Street campus.

During 2014 the enrolment of students for the ALC exceeded expectations. Our target was 20 and we had 53 enrolled for our start date of July 14, 2014. At the end of Term 4 we were attending to 67 students. Importantly, our desire for inclusivity and our focus on targeted needs was rewarded. We proudly opened our doors to students who self-determined a need for change; to those who wanted to be heard and to those who had the courage to try.

Opening in July 2014 we offered four Stage 5 classes:

• Two Alesco classes: designed to deliver the Record of School Achievement through six individual core subjects with an optional introductory vocational subject cluster for Term 4 – operating from the main college campus, Cobbora Road.
• One Baby on Board Class: designed to deliver the Transcript of Study through a flexible project based program and the availability of a crèche operating from the main college campus, Cobbora Road.
• One Transition Class: designed to deliver the Transcript of Study through a flexible project based program. With an optional introductory vocational subject cluster for Term 4 – operating from both Cobbora Road and for practical needs, from a self-contained learning centre in TAFE which has now become our formal White Street campus (Block C TAFE).

Concept, growth and new directions

While the school started officially in 2014 and is now part of a growing Alesco family of schools owned and operated primarily by Community Colleges throughout New South Wales, it grew from passionate commitment to disengaged youth. The Western College ALC grew from a national award winning program – called Links to Learning – targeting at-risk youth.

A significant advertising and promotional campaign was implemented for the launch of the Alesco school in 2014. This campaign was highly successful in creating an awareness of ALC and its objectives.

In parallel with the opening of the school, preparations began for the next stage. The college completed the purchase of a vacant block of land located at the southern end of the main campus to plan for growth as we progress towards our goal of offering Years 9-12 by 2017. Expansion of the vocational class to Wellington under the Leap to Learning Program is planned for 2015 and will be the first of several Western College ALCs for disengaged youth across the Orana Region.
Student outcomes in standardised national literacy and numeracy testing

The greatest measure of success for 2014 has been seeing more young people really understand the value of education and therefore actively choose to continue on to further education of some form.

Because the Alesco school commenced in July 2014 our students did not participate in the national literacy or numeracy testing.

Assessment fairness

Western College ALC does not determine overall grades by assessment task results alone. Assessment is the ongoing process of gathering, analysing and reflecting on evidence to make informed and consistent judgements to improve future student learning and in the process improve teaching and assessment quality.

Assessment for improved student learning and deep understanding requires a range of assessment practices to be used with three overarching purposes:

- Assessment FOR learning - occurs when teachers use inferences about student progress to inform their teaching;
- Assessment AS learning - occurs when students reflect on and monitor their progress to inform their future learning goals;
- Assessment OF learning - occurs when teachers use evidence of student learning to make judgements on student achievement against goals and standards;

Our assessment of students is primarily an internal process but the school supports and values external assessment providers such as NAPLAN and subject specific instruments.

As part of the teaching programs, teachers plan a variety of assessment tasks related to each objective of the course. The results of assessment are used to plan further learning appropriate to each student’s needs and talents.
Assessment FOR Learning occurs when teachers use inferences about student progress to inform their teaching.

Assessment AS Learning occurs when students reflect on or monitor their progress to inform the future learning goals.

Assessment OF Learning occurs when use evidence of student learning to make judgements on student achievement against goals and standards.

http://www.education.vic.gov.au
Professional learning and teacher standards

In 2014 we employed six teachers who were responsible for delivering the curriculum, two full-time and four part-time, and an additional consulting teacher assisting with compliance. The teaching staff qualifications, experience and accreditation levels fall into the following category:

Having teacher education qualifications from a higher education system within Australia or as recognised within the National Office of Overseas Skill Recognition AEI-NOOSR guidelines - seven teachers.

Two teachers have Masters Degrees and two teachers are currently completing additional formal study.

All teachers are encouraged to participate in professional learning. In 2014 the professional learning undertaken included:

- Exploring the Edge – for educators working with at-risk youth in alternative learning environments;
- Joining the Dots – Alesco conference;
- dLux Media Arts – Training in technology for augmented realities to support delivery of STEM (Science, Technology, Education, Maths) subjects;
- Nationally Consistent Collection of Data Training workshop;
- Cert IV in Training and Assessment;
- Provide First Aid and Senior First Aid.

During 2014 there was also four support staff employed on either a full or part-time basis, each having a minimum qualification of Cert III in Education Support or Cert IV in Training and Assessment. All four support staff participated in the dLux Media Arts training in technology for augmented realities to support delivery of STEM, first aid training and in-house training on policies and procedures. Support staff also attended class sessions run by Mission Australia and BeyondBlue which provided information for the students on mental health and how both organisations might support them when needed.
Workforce composition

In 2014, there were:

• Seven members of the teaching staff;
• A head of student welfare;
• Four student learning support officers;
• Three crèche personnel;
• One school administration assistant;
• Five corporate services staff shared with the college;
• Five teachers attending to the vocational and education program each Friday.

In total there were three full time staff and 10 part time staff employed for the WCALC in 2014. Staffing includes two indigenous youth support officers.

Full time staff
James Austin - Head of School
Wendy Thomas - English and Senior School Project

Part time staff
Kate Davis - Head of Student and Community Liaison Student Welfare
Fiona Gough - Maths and Science
Paul McLeod - Baby On Board

The school is supported by the following College staff:

Administration
Marianna So – Administration Manager
Bridget O’Donnell - Receptionist

Marketing & Business Development
David Armstrong - Manager
Kerryn Shearman – Business Development Officer
Annette Ferguson - Website and Social Media Officer / Graphic Design Consultant

CEOs Office
Valerieanne Byrnes - CEO & Principal
Marzenka Leszczynska - Finance Consultant
Erifili Davis - Innovation & Design including Grants
Student enrolment, attendance and retention

Enrolment
On 14 July, our doors opened for Semester 2, Term 3 2014 with 53 students spread across four classes and three distinct programs. By the end of Term 4, we had 67 students attending the school. All programs increased during the semester in response to promotion and community engagement by teachers, youth support and community liaison staff.

21 of the initial 53 students were keen to give education another chance, having previously been identified as not meeting school attendance requirements.

Alesco enrolments for 2014 by program

![Graph showing enrolment changes over terms for Alesco, Transition, and Baby on Board programs.](image-url)
Management of non-attendance

Each period has a class roll maintained by the teacher and submitted to administration at the end of each day. If a student does not arrive for school or is absent from a class/s during the day the parent/guardian is notified on the day. Attendance is analysed weekly to identify patterns of attendance. All absences must be explained with parental permission note, medical certificate or confirmation of appointment attendance slip.

If students are found to be at risk of not completing the course criteria due to attendance, the principal or delegate will notify the student and the parent or caregiver in writing. A copy of this letter is then maintained on file. The principal has the discretion to allow a student to continue with the program if they believe the student’s merit warrants it.

Jeremy, Sharna, Yasmin, Sameria, Gemma, Josh, Kalina, Jamie and Justin.
Post school destinations

Our student welfare officer maintains a keen interest in our students and their future goals, and encourages continued communication with students after leaving our school. From our enrollees in 2014, nine students moved interstate with family, nine moved from Year 9 to Year 10 at another school, one was exempt from completing Year 10, three entered the workforce, three moved on to vocational studies and two were placed into a government care program.

Tom investigating career options

Post school destinations 2014

- Government Care
- Exemption
- Other Local School
- Other School Year 10
- Vocational Studies
- Employment
- Parenthood
- Pre Vocational > 17 years
- Moved Interstate
Enrolment policies and characteristics of the student body

Enrolment

Entry is permitted following a student interview and assessment of needs. Prior to enrolment at Western College ALC students are required to attend an interview with the principal to discuss their previous schooling and why they want to attend our school. Students are asked to share any relevant health history or behavioural incidents, as well as their support networks and peer networks. We welcome parents and guardians to attend this interview with the student, however it is the student who will be the focus of the interview. Those who participate in the interview with an openness and willingness to embrace change have the best chance of gaining a position within the school.

The following pieces of legislation are relevant to Western College ALC’s enrolment policy and practice:

- Disability Discrimination Act
- Race Discrimination Act
- Anti-Discrimination Act

These acts make it unlawful to discriminate against a person on the grounds of their disability or race by refusing to enrol them at the school. The school is committed to fulfilling obligations under the law in this enrolment policy.

Students who are successful in the enrolment process will receive written notification of their offer of placement and commencement date at the school. When a student accepts the offer, they are required to fill in an enrolment package which includes:

- all contact details
- an emergency contact person
- prior learning history
- personal and medical information
- disability confirmation
- travel forms
- information and photo release forms

Enrolment of students with specific challenges

Enrolment applications that indicate a student has specific learning challenges will require clarification of the exact nature of the student’s needs and the strategies required to address them. The student will be referred to our Head of Student Welfare who will assist with assessing individual measures and actions requested to support the child. External service providers will also be accessed as necessary. The Head of Student Welfare together with teaching staff will then consider the following:

- The specific challenges faced by the student;
- The parents’, staff and student’s views on whether the measure or action is reasonable and to what extent the measure or action would enable the student to participate in the school program;
- The effect of the adjustment on the student’s ability to achieve learning outcomes, ability to participate in programs and independence;
- The effect of adjustments on anyone else involved including the school, the staff and other students.

This information is collated into an Individual Learning Plan (ILP) which is reviewed and update regularly.
Referrals and community engagement

The majority of our students chose to continue with their education at Western College ALC having previously attended the Links to Learning Program run by Western College prior to July 2014. Many students self-referred from local schools and others were sourced from a variety of local organisations and services.

Parent and guardian involvement

2014 saw the enrolment discussion with parents and guardians and liaison with parents throughout the term to discuss particular student needs.

To launch our vocation program, parents and guardians were invited to discuss the courses available to the students. Courses discussed included accredited and general interest topics such as infrastructure, community services, beauty and animal care.

To finalise semester two, all parents and guardians were invited attend the end of term BBQ for the students and seek individual meetings with teaching staff. Eight parent initiated meetings were held to discuss specific needs which are vigorously encouraged.

Parent and Community Engagement (PaCE)

We encourage parents and guardians from the indigenous community to join our PaCE (Parent and Community Engagement) program. The program targeted parents and families of students attending all Alesco programs but was open to all parents and the general community. It catered for parents of young children, especially young parents and their extended networks. The focus of this program is specifically about encouraging interaction and advocacy within the school system. In 2014 the program was run by Alesco teachers and support staff, some of whom are indigenous people, using the Eight Ways of Aboriginal Learning framework.

Contributions to this program from professional counsellor David Haupt, and community workers Lorna Brennan and Michelle Doolan proved to be very engaging and invaluable to the participants.

In 2014 we had a total of 29 enrolments in the PaCE program and from that number, four
young mothers returned to school at Alesco, with pleasing attendance maintained.

**Learning Assistance**
Twenty seven of 67 students have a formal diagnosis requiring learning modifications, and the remainder have observed and/or referred learning challenges. Learning challenges require adjustment to environment and/or process. The challenges facing these students fall into one or more of the following categories:

- Cognitive
- Sensory
- Physical
- Social/emotional

**Gender distribution**
Out of 67 students, 40 students were female and 27 male.

**Cultural characteristics**
Students are all Australian-born and 53 of 67 students identify as Indigenous Australians.
School policies

Enrolment policy
Western College ALC is a school specifically designed to re-engage disenfranchised and at-risk young people.

Our school aims to provide opportunities to young people, primarily aged 15-17 years, who are unable to complete their education within the traditional school environment.

The selection criteria for Western College ALC focuses on eight key areas:

- Learning difficulties/disabilities
- Behavioural difficulties/disabilities
- Social disadvantage
- Age
- Academic achievement
- Financial disadvantage
- English as a second Language/Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander
- Isolation

Case management will be provided to all students who are enrolled in the school but Western College ALC is not in a position to manage students who cannot operate within the adult learning environment.

All students who apply to attend Western College ALC within the designated intake times shall be offered an interview as part of the application process. Student’s acceptance into the program is dependent on their presentation at interview and their demonstrated ability to work within the policies and philosophy of ALC.

All students who are enrolled at Western College ALC will need to undergo a literacy and numeracy assessment if the teaching staff deems it necessary. This may be conducted prior to enrolment if required.

Procedural fairness
The concept of procedural fairness is derived from the principles of natural justice. A process that demonstrates procedural fairness is one in which:

- Decision makers act fairly and provide reasons for decisions;
- The person affected is given a fair hearing;
- All parties to a matter have an opportunity to present their case where an adverse decision or finding is made;
- The decision-maker is impartial and acts without bias when making the decision;
- All relevant arguments are considered and irrelevant arguments are excluded; and
- The decision, the reasons for the decision and the evidence upon which the decision is made are explained and are capable of review.

Student welfare policies
Policies relating to student welfare include referral of students to local support services when a student has issues that are impinging on the student’s ability to learn, and a strict confidentiality policy to which all college staff must adhere.

POLICY 5A.1: Duty of care
POLICY 5A.3: Role of staff in child and young person’s care and protection
POLICY 5A.4: Mandatory reporting requirements of alesco learning centre staff
POLICY 5A.5: Working with children’s checks applying to guest speakers and volunteer Workers (including work experience supervisors)
POLICY 5A.6: Reporting suspicion of risk of significant harm to young person to cs
POLICY 5A.6: Reporting suspicion of risk of significant harm to young person to CS
POLICY 5A.7: Reasonable suspicion of risk of significant harm to a student
POLICY 5A.9: Procedures where concerns about risk of significant harm relate to the actions of a student, trainee or apprentice

POLICY 5A.10: Additional procedures where concerns about risk of significant harm relate to issues of reportable conduct.

Other policies
Western College Alesco Learning Centre seeks to provide a safe and supportive learning environment which:

• Supports the social and emotional wellbeing of students
• Encourages academic achievement
• Minimises risk of harm

The following policies are in place and are reviewed regularly.

POLICY 1.4 Staff code of conduct
POLICY 1.8 Student supervision
POLICY 1.9 Students traveling in staff vehicles
POLICY 1.11 Drug and alcohol
POLICY 1.12 Confidentiality
POLICY 1.13 Staff relationships with students
POLICY 2.17 Disability provisions for students
POLICY 3.1 Equality of opportunity
POLICY 3.2 Access and equity
POLICY 5B.1 Notification of concern for student welfare
POLICY 5B.2 Referral to support services
POLICY 5B.3 Accepting referral to support services
POLICY 5B.4 Individual education plans for students
POLICY 5B.5 Application for funding assistance for students with special needs
POLICY 5B.6 Student medical disclosure and medication
POLICY 5B.11 Harassment, discrimination & anti bullying
POLICY 5B.13 Request for police assistance
POLICY 5B.32 Student complaints
POLICY 5B.22 Student access to own records
POLICY 5B.25 Students rights and responsibilities
POLICY 5B.29 Student drug and alcohol
POLICY 5B.30 Weapons
POLICY 6.1 Student discipline
POLICY 6.2 Procedural fairness
POLICY 6.3 Corporal punishment
POLICY 8A.5 Assurances in relation to 'responsible persons' and good character
POLICY 8A.6 Complaints or grievances received by the school

The policies are available in the Student Handbook which is given to each student on enrolment and available by request from the principal. Policies are reviewed regularly.
Curriculum and school activities

Curriculum and school activities

English
Developing proficiency in English enables students to take their place as confident communicators, critical and imaginative thinkers, lifelong learners and informed, active participants in society. It supports the development and expression of a system of personal values, based on students’ understanding of moral and ethical matters, and gives expression to their hopes and ideals.

Geography
The study of geography enables students to critically assess the ideas and opinions of others and to form and express their own ideas and arguments. In so doing it forms a basis for active participation in community life, ecological sustainability, creating a just society, promoting intercultural understanding and lifelong learning. We offer students the following topics: Australia’s physical environments; changing Australian communities; issues in Australian environments; and Australia in its regional and global contexts.

History
The study of history investigates the actions, motives and lifestyles of people over time, from individuals and family members, to local communities, expanding to national and world history contexts. It introduces the idea that history contains many stories and that there is never only one uncontested version. In Stage 5 students will investigate the following: Australians at war (World Wars I and II); rights and freedoms (1945–present) and The Holocaust.

Science
Scientific inquiry is a distinct way of finding answers to interesting questions and solutions to important problems about the natural world locally, nationally and globally, including shaping sustainable futures. Scientific knowledge provides explanations for a variety of phenomena and enables sense to be made of the natural environment and the made environment. Scientific experiments at Alesco are based within a “real world. We feel that by offering students experiments in which they can engage and recreate deepens their understanding and improves participation.

Personal development, health and physical exercise (PDHPE)
PDHPE provides the opportunity for young people to explore issues that are likely to impact on their own health and wellbeing and that of others, now and in the future. The issues that affect young people include physical activity, mental health, drug use, sexual health, nutrition, supportive relationships, personal safety, gender roles and discrimination.

Mathematics
Mathematics provides students with knowledge, skills and understanding in number and algebra, measurement and geometry, and statistics and probability. Mathematics at Alesco makes clear the links between the various components of mathematics, as well as the relationship between mathematics and other disciplines. Students learn to apply their mathematical knowledge, skills and understanding in a broad range of contexts beyond the mathematics classroom.

Innovative activities

Success Stories program
Students love the creative and open format of this program and the sense of achievement they gain from their creations. With the aim of igniting imagination and creativity and to get students heading in a positive direction early in life, we dare them to dream and create the plan for their best life in the form of a scrapbook or picture board. These workshops provide a space where students can piece together what is good about
their life, support teacher in moving forward in a positive direction and build friendships based on the learning from the program.

**dLux Media Arts program**
The project focused on the use of augmented reality, geocaching and geotagging technologies to achieve Stage 5 science outcomes. It also achieved cross-curricula outcomes in geography, history, digital technology and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories and cultures and sustainability.

The augmented reality project that was developed by the class in this hands-on, in-the-field project based learning experience was created from information gathered by students on excursions to the local Macquarie River, Beni Forrest and the Shoyoen Japanese Gardens. The project involved a lesson on cartography—understanding that a map is not only about finding our way to a geographical location, it can represent the people and places around us. Students looked at how the Macquarie River and other local areas have been impacted by colonisation and how current local development may impact it in the future. The significance of the river to the local Aboriginal groups and how it was used in the past and in the present was also incorporated. The students were engaged in STEM by taking technology with which they have some familiarity to a different level. The project provided students with real-world connections to STEM as well as its interconnectedness to other subject areas. Because of the constructivist approach, it was an immersive-engaging learning experience for students with students being required to take considerable responsibility for the project and the outcomes, guided by the teachers.

**Use of Google Apps for Education**
Students were set up with Google Apps for Education during Term 3 of 2014. This means every student now has an internal email address as well as access to Google Drive which allows for collaboration and accessibility.

**Weekly “Vision Lab”:**
- Creative and productive uses of technology;
- Looking at ways devices like smart phones can help us at school;
- Consultation from students on school site development.

**Crèche**
Our crèche is located in the converted board room at the main campus in Cobbora Road. The crèche allows young mothers to continue their schooling while their children are cared for by qualified childcare workers. The mothers and their babies are transported to the college daily in the college bus, driven and coordinated by Mibby Eastwood, who is also our Youth Worker and was a trainer in the Links to Learning program. From July when the crèche opened until December, there was an average of four children attending per day between 9am and 3pm.
School determined improvement targets

Goals for 2014

Being our first year in operation, our objectives focused mainly on establishment of the school, engagement with the community and enrolling new students. In our first six months of operation we have successfully created a base from which we can grow and flourish.

Our main aim in 2014 was to engage with students who were not succeeding in traditional schooling environments and improve both attendance rates and productive attrition rates whereby students continue with us or transfer to further education or employment, rather than disengage from education.

Achievements in 2014

Student numbers: We achieved an overall increase of 14 students from day one (53 students) to the end of Term 4 (67 students). Productive attrition: 28 out of 36 students who left Western College ALC transferred to another area, another school for higher qualifications, vocational training or employment.

Focus for 2015

We will be working hard to encourage students, parents and guardians and community representatives to assist us to improve the meet the needs of students and the community. It is also our priority to encourage student engagement within the community with events like entering student contributions to art and performance events such as Dubbo Annual Show, Dubbo Eisteddfod and Indigenous culture activities.

Priority areas for 2015 include the building of new learning spaces in the adjacent property. We will also focus on implementing a campus in Wellington for both youth students and mature aged students. Registration as a charitable gift recipient during 2015 and a drive to corporate and philanthropic donors is expected to enable the raising of funds to improve resources available and meet demand.

Preparation to deliver Year 11 and 12 in 2016 began toward the end of 2014 and will continue throughout 2015.
Initiatives prompting respect and responsibility

A workshop on the Alesco Circle of Respect was conducted during Term 3. The focus of the workshop was to bring meaning and understanding of the concept and discuss with students their expectations of how the Circle of Respect would look and work in real life. All students were given the opportunity to participate in this workshop.

Mission Australia ran two workshops over a six week period:

- Manage The Bull was a resilience building program which focused on dealing with bullying;
- Rage Anger Management focused on managing anger and strong emotions.

The BeyondBlue van visited Alesco students in August 2014. Speaker Josh shared his experiences of dealing with mental health issues and emphasised the importance of talking to others for the purpose of either accepting or giving help as a way of maintaining good mental health.

Inclusive education is the foundation of each Western College learning program and at the Alesco Learning Centre catering for our indigenous students in a collaborative way is considered critical.

Kate Davis: “Harmonious classrooms are a step towards harmonious communities”

For the past two decades it has been my privilege to work with significant numbers of indigenous Australian young people and their families to achieve better educational outcomes and facilitate long term engagement with learning. In developing the Links to Learning program, the initial contact involved identifying families and young people who had been disengaged from school in secondary years. We then progressed to what I refer to as “housekeeping”, involving visits and long conversations about all subjects around the community. This offered great insight into issues that influenced school attendance and the genuine concern of everyone about the loss of connection to learning and the need to do things differently. The willingness to share knowledge and discuss the many ideas I offered was humbling to say the least and I was able to build a clearer picture of more appropriate approaches to engagement. The’ housekeeping’ approach is an important process that acknowledges respect for cultural differences and builds trust tolerance and understanding. The potential for shared efforts and achievements of the young is established once attendance and participation begins.

The style of the classroom has been developed to promote discussion style lessons, again involving the exchange of information about the topic delivered and promoting as many questions and ideas around the group informally placed around a table or room. Another effective approach is the encouragement of peer directed learning. Opportunities for shared opportunities
to teach each other are very workable and realised the completion of many tasks that had previously not been attempted at all. Activities are facilitated most effectively if the staff engages actively in the process whether this takes the form of sport, art, dancing or fitness – staff must be willing to engage and in many situations be prepared to accept looking silly as that effort and humility promotes bonding across the classroom as well as the activity arena. Engaging in every moment of the day is critical to develop that complete sense of community that is so valued by this unique group of people. The use of art builds a powerful connection to the classroom and encourages the readily available skills all indigenous youth seem to possess. Some of the art work produced over the years by individuals and groups of individuals has been astounding and this production continues effortlessly. Again this activity promotes understanding of the learning styles, the peer interaction and encouragement offered consistently and the skills of concentration and persistence with the task at hand.

It is necessary to comment about the dynamics of culture – every new program needs to identify those factors that have influenced change in the indigenous community’s perceptions of learning. Political changes over time have contributed to increasingly negative experiences such as the dissatisfaction of non-indigenous with many school-based initiatives that are provided free of charge to indigenous students. Again, sensitivity to this impact is critical and the nurturing of an environment of acceptance and respect for individual experiences is ongoing and should not be underestimated.

For the past 20 years my programs have always worked with a mixture of indigenous and non-indigenous and maintained an underlying philosophy that tolerance and understanding builds not only harmonious classrooms but creates potential for the communities in which the students live to share this learning as well.

“Maintaining an underlying philosophy that tolerance and understanding builds not only harmonious classrooms but creates potential for the communities in which the students live”
Parent, student and teacher satisfaction

As per our policies, we welcome and encourage feedback from students and their families, as well as our staff.

Feedback from students is encouraged through an open suggestion box and through individual meetings. Parent and guardians are encouraged to contact the school via the newsletter, parent-teacher interviews and during event phone calls.

Western College staff are encouraged to provide feedback through online surveys, team and individual meetings.

Identified areas for improvement included:

- Communication
- Transport coordination
- Noise reduction

“[Student] is nothing short of amazing. There’s a long way to go, but to his credit he is climbing out of the rut he has been in. Makes life heaps better for all concerned. I was amazed he walked to school the other day after missing the bus. Once again thanks.” [parent]

Mibby Eastwood Student Learning Support Officer with students Shania and Tearny
Summary of financial information

Recurrent and capital income 2014

State Government recurrent funding for 2014 was received in 2015

Recurrent and capital expenditure 2014