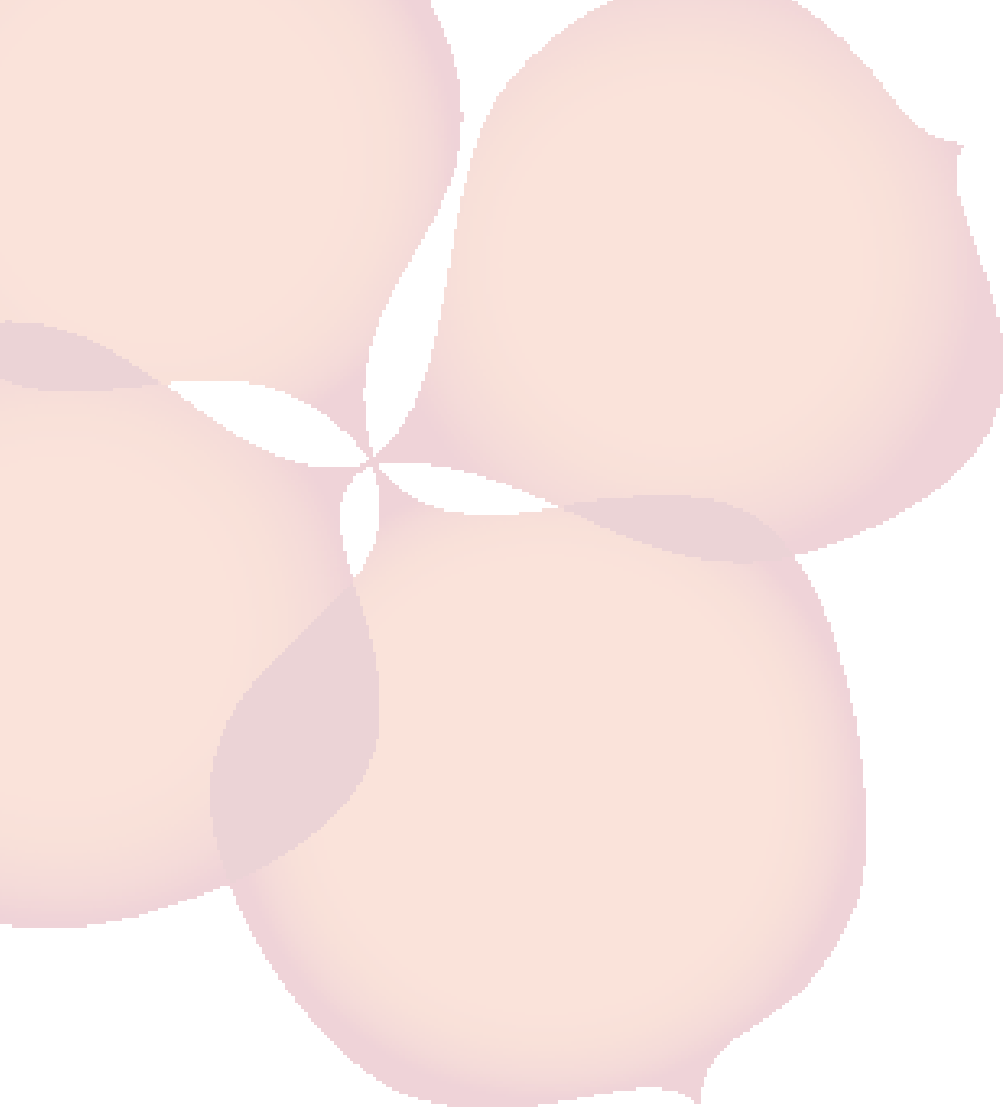
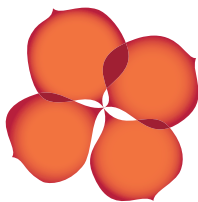


# 2023 Annual Report







**NT Christian Schools**

ABN 65 060 686 305

**Annual Report 2023**

A review of the activities of NT Christian Schools that occurred throughout 2023.

Copies of this report are available on our website.

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NT Christian Schools is a Public Company Limited by Guarantee under the Corporations Act. We have been incorporated as a special purpose Public Company since 1 January 2013, and are registered as a charity with the Australian Charities and Not-for-Profits Commission (ACNC). NT Christian Schools also has Deductible Gift Recipient status approved for our School Building Fund.

The names of all our schools and functional entities are listed as trading and business names under our Company. A copy of our full Company information may be found on the Australian Business Register ([www.abr.business.gov.au](http://www.abr.business.gov.au)).

Prior to 2013 NT Christian Schools operated as an Association incorporated under the NT Associations Act, named Northern Territory Christian Schools Association (NTCSA).



# Contents

Vision and Mission	05
Board Chair Report	07
Our Board	08
Message from the CEO	11
Learning Matters: Celebrating our Camp Comeback	15
Our Schools and Entities	17
Our People	37
Message from the Acting Director of Finance	39
Auditor's Statement	45
NT Christian Schools Directory	48





# Our Vision & Mission

**To be Christian communities, learning together to live life as God intended, offering hope for the world.**

NT Christian Schools seeks to provide education, training and care in faithful response to the Gospel of Christ by:

Partnering with Christian parents to help them fulfil their mandate of educating their children in Christ;

Supporting all parents who choose Christian education for their children;

Developing, building and maintaining Christian Schools;

Assisting every school community to provide the highest quality education from a biblical perspective, so that students are educated within a Christian worldview;

Promoting Christian education in the Territory and beyond;

Providing opportunities for vocational training, both through the organisation's own entities and in collaboration with other organisations; and

Developing a wide range of partnerships that support the achievement of the vision and mission.





Let no one despise you for your youth, but set the believers an example in speech, in conduct, in love, in faith, in purity.

*1 Timothy 4:12*



# 2023 Board Chair Report

Our desire as a board is to see schools that teach from a Biblical world view. We want to see schools that build students up in faith and in academic success. We want all children in our care to be nurtured and encouraged. The pursuit of these goals can be a challenge.

During 2023, the key challenge was new legislation brought in by the NT Government at the beginning of July. The legislation diminished our capacity as an organisation to discern who we hire. Specifically, it made it more difficult for us to choose to only employ Christian staff. This has been our practice in order to maintain our distinctive Christian identity.

The board spent time wrestling with our response to the new legislation with Mark Fowler, a lawyer specialised in dealing with Christian schools around these issues. In response to advice from Mark, a proposal to amend the NT Christian Schools constitution was brought to the AGM, and was passed. This allows us to argue that NT Christian Schools is an organisation which promotes religion, giving us a reason to argue for our hiring practices. The changes also allowed for additional statements of faith to be added. After consultation with the membership, these additional statements were implemented.

2023 saw some significant changes to senior staffing in the organisation. We farewelled Phoebe van Bentum and welcomed Phillip Leslie as our new CEO. Phillip comes to us with a wealth of previous management experience at a high level and has hit

the ground running helping us to steer the organisation toward our goals. In 2023, we also said goodbye to two principals: Joel Van Bentum and Damien Gainsford. Two interim principals will fill their vacancies during 2024 while we recruit to the positions.

During 2023, there was also movement within the board. Leeanne Zamagias finished her time with us, and Murray Redman joined us. The board has only consisted of five directors at any one time. Ideally we would have more board members than this. Could you bring this before the Lord as a prayer request that we have more people volunteer as board members? If you are interested yourself, please enquire!

The board met with Phillip in the latter part of the year to work on a strategic framework. This outlines key areas of focus to align our activities on our goals. Going into 2024, we will be pressing toward greater academic rigor as well as a firm commitment to the welfare of our students. The deep desire is that our young people find Jesus and learn to live for him. We love to see former students using their gifts to serve the Lord in the world.

Geoff Harper  
Board Chair

# Board of Directors



## Chairman - Geoff Harper

Geoff has been a member of NT Christian Schools since May 2014 when his children were enrolled at Nhulunbuy Christian College. His family have since moved to Darwin and have two children attending Marrara Christian College. In his original membership application Geoff said that to him, being a Christian means “having received salvation from sin through belief in Jesus which makes us members of God’s people. This is achieved through Christ’s death and resurrection.”

He joined to support the organisation, and intends to fulfil the duties of a Director with integrity. Geoff is married to Hannah, and his family fellowship at St Peter’s Anglican Church Nightcliff.



## Deputy Chair - Richard Riley

Richard has been involved in Christian ministry for his whole life, but this became more deliberate in 2002 when he began work with Youth for Christ NT. He later worked in parish ministry in rural NSW and returned to Darwin in 2017, initially as the Director of Scripture Union, and now as the Pastor at the Darwin Presbyterian Church. His passion is for all people to hear about the love of God shown in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus—and grow as healthy disciples of Christ.

Richard joined the board because he was keen to be a part of a continued focus on Christian education and to ensure that this remains at the core of NT Christian Schools mission and values. Richard is married to Jenny and they have four children.



## Director - Murray Redman

Murray’s family arrived in Darwin in 1982 after many years in PNG. Both of his daughters completed their schooling at Marrara Christian School. His eldest daughter, Madia, is a long-serving teacher at Marrara and then Sattler Christian Schools. Now grandchildren are schooling at Sattler also! Soon after arriving in Darwin Murray was seconded to the Board of (then) DCSA and went on to serve on the Board of DCSA/NTCSA for three terms over the next 26 years, including stints as President (6 years) and Vice President (10 years). He and his wife Toni (who worked at MCS for 29 years) were inducted as life members in 2009. Murray joined the Council of SCC in 2014 and has been Chair since 2019. He agreed to join the Board again in 2023 on an interim basis.

Murray retired as a university lecturer in international management in 2010. He worships with Litchfield Home Church in Darwin’s rural area.

Murray has a passion for NTCS and our schools to be purpose-driven: to proclaim in word and practice the Lordship of Jesus in every aspect. His driving force and plea for NTCS: “Think about the things of heaven, not the things of earth. For you died to this life, and your real life is hidden with Christ in God. And when Christ, who is your life, is revealed to the whole world, you will share in all his glory.” Colossians 3:2-4



## Director - Kathleen Flentje

Kathleen is currently a Primary School Teacher and Stage Leader at a Christian School on the Sunshine Coast, Queensland. She is actively involved in her local church and enjoys living near her parents and other family.

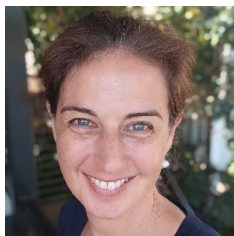
Kathleen has strong connections to the Northern Territory with life beginning on Elcho Island and then later on in life returning to live and work for many years in Darwin. Kathleen initially worked as a teacher at Marrara Christian College. Five years later she moved into the System Office, working across the schools in Curriculum Development and Professional Learning in Christian Education. Kathleen is deeply committed to the vision of NT Christian Schools, is passionate about Christian Education and loves the Territory and her people.



## Director - Michael Budden

Michael Budden has been involved in the education sector for over 40 years, 30 of which he has served as a principal at four Christian schools around Australia. His education philosophy stems from a God-centred view of all of life and he believes that Christian education should prepare students to go out into the world as 'Kingdom Ambassadors.' Michael has a long standing history with NT Christian Schools, having served at Marrara Christian College.

Michael has had 35 years' experience on various boards and desires to continue to serve Christian education in the Northern Territory. Michael and his wife Glenda fellowship at Maitland Baptist Church in the Hunter Valley of NSW.



## Director - Danielle 'Dee' Little

Once a public-school teacher, curriculum officer and deputy principal, Dee was led to Christian education in 2004. Since then, she has served with NT Christian Schools as a teacher, school council member, board member and system-level project officer.

Dee is married to Tamlin and her family fellowship at Darwin Baptist Church. Both of her children have been students at Marrara Christian College, and her eldest child currently attends NT Christian College on the Marrara campus.

Dee is passionate about seeing all aspects of school life transformed by the gospel, and protecting, preserving, and perpetuating our vision to be 'Christian communities, learning together, to live life as God intended, offering hope to the world'.

*Dee was appointed in May and resigned effective June 2023.*



## Director - Leeanne Zamagias

Leeanne Zamagias lived in the Northern Territory for over twenty years. She has had a long association with NT Christian Schools and her two sons attended Marrara Christian School. Leeanne has worked for Bible Society, The Anglican Diocese of the Northern Territory as well as Northern Territory Christian Schools. She is a Fellow of the Australian Institute of Company Directors, and has wide ranging board experience. Leeanne recently completed an MBA, and runs a business consultancy specialising in Governance, Risk Management and Human Resource Management. She currently resides in regional NSW.  
*Leeanne resigned effective May 2023.*





“If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask God, who gives generously to all without reproach, and it will be given him.”

*James 1:5*

# Message from the CEO

Phillip Leslie

In 2023, NT Christian Schools underwent a season of change whilst maintaining the organisations core values which are founded on faith and identity in Christ and our purpose which is to partner with parents and provide high quality Christian education, training and care for our students. Through the period of change, God has been faithful.

It was perhaps the first full year of post-Covid operations as the world continues to adapt and change to a world of work from home and on-line learning. Although the Northern Territory was perhaps not as affected as other Australian jurisdictions it is pleasing to be beyond the pandemic response and all that brought us.

It was also a time of change in senior staffing roles as we farewelled Phoebe van Bentum as CEO, Reg Gulley as Director of Operations and two Principals – Damien Gainsford at Araluen Christian College and Joel van Bentum at Marrara Christian College. Turnover is synonymous with working life in the Northern Territory and organisations have to be nimble and adaptive and manage these transitions well.

As referenced in the media, teachers are not in abundance at the moment and Christian teachers are in short supply. It is a problem Australia wide and whilst we rely on advertising, word of mouth and the willingness of potential staff to be responsive to a call to teach in the Northern Territory, this is an ongoing issue for us. A pilot partnership with Alphacrucis University has enabled us to commence training and upskilling some Teacher Aides to become teachers and we are hopeful that this will be successful and go beyond being a pilot.

A strategic plan was developed to guide us for the next three years with key priorities being;

- Our People
- Our Facilities
- Our Teaching and Learning
- Our Community Engagement
- Our Stewardship

As we bring our plan to life we are looking forward to improving standards of behaviour and outcomes for the children in our care. The key relationships in our organisation are those between our teachers, parents and students and we want our students to be able to express their gifts and talents to the best of their ability. By setting high standards and expecting the best from our students we are showing deep respect and love by allowing them to express their gifts and talents as God intended.

The Government introduced changes to the Education Act, specifically around Registration Standards for Non-Government Schools and we were invited to be part of the reference groups working through the standards actions and evidence. This requires considerable change to our policies and procedures and the organisation will be working hard on this throughout 2024 to ensure we are compliant. We expect a number of our schools to be assessed according to the standards in 2025.







We are also members of the Non-Government Schools Ministerial Advisory Council and have a seat on the Block Grant Authority Committee where funding for capital projects across independent schools is decided. However, the amount of funding is trivial and we continue to lobby for better access to facility funding for our schools, although to date there has been very little forthcoming from government. This is particularly so given the number of break-ins at our schools in 2023 with no avenue for funding support.

Likewise, improvements in how we manage our vehicle fleet, as well as processes in human resources management, identifying alternative funding streams, consulting on our Gawa agreement and how we use social media to effectively engage with the community and tell our story will be prominent in 2024.

Commencing with the organisation in July, I have visited each of our schools and spent time being available to our staff to hear their journey and how they see NT Christian Schools and how we can continually improve. I have marvelled at the depth of care felt for the organisation, its staff and our

students and how the Formational Learning Framework and Teacher Growth Roadmap continues to be delivered across our schools.

We made the difficult decision to close our Capacity Plus training arm at the end of the year. It was a difficult decision and I would like to thank the staff for their efforts, serving with commitment and grace over the years of operation.

NT Christian Schools is a strong organisation with a proud history and as we look to the future, we are committed to excellence in every aspect of our organisation — from teaching and nurturing students, to governance and administration, to equipping students to flourish beyond their school years. Our emphasis going forward is to continue to deliver high quality Christian education, in line with our mission - to be Christian communities learning together to live life as God intended, offering hope to the world.

Phillip Leslie  
CEO







# Learning matters: Celebrating our camp comeback

**After a disappointing era of Covid restrictions, 2023 saw the return of our beloved and much anticipated camps and trips.**

The iconic Year 10 Trip got back on the road for the first time since 2019, comprising of students from the Palmerston, Sattler, Nhulunbuy and Marrara campuses. They integrated well and formed an incredible group with great community spirit.

From the opal caves in Coober Pedy to the nation's capital, Canberra – from the first settlement in the Rocks, Sydney to the vast expanses of the outback, students had enriching experiences that will help inform decisions as they step into their future. During their time in Canberra students took part in a number of different educational programs with a focus on Australia's history, culture, heritage and democracy. Reportedly, all along the way our students were complimented on their positive attitudes and enthusiasm.

The Larapinta Trip also recommenced and was an incredible time of learning, challenge, and growth for our year nine students. Palmerston, Nhulunbuy and Araluen students converged and spent days hiking

the Larapinta Trail, racing up Mount Sonder and sleeping under the stars. The cohort also enjoyed a visit to a local church in Alice Springs and to Alice Springs Desert Park.

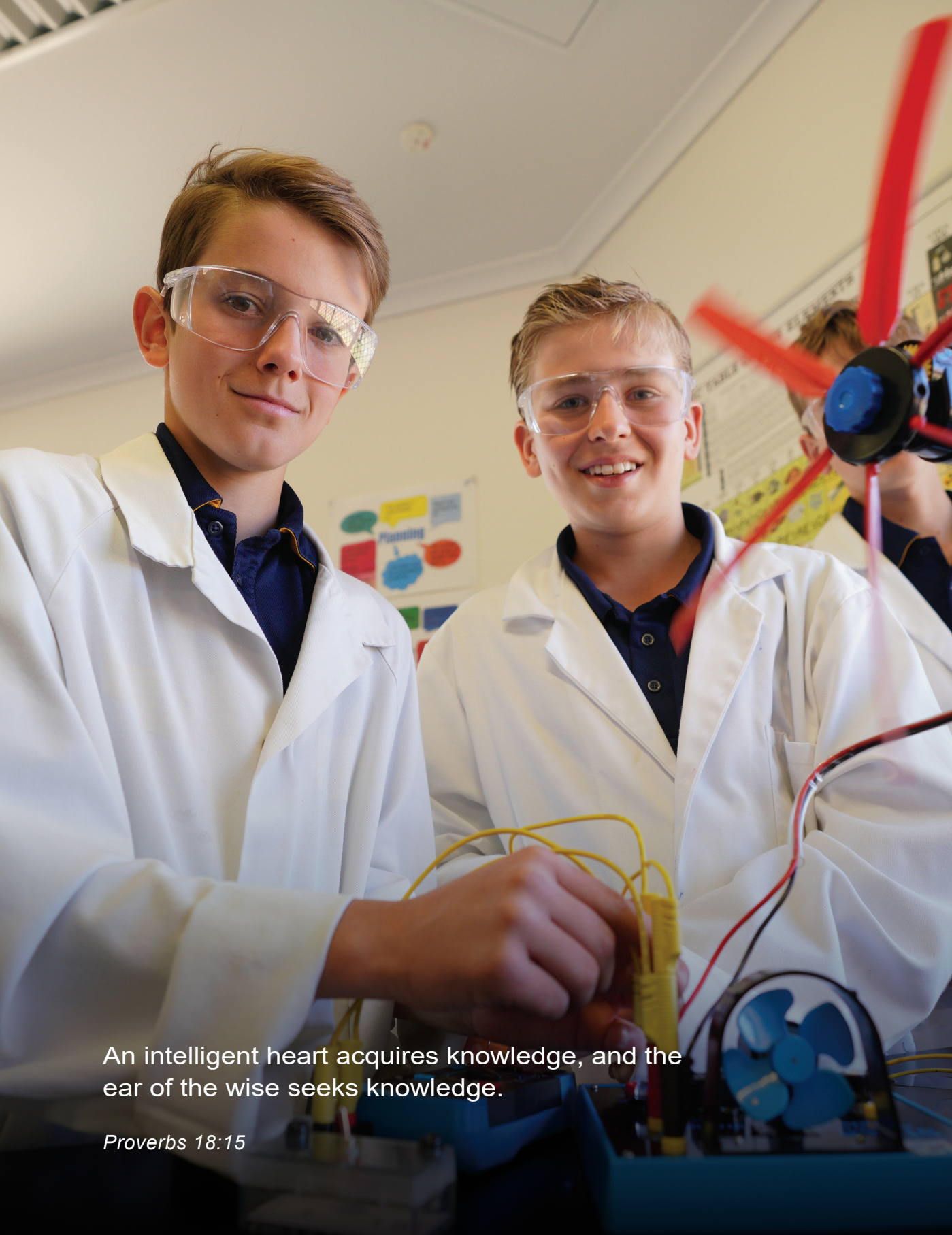
Rich times of fellowship and devotion were had around the fire at night and students were encouraged to seize the opportunity to reflect on the Creator and his handiwork. The West MacDonnell Ranges is an incredible place to do this!

In reflecting on the trip, some students noted their growth in the following ways:

- the ability to get up early
- noticing that they don't need to use their phone all the time
- there are jobs and responsibilities to do and that some of these are fun (like cooking)
- they appreciated what their parents do for them at home and in turn, want to do more to help.

Year 7 and 8's across our campuses also enjoyed outdoor learning with trips to Kakadu and Katherine.





An intelligent heart acquires knowledge, and the ear of the wise seeks knowledge.

*Proverbs 18:15*



## Faith Hope Love

Principal 2023: Damien Gainsford • Location: Alice Springs • Established: 1990

2023 was an enjoyable year at Araluen Christian College. It was a year in which we began to sow the seeds for new growth across several areas of the college.

The first of these areas was development of facilities. Term 4 of 2023 ushered in a newly refurbished Amenities Block in the Junior School Area. This refurbishment transformed the Junior Amenities with cubicles for both male and female students, hand dryers and sensor energy saving lights that time out when not in use. Additionally, there was an enclosed space created for the Wood Technology Programs, newly constructed flagpoles that signify inclusivity of our First Nations people, more security screens installed, an upgrade of our Public Address and Bell system and new furniture purchased for our Year 3 and 4 classrooms. These markers provide a view of the ongoing facilities renewal plan in action.

We planned for and began an implementation of a new leadership structure for the college and a review of the positive rewards systems for the students. This structure aimed to provide focus for staff in our key areas and to align to our college's strategic direction. We introduced an Assistant Principal role with a clear link to our Middle School students, Vocational Education and Training opportunities and NCCD processes. Additionally, all staff were engaged in the Peacewise for Kids & Youths Professional Development that will drive consistent

language and processes for developing a culture of peace at Araluen in 2024 and beyond. These shifts saw the college take bigger steps forward in a range of areas, particularly in our teaching and learning goals.

2023 also saw the college continue to focus on crafted formational learning and coaching across our teaching and learning. In our professional learning communities staff worked on developing student oriented professional learning goals that allowed them to focus on developing their professional skills in a way that would benefit student learning. Staff embraced this process and there was ongoing growth.

To close the year, we celebrated the awesome work of our staff and students. Some highlights of the year included the Book Week Parade, Weekly Chapels organised by our students, Tuckshop reopening and supported by our own Food Technology students and our Celebration Night which saw a growth in parental engagement across the board. These are beautiful moments of seeing our College's Servant Heart mentality and God's enduring faithfulness in action.

Damien Gainsford  
Principal









**GÄWA**  
CHRISTIAN  
SCHOOL

## Know And Learn The Truth

Principal 2023: Rachel Herweynen • Location: Elcho Island • Established: 2004

We had a rough start to the year, having discovered that staff housing and school buildings were broken into during the holidays. The gift of gurruṯu (kinship), being adopted into Yolŋu clan connections, meant that issues could be worked out as family. Living within the gurruṯu system also meant discipline could be addressed in the context of love. There was restoration of broken relationships along with the broken locks.

It was no coincidence that the Lord already had chosen RAYPIRRIMI – having discipline – as our school vision focus for Semester 1. During community consultations, it was apparent how Yolŋu discipline always involved recognising right relationships and honouring responsibilities. Discipline and order comes from knowing one's place within gurruṯu, being in the right place, surrounded by family.

As a staff team, we committed to the discipline of displaying learning targets in our classrooms. We were also disciplined in aligning our practices with evidence-based pedagogy such as the Science of Reading principles. We witnessed our students grow in the discipline of engaging with Bible verses and memorising them week by week. Even months later, on bus rides or in waiting rooms, students would recite Bible verses to each other.

Our focus on raypirrimi perfectly transitioned into GURRUṬUMI (having family) in the second semester. We explored the depths and breadth of the definition of family, as we all prepared for various

school trips. Meeting with our larger NT Christian Schools' family during the Over the Top Conference, we were pleased to see many participate in the Djambarrpuyŋu Language and Culture workshops, led by Margaret Miller and Gäwa Christian School Staff. Getkit students (Prep to Year 3) loved experiencing classes at Marrara Christian College and making new friends there. Connections continued through video conferencing through the year, with classes dancing together even through the distance. Our Gukuwal and Murryil students (middle and senior) enjoyed being embraced by our family at Sattler Christian College as well as churches and schools in the Sunshine Coast. Through speech, song and dance, they shared joy in Jesus in every presentation. AFL matches with gifted players in the Sunshine Coast was a highlight. We are grateful for Airnorth and AFL Queensland for having made our trip possible.

We also joined our family of Christian schools around Australia in sharing the importance of Christian education. Stories of generational impact and of students growing into loving husbands who lead their wives and families in Jesus' way poured out.

Our Triune Lord had his arms around the people and the place of Gäwa throughout the year, as He has from the beginning. We are surrounded by His awesome presence and praise Him together.

Rachel Herweynen  
Principal







## Live in Truth, Grow in Wisdom

Principal 2023: Joel van Bentum • Location: Marrara • Established: 1979

We are grateful for the staff and families that have put their trust in us to partner in the education and nurture of their children at Marrara Christian College.

2024 continues to be a challenge as day-to-day cost of living has caused financial stress on many of our families. We continue to seek to provide a school where children are known and loved, to have facilities that enable us to provide a high-quality education to the children in our care.

At the end of 2023, the school farewelled our school principal Joel Van Bentum who has taken up a new position as Principal at Green Point Christian College in NSW. I am privileged to step into the role of Principal for 2024, and look forward to enhancing the work being done at our school.

In 2023 the College implemented several significant changes that we trust will improve the academic and other outcomes for our students. They are:

- Implementing a new “learnership” focus. This focus has come from the work of John Hattie that has shown student agency is one of the most significant aspects that needs to be addressed in order to improve educational outcomes. This will continue to be rolled out in coming years.
- We have also started rolling out a project called “Zones of Regulation” that enables student agency by getting them to understand their emotional/ mental state and how to move towards a place whereby they are in a better place to thrive and learn.

- The school has also started embedding “Peacewise”. This project teaches students how to do conflict well so that it has positive outcomes. We have seen how this has started to play out in the classroom and in the playground.

- In the primary school we have implemented a literacy program that is based upon explicit teaching of reading and writing. We look forward to the outcomes in literacy in the coming years.

- Mararra is also involved in a new project that involves all our schools where we are actively involved in recruiting and training our own teachers in a project that has proven successful in other states. This is being done in partnership with Alphacrucis University College based in Sydney. This strategic initiative will place our school well as we look to ensure a pipeline of high-quality teaching staff into the future.

- As part of our focus to enhance the education of our students, we have had a stronger emphasis on maintaining well ordered classrooms by managing disruptive behaviours well. This emphasis will be strengthened in 2024.

We look forward with anticipation to the work being done in our school. Our staff are passionate and committed to providing a Christ centred and biblically grounded education in a nurturing environment.

Bill Rusin  
Principal 2024  
*On behalf of Joel van Bentum*









**NHULUNBUY  
CHRISTIAN  
COLLEGE**

## **Live, Love & Learn in Christ**

Principal 2023: Mark Twine • Location: Nhulunbuy • Established: 1999

The 2023 academic year at Nhulunbuy Christian College was a year of significant focused development in our teaching and learning, in our student support, in our community engagement and in our facilities.

As a new principal, my first year involved a review of all aspects of the college. This review was supported by our routine schools' assessment which was carried out by the Department of Education in May. Following the routine schools' assessment, the Department of Education extended our college's registration until 2027. Throughout the year, I completed an assessment against each area of the School Improvement and Renewal Framework. These assessments and their associated reports were presented to and discussed by the college's school council. These reviews helped identify areas of improvement as well as areas in which the college is doing well.

During the year, a series of substantial building works were completed to optimize the usability and versatility of our campuses' facilities, to upgrade in line with modern compliance standards and to address the needs of better storage options. As part of a Block Grant Authority grant, the original toilet block was gutted and refurbished as a modern, compliant facility with staff toilets, disability toilet and Primary appropriate bathrooms. An ablutions block for the high school students was developed at the rear of the property near the science laboratory. The college's Food Technology room was no longer safe or suitable for purpose. The expense for a complete remodel of the room as a kitchen was financially unachievable. Consequently, the room was gutted and repurposed as a general learning area while the staff room was remodeled to make it a space which free community events, such as our Mother's Day and Father's Day breakfasts, could be operated out of. The science laboratory was updated and remodeled to modern standards. Storage sheds were installed behind the covered basketball court. The donga was emptied and prepared for demolition.

New pathways were laid, to improve campus movements. A deep maintenance of the college's and staff housing roofing commenced early in 2023 and will be fully completed by the end of 2024.

While our facilities were subject to significant review and investment, so too was our teaching and learning. Student support was identified as an area of significant need in the college. In recognition of our limited support staff, several strategic initiatives were put in place. Firstly, rather than one person managing all Education Adjustment Plans (EAPs), all staff received training in how to use Inspire (an online platform which assists staff in creating a detailed EAP) and how to efficiently document and record evidence of adjustments provided at the college. Secondly, it was decided that small group intervention groups would be a more effective use of support staff than having the staff in classrooms. The college introduced the MultiLit program from Macquarie University along with the Elementary Math Mastery program, as focused, small group intervention groups on a regular basis. The widespread expectation and support of teacher's using daily reviews, especially for literacy and numeracy, also assisted in supporting students' diverse needs within the classroom. Ongoing review of our student support programs and feedback from community members led to the identification of a need for a more formalized wellbeing and pastoral care approach. As well as student support, teaching and learning was addressed through a focus on visible learning practices and the clear articulation and exploration of learning targets. The opportunity for engaging with the wider community from an educational perspective was targeted through developing relationships with other local schools and especially developing a close working relationship with the Dhupuma Barker School who joined NCC for combined learning tasks in science, physical education, art, robotics and history.

Mark Twine  
Principal







## Innovation, Communication, Collaboration

Principal 2023: Joel van Bentum • Location: PCC / MCC / NCC / ACC  
Established: 2013

2023 was another year of exciting growth for NT Christian College. Beginning Year 11 on both Sattler and Nhulunbuy campuses was the most significant highlight of 2023. There were many other highlights as we graduated Year 12 at Marrara and Palmerston and saw students 'Find their Path and Step into their Future'.

We continue to be thankful for the pioneering families who are partnering with us.

There has continued to be structural changes for the college and there has also been a focus on several key elements of teaching and learning. There has been a strong focus on developing online learning opportunities through training and stronger development of CANVAS courses. Teachers have sought to bring formational learning to bear across the school and have been encouraged to set clear goals that improve teaching and learning from a Christian perspective in all learning areas. They have also participated in collaborative work to strengthen assessment outcomes.

2023 graduates continued to shine in a variety of pathways. Many were granted early entry to university courses, others began traineeships within the Government and Emergency Services, whilst others began careers and traineeships in private enterprises. One student became the first Indigenous female accepted into the Qantas Academy for pilot training. Completions increased and results reflected the hard work that students had put in throughout the

year. The amazing achievements of the students are testament to the work of staff in partnership with families and the work of our pathways team.

Two Year 12 students were finalists in the Exit Art Exhibition. This exhibition highlights the work of art students from across the Territory.

The Year 10 trip was able to happen again! Once again, we were reminded of how fantastic an opportunity for learning and growth the trip is. It was amazing to see the Year 10 cohort build community and learn resilience throughout the experience. We are looking forward to seeing these young people grow and find their paths in the next few years.

Throughout the year, students engaged in sporting activities at school level and at interschool events where they represented themselves and the College with both skill and sportsmanship. Senior students engaged in the Titration competition again and won gold and silver awards for their amazing science skills.

We thank God for His provision in 2023 and pray that He continues to bless the college as we seek to help students cultivate their identity in Christ and become culturally engaged citizens who have a passion for learning

Joel van Bentum  
NTCC Principal







**PALMERSTON  
CHRISTIAN  
COLLEGE**

## **Serving, Nurturing, Educating**

Principal 2023: Luke Willsmore • Location: Marlow Lagoon • Established: 1988

2023 was an exciting year at Palmerston Christian College. The return of our camps, Larapinta Trek and Year 10 Interstate trip was well received after being on hiatus due to Covid the previous year. The bonding time for students and staff and the opportunity to experience different universities and explore different pathways that are available to them was a truly fantastic experience.

2023 saw the completion of our playground construction consisting of a rock-climbing wall and climbing spider web. It has been a real delight to see the students make use of the playground and the excitement and fun that it brings. The installation of a permanent Table Tennis Table has encouraged some lively competition for our middle and secondary students.

Our nature play/bushland area had some refurbishment and pathways upgraded. This area has been a great source of exploration and fun for our primary students, allowing them to make use of the natural space while still maintaining a pleasing aesthetic and practicality with the now clearly defined pathways.

In early 2023, we recognised the need for an executive space for our leadership team and the relocation of executive staff/leadership occurred in order that leaders be situated together to enable better communication and planning to occur. Forward planning was put in place to build new offices for Principal and Assistant Principal to provide much needed confidential meeting areas. Work on the new toilets for lower primary and staff toilets were also planned and the commencement of these works occurred in December 2023 with completion due in early 2024.

2023 saw PCC focus on differentiation across our teaching and learning areas in both Primary and Secondary classes. Our fortnightly Professional

Learning Communities strongly focused on building those areas to equip teaching staff on how to best cater to each and every one of their students and their individual needs.

As part of our Year 7 and 8 HASS small business studies, students held market days for the whole community to enjoy. There were a variety of items and activities on offer providing a learning experience which encompassed planning, marketing and customer service.

In Term 4, we held a MADD (Music, Art, Drama, Dance) night, showcasing to our college community the array of arts and Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics projects that our students have been focusing on throughout the year. Our students created some amazing pieces, and the night was well received by staff, students and our parents.

Our annual Thanksgiving and Graduation Service returned as a joint whole community event in 2023. After considering staff and parent feedback from the previous year's separate Primary and Secondary events due to Covid, the decision was made to have a single whole college event. Feedback received was resoundingly positive and ongoing, we plan to continue with this format. It was wonderful to see the increase in Year 12 graduates who were celebrated at our Thanksgiving Service with the introduction of graduation caps and gowns. We pray that our graduate numbers will continue to increase in future years.

Luke Willsmore  
Principal









**SATTLER  
CHRISTIAN  
COLLEGE**

## Growing In Wisdom, Learning To Love

Principal 2023: Michael Tooler • Location: Bees Creek • Established: 1996

For the third year in a row we set new enrolment highs, with 2024 higher again. What a remarkable achievement for the school where enrolment was in decline prior to 2019. This unprecedented growth and fiscal improvement is so pronounced, that we are the second largest financial improver of all NT Schools over the 2018-2023 period. This growth has been achieved through Sattler's unique standalone initiatives which have us well on the way to tripling the number of past enrolments.

It has been a joy to see families find their new school home with us and be warmly embraced by the staff and school community. Parents continue to willingly choose to select a genuine and authentic faith-based schooling here. Our school culture reflects one that extends well beyond our Christian classroom curriculum, encompassing all of our interactions and expectations we have in our community with each other. We do that so that Jesus is glorified in all aspects of the school, as we serve one another in changing lives for generations to come.

Christian community culture was clearly on display at the Father's Day community breakfast which was the biggest event of its kind we've ever had! Staff prepared and catered for the whole event and it was a credit to them. Other great highlights in Primary were the Tournament of the Minds, Harmony Day, Do it for Dolly Day, Book Character Day and Water Fun Day. Primary also ran many camps, excursions and specialist sporting incursions. Secondary too had a blast with local, interstate and national camping programs, a Robin Hood Production, Book Week activities and team building connection days. Secondary students have never had more electives to choose from which further expands in 2024 and benefitted from specialist sporting events.

After sustained advocacy, a significant improvement in the number of digital devices occurred in 2023. With talk of Year 12 being considered on and off at Sattler Christian College for decades, 2024 sees it delivered upon!

Another testament to our culture is that 100% of 2023 current permanent teachers, teacher aides, leaders and office administration staff, have returned for 2024, a remarkable achievement considering high staff turnover that exists in the NT. Strategic cultural reforms in governance, leadership, operations, behaviour management, fiscal management and learning support have been key pillars in the success story. These reforms are embodied in the continuous reflective cycle we pursue to ensure our practices are data informed with the *Disciplined Dialogue* process.

The systematic delivery of literacy and numeracy programs again led to our NAPLAN results significantly higher than private and public schools in our area. Our communication culture of *Manners Before Matters* and our *Bullying and Harassment Prevention Plan* strategies continue to be key social pillars, and when coupled to classroom management techniques, ensured staff are supported and the learning environment is orderly so that students can learn without distraction. Ultimately parents know that their children are safe in our community.

I'm always excited by our Christian formational learning in our primary department and our transformational learning in our secondary department. Students are given the opportunity every lesson to hear the Gospel of Jesus Christ and see how the timeless and living Word of God can be applied in all topics and how this Christian worldview is God's best plan for each of us, our community, our families and creation.

Sattler seeks to collectively live the Bible here, not just hear of it, as Romans 12:2 teaches *do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will.*

Michael Tooler  
Principal







## Director Of Training and Community Impact: Darran Plumb

2023 in the life of Capacity Plus was an adventure. There were many hallmark events over the course of the year and some really memorable moments.

The community service and family strengthening programs continued to supply the FAST program across the Northern Territory. The participants were almost wholly self-nominated for the programs that we ran. This just goes to show the hunger and the need amongst families to strengthen themselves and see their communities flourish. With 6 remote communities, as well as the work we do in the Darwin metro area, Capacity Plus staff had their hands full managing the local sites as well as liaising and coordinating with the 5 major funders.

The RTO (Registered Training Organisation) had another successful year too. With more than 50 students enrolled again trainers were working with full classes. We ran the same courses we ran for 2022 with great success. Extremely high pass rates and student satisfaction results with our surveys encouraging our students, their schools and families, as well as our trainers. Students studied Community Services, School based Education and Support, and Early Childhood Education at a number of different Certificate levels. Once again, we held our graduation service at the Crossroads Church in Palmerston. This was a fantastic chance for students and their families to gather together and celebrate their success as well as the completion of their hard work and effort over the previous year. We thank Crossroads for their generous assistance and support.

2023 also saw Capacity Plus embark on the process of employing somebody with a specific skill set around grant writing. This was a specific need as well as a strategic opportunity to see if there was an opportunity to strengthen the funding opportunities for the RTO and counter the moving landscape of

government funding. We were able to partner with a number of organisations over the year and increase our throughput over the year. We were ultimately unsuccessful with our initial goal of strengthening the RTO funding and this then fed into the direction we saw later in the year. One of the organisations we were able to partner with was Good360 and we distributed a fairly large amount of goods and supplies into our partner locations, straight into the hands of families and communities that had need and were ever so appreciative including a pallet load of children's Nike shoes.

September saw the Board of NT Christian Schools meet and labour over the difficult decision of what to do with Capacity Plus. As has become evident in history they made the extremely difficult decision to close all the workings of Capacity Plus. This meant that the last quarter of the year was spent on communications and logistics of winding up the affairs of the two major components. The RTO had been operating since 2002, so 20+ years and the FAST program since 2003. We received some incredibly encouraging responses from remote communities as they reflected on the years of programs and the changes that had occurred over time. There were a number of groundswells in community of folk to try and see the programs and service continue it was so valued. Inevitably the doors closed for the final time in late December with most staff already securing replacement jobs in their various fields.

2023 was the end of a chapter in the life of NT Christian Schools.

Darran Plumb  
Director of Training and Community Impact







## Senior Director Teaching & Learning: Alice Mustin

NT Christian Schools has continued to provide long and short-day care options at our Early Learning Centres across Sattler, Marrara and Palmerston Christian Colleges. In 2023, we celebrated 70 graduations as our kingdom kids adorned adorable outfits, proud smiles and showcased learning and favourite songs to their families. We had 53 (76%) of these preschool graduates continue on their learning journey into our primary schools.

We believe with deep conviction that every child is made in God's image and design, is inherently valuable, with unique interests, abilities and insights. It is our hope that together we establish a solid foundation for their learning and that they can discover what it means to follow Jesus and explore God's world with courage, wonder and curiosity. We aim to create a safe place where children love to come, that slowly and sensitively introduces them to some of the routines and realities of starting 'big school.'

Alongside a play-based approach, this year we focused on enhancing school readiness by introducing targeted instructional literacy based on the latest research on the science of reading. Our staff received training and online coaching and will

continue to embed this into our daily programs and routines into the future.

With a nation-wide shortage across the Early Learning sector, we have found it particularly hard to recruit Centre Directors and qualified Early Learning Teachers. This is an ongoing challenge, having had three Centre Directors leave during the year. We were unable to fill the positions at Marrara and Sattler Christian College and are still recruiting for these positions.

We are deeply grateful for the oversight and leadership of Erica Miles, our Centre Directors, and all our staff teams who continue to love, care and foster the development of the children in our care amidst increased staff shortages.

We trust God to continue to lead and guide our Early Learning Centres.

Alice Mustin  
Senior Director Teaching & Learning







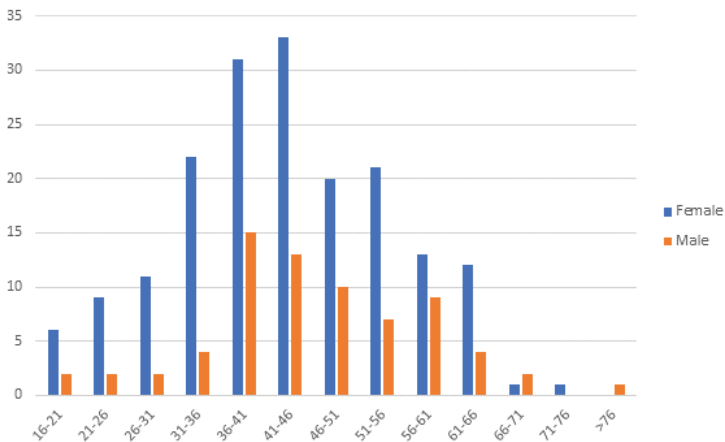
# Our People

At a glance

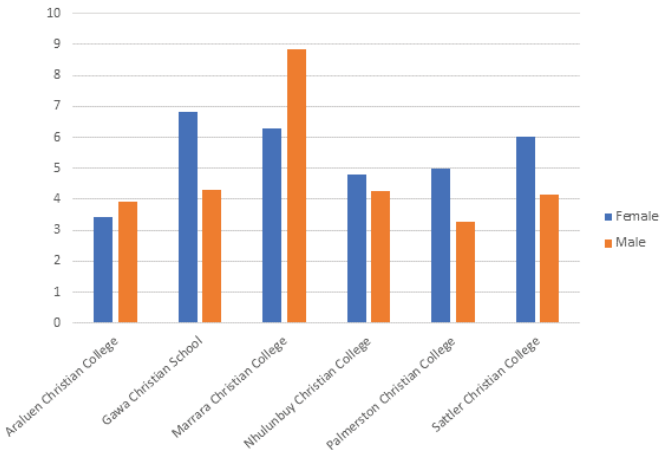
Staff at school sites  
(as of census date 2023)

	ACC	GCS	MCC	NCC	NTCC	PCC	SCC	Total
Principals	1	1	.7	1	.3	1	1	6
Teachers	7	2	20	12	18	22	13	94
Non-teaching staff	4	3	15	4	6	20	10	62

Count of staff  
by age



Average length  
of service







But Jesus said, "Let the little children come to me and do not hinder them, for to such belongs the kingdom of heaven."

*Matthew 19:14*

# Message from the Acting Director of Finance

Asiri Karunaratne

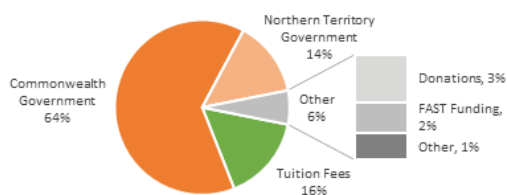
In 2023, NT Christian Schools met key budget targets for financial viability and sustainability, though not by the wide margins of previous years. EBITDA (Earnings before interest, depreciation, and amortization) excluding capital grants and Mountain District donation for the entire system of schools was 11.7% of total income, down on 15.4% in 2022, against a benchmark of 13% required to maintain and modestly grow our portfolio of equipment and facilities.

While we are thankful to God, and to our staff, for such performance in challenging circumstances, it is nevertheless necessary for us to understand and reverse the trend in declining EBIDA, so that we can

continue to provide quality Christian education into the future.

As indicated in the charts below, NT Christian Schools receives the bulk of income from per capita sources (government subsidies accounting for 76% in 2023, and fees for 19%). This means that no matter how carefully we manage our expenses, our overall financial performance is still highly sensitive to fluctuations in student enrolment. Falling student numbers (a net loss of 70 students this year, declining from 1386 in 2022 to 1316 in 2023) therefore represents an increasing challenge to meet our EBIDA target.

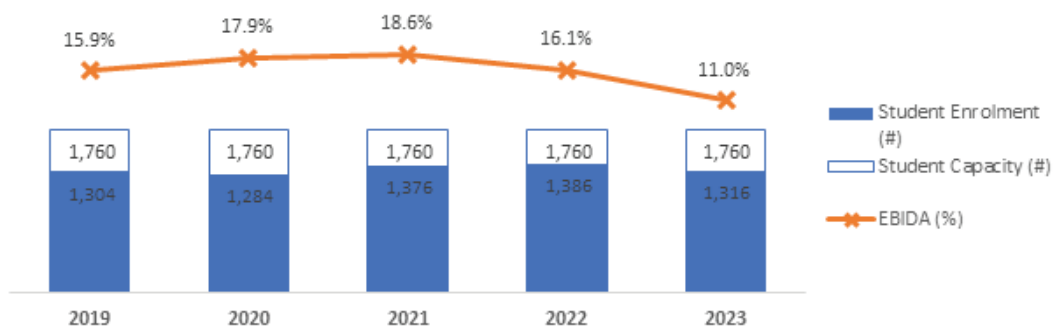
Income by Source



Income (\$ million)	2023
Commonwealth Government	25.9
Northern Territory Government	5.7
Tuition Fees	7.9
Donations	1.2
FAST Funding	0.6
Other	0.3
Total	41.6



## EBIDA vs Student Enrolment



	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
Student Enrolment	1,304	1,284	1,376	1,386	1,316
Student Capacity	1,760	1,760	1,760	1,760	1,760
EBIDA (%)	16.1%	19.2%	17.9%	15.4%	11.7%

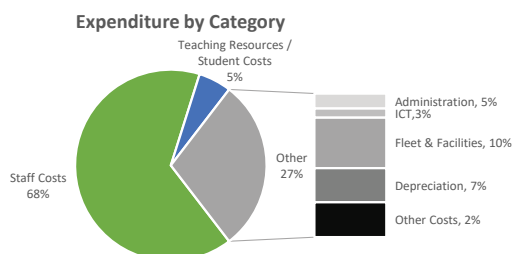
Many of the factors impacting student numbers are difficult to avoid. For instance, national trends like rising inflation and interest rates are driving up the overall cost of living, and are forcing some families away from independent schools altogether. Local factors, such as the gradual reduction in mining staff and their families Nhulunbuy and the social situation in some NT communities, may also have a negative effect.

Despite these challenges, NT Christians Schools still has enormous opportunity to capitalise on marketable strengths, including values in education and strong school culture/community. Additionally, with all our schools running below maximum enrolment capacity, core infrastructure is already in place to support increased student numbers without major capital investment.

	ACC	GCS	MCC	NCC	PCC	SCC	Total
Student Enrolment	114	58	392	140	390	222	1,316
Student Capacity	200	70	550	240	450	250	1,760

Beyond efforts to increase student numbers, NT Christian Schools can also focus on improving non per capita income streams, such as donations. Gratitude is extended to Mountain District Christian School for a generous \$1.1 million donation in 2023 (\$118,000 allocated to Gawa, \$368,000 to Sattler, \$384,000 to Nhulunbuy, and \$252,000 to Araluen). With inflation (approximately 8% in 2023) currently outstripping Commonwealth funding indexation (approximately 4%), donations and new/innovative sources of revenue will be increasingly important to safeguard the future operation of our schools.

On the operational expenditure side of financial performance, staffing remains the largest category (65%), with ongoing need to focus on maintaining both administration and teacher to student ratios, balancing financial sustainability with delivery of educational outcomes.

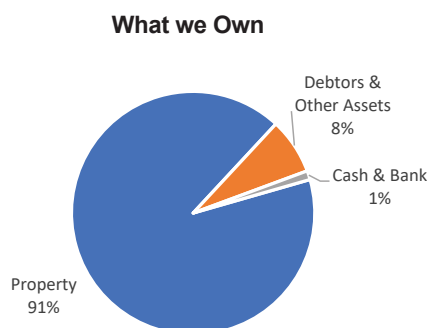


Expenditure (\$ million)	2023
Staff Costs	24.9
Teaching Resources / Student Costs	2.1
Administration	1.2
Information Communication Technology	0.7
Fleet & Facilities	3.9
Depreciation	2.6
Other Costs	2.7
<b>Total</b>	<b>38.1</b>

In 2023, capital investments amounted to \$6.0 million, with major projects including classrooms (M-Block) in Marrara, classrooms (D-Block) and toilets in Nhulunbuy, and a toilet block renovation in Araluen.

The challenging decision was reached to discontinue our Capacity Plus Programs at the end of 2023. This conclusion follows thorough consideration over an extended period. On behalf of all staff, I wish to express appreciation for the hard work and dedication of everyone who has contributed to the various iterations of these programs over the years. It's important to acknowledge the sombreness that accompanies decisions of this nature.

As of the end of 2023, NT Christian Schools' debt levels and ongoing servicing of loans remains healthy. Total debt was \$4.5 million (\$3,448 per student). Continued prudence in managing our debt reflects a commitment to financial responsibility and sustainability.

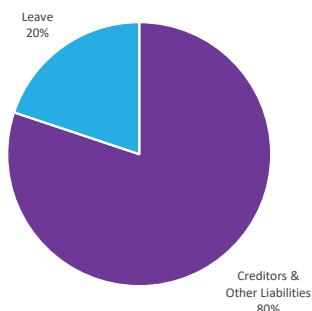


What we own (\$ million)	2023
Property	58.1
Debtors & Other Assets	4.7
Cash & Bank	0.8
<b>Total</b>	<b>63.6</b>





### What we Owe



What we owe (\$ million)	2023
Creditors & Other Liabilities	9.1
Leave	2.3
<b>Total</b>	<b>11.4</b>

While local and national economic factors contributed to a challenging 2023 for the finances of NT Christian Schools, dedicated efforts from all staff have yielded a pleasing result, for which we thank God. Please join me in prayer for our Board, Executive, Principles, teachers, and support staff, as together we seek to wisely steward the resources God has entrusted us, in the words of our organisational Vision Statement "to be Christian communities, learning together to live life as God intends, offering hope to the world."

## Brief overview of financial performance

<b>Consolidated Operating Result</b>	2023	2022
Operating result (before capital grants)	1,961,444	3,902,168
Capital grants	393,000	477,000
Operating result after capital grants	2,354,444	4,379,168
Non-operating adjustment - Mountain District Christian School Donation	1,122,000	
Non-operating adjustment - TSNT Donation		1,502,056
Net Financial Result (after capital grants and non operating donations)	3,476,444	5,881,224
EBIDA % (excluding Capital gains & TSNT Donation)	11.7%	15.4%







# Auditor's Statement





## Independent auditor's report to the members of NT Christian Schools

### Opinion

We have audited the accompanying financial report, being a special purpose financial report of NT Christian Schools (the 'Company'), which comprises the statement of financial position as at 31 December 2023, the statement of comprehensive income, statement of changes in equity and statement of cash flows for the year then ended, notes comprising a summary of material accounting policy information and other explanatory information, and the directors' declaration.

In our opinion the financial report of NT Christian Schools has been prepared in accordance with Division 60 of the *Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission Act 2012*, including:

- a) giving a true and fair view of the Company's financial position as at 31 December 2023 and of its financial performance for the year then ended; and
- b) complying with Australian Accounting Standards to the extent described in Note 1, and Division 60 of the *Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission Regulation 2022*.

### Basis for Opinion

We conducted our audit in accordance with Australian Auditing Standards. Our responsibilities under those standards are further described in the *Auditor's Responsibilities for the Audit of the Financial Report* section of our report. We are independent of the Company in accordance with the *Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission Act 2012* and the ethical requirements of the *Accounting Professional and Ethical Standards Board's APES 110 Code of Ethics for Professional Accountants (including Independence Standards)* (the 'Code') that are relevant to our audit of the financial report in Australia. We have also fulfilled our other ethical responsibilities in accordance with the Code.

We believe that the audit evidence we have obtained is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for our opinion.

### Emphasis of Matter – Basis of Accounting

We draw attention to Note 1 to the financial report, which describes the basis of accounting. The financial report has been prepared for the purpose of fulfilling the Company's financial reporting responsibilities under the *Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission Act 2012*. As a result, the financial report may not be suitable for another purpose. Our opinion is not modified in respect of this matter.

### The Responsibility of the Directors for the Financial Report

The Directors are responsible for the preparation of the financial report that gives a true and fair view and have determined that the basis of preparation described in Note 1 to the financial report is appropriate to meet the requirements of the *Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission Act 2012* and the needs of the members. The Directors responsibility also includes such internal control as the Directors determine is necessary to enable the preparation of a financial report that gives a true and fair view and is free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error.

In preparing the financial report, the Directors are responsible for assessing the Company's ability to continue as a going concern, disclosing, as applicable, matters relating to going concern and using the going concern basis of accounting unless Directors either intend to liquidate the Company or to cease operations, or have no realistic alternative but to do so.

The Directors are responsible for overseeing the Company's financial reporting process.

Liability limited by a scheme approved under Professional Standards Legislation

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### Auditor's Responsibilities for the Audit of the Financial Report

Our objectives are to obtain reasonable assurance about whether the financial report as a whole is free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error, and to issue an auditor's report that includes our opinion. Reasonable assurance is a high level of assurance, but is not a guarantee that an audit conducted in accordance with the Australian Auditing Standards will always detect a material misstatement when it exists. Misstatements can arise from fraud or error and are considered material if, individually or in the aggregate, they could reasonably be expected to influence the economic decisions of users taken on the basis of the financial report.

As part of an audit in accordance with Australian Auditing Standards, we exercise professional judgement and maintain professional scepticism throughout the audit. We also:

- Identify and assess the risks of material misstatement of the financial report, whether due to fraud or error, design and perform audit procedures responsive to those risks, and obtain audit evidence that is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for our opinion. The risk of not detecting a material misstatement resulting from fraud is higher than for one resulting from error, as fraud may involve collusion, forgery, intentional omissions, misrepresentations, or the override of internal control.
- Obtain an understanding of internal control relevant to the audit in order to design audit procedures that are appropriate in the circumstances, but not for the purpose of expressing an opinion on the effectiveness of the Company's internal control.
- Evaluate the appropriateness of accounting policies used and the reasonableness of accounting estimates and related disclosures made by the Directors.
- Conclude on the appropriateness of the Directors' use of the going concern basis of accounting and, based on the audit evidence obtained, whether a material uncertainty exists related to events or conditions that may cast significant doubt on Company's ability to continue as a going concern. If we conclude that a material uncertainty exists, we are required to draw attention in our auditor's report to the related disclosures in the financial report or, if such disclosures are inadequate, to modify our opinion. Our conclusions are based on the audit evidence obtained up to the date of our auditor's report. However, future events or conditions may cause the Company to cease to continue as a going concern.
- Evaluate the overall presentation, structure and content of the financial report, including the disclosures, and whether the financial report represents the underlying transactions and events in a manner that achieves fair presentation.

We communicate with those charged with governance regarding, among other matters, the planned scope and timing of the audit and significant audit findings, including any significant deficiencies in internal control that we identify during our audit.

Merit Partners

Matthew Kennon  
Partner

Darwin  
Date:



# NT Christian Schools Directory

**Araluen Christian College**

10 Blain Street, Alice Springs,  
NT 0870  
ph: 08 8955 3300  
email: admin.acc@ntschoools.net

**Gäwa Christian School**

Gäwa, Elcho Island, NT  
PMB 257 Elcho Island  
Via Winnellie, NT 0822  
ph: 08 8970 5212  
email: admin.gcs@ntschoools.net

**Marrara Christian College**

110 Amy Johnson Avenue,  
Marrara, NT 0812  
P.O. Box 84, Karama, NT 0813  
ph: 08 8920 2000  
email: admin.mcc@ntschoools.net

**Nhulunbuy Christian College**

Eugenia Ave, Nhulunbuy, NT 0881  
P.O. Box 621, Nhulunbuy, NT 0881  
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**NT Christian Schools**

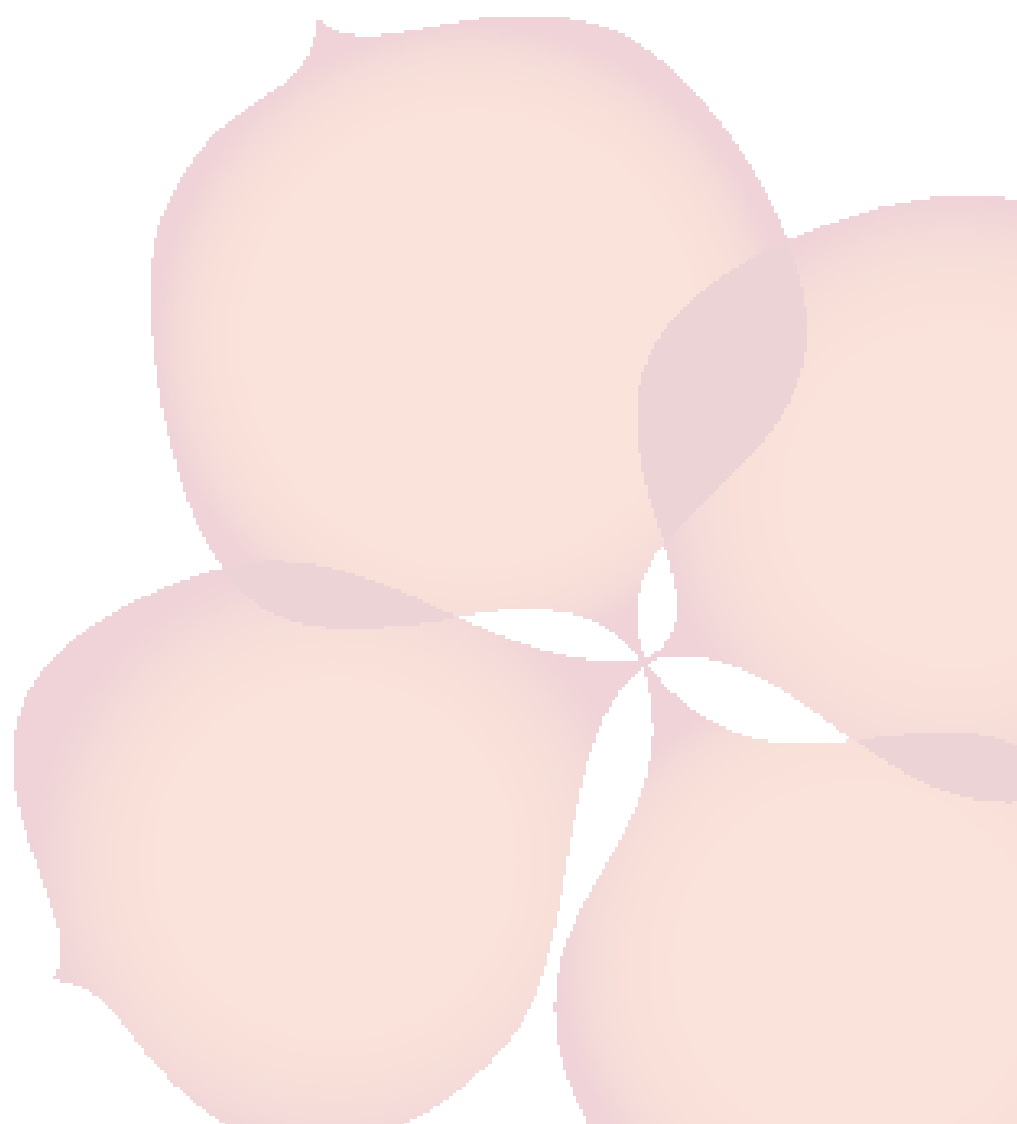
System Office  
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ph: 08 8920 4355  
email: admin@ntchristianschoools.com.au

**Palmerston Christian College**

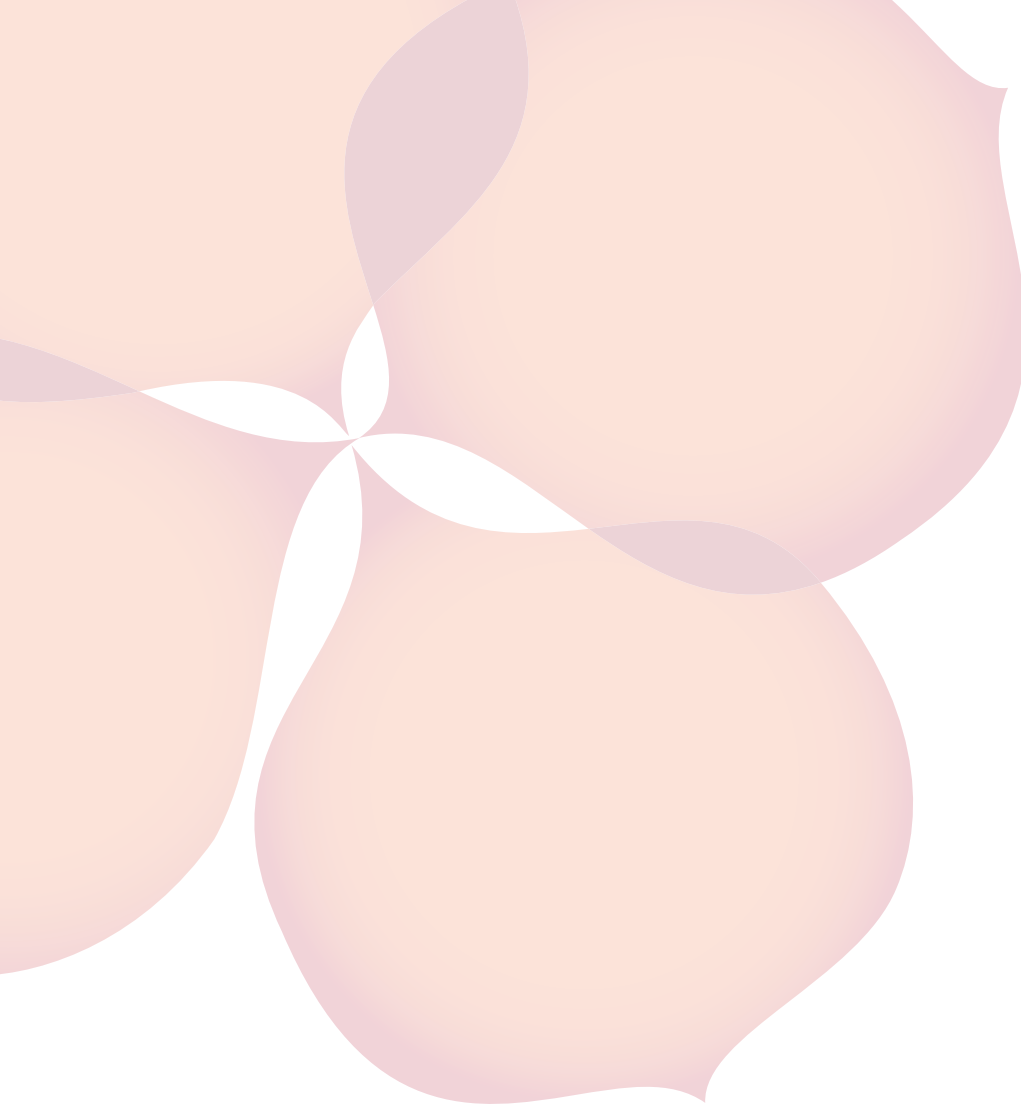
50 Waler Road, Marlow Lagoon, NT 0830  
P.O. Box 113, Palmerston, NT 0831  
ph: 08 7922 5600  
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**Sattler Christian College**

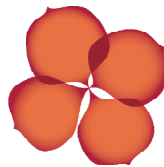
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