



ALESCO
Learning Centre Illawarra

Annual Report 2012



Alesco: from the Latin, to grow or mature

For young people, aged 15-18 years, who are ready to take responsibility for themselves, their learning and their future, in a safe and supportive environment for change

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Alesco Learning Centre Illawarra operates
under the auspices of WEA Illawarra
ABN 14 062 944 950
Board of Studies School Number: 78007
DEEWR School Number: 29085

This report is prepared by Alesco Learning Centre Illawarra to meet educational and financial reporting requirements for the 2012 reporting year, in accordance with the Commonwealth Government's *Schools Assistance Regulations 2009* and the NSW Board of Studies requirements for Registered and Accredited individual non-government schools.

Alesco Learning Centre Illawarra would like to thank

- The Australian Government Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations
- The NSW Department of Education and Communities
- The NSW Association of Independent Schools
- The Board of Directors and staff of WEA Illawarra
- The staff and students of Alesco Learning Centre Illawarra

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Table of Contents

From the WEA Illawarra Board of Directors.....	4
Principal's Message	5
Vision, Mission and Philosophy	6
Characteristics of the Student Body	10
Chart: Student Enrolment Data as at End Term 4 (Gender Distribution).....	10
Chart: Student Demographics.....	10
Student Performance.....	11
NAPLAN	11
Year 10.....	11
Course Results	11
Literacy and Numeracy Tests.....	12
Table: Literacy and Numeracy Test Scores.....	13
Workforce Composition	14
Teaching Standards	14
Professional Learning	15
Student Attendance.....	17
Chart: Percentage of enrolled students in attendance in 2012	17
Post-School Destinations.....	18
Enrolment Policies.....	19
Other School Policies.....	21
Student Welfare	21
Discipline	22
Complaints and Grievances	22
School Improvement Targets.....	23
Initiatives Promoting Respect and Responsibility.....	25
Other Programs and Partnerships	27
Parent, Student and Teacher Satisfaction.....	29
Summary Financial Information.....	30
Chart 1: Recurrent and Capital Income 2012.....	30
Chart 2: Recurrent and Capital Expenditure 2012	30

From the WEA Illawarra Board of Directors



I am delighted on behalf of the WEA Illawarra Board of Directors to present to you the second annual report for the Alesco Learning Centre Illawarra.

I attended the 2012 Graduation ceremony with Board members and was proud of the achievements of the students and the staff.

The ceremony was the culmination of a year of effort and dedication from the team at Alesco and they are to be congratulated for the outcomes they have achieved.

The keynote address was delivered by Lord Mayor Gordon Bradbery OAM, who encouraged the students to follow their passion and to be resilient as they grow and mature. These messages closely align with the Alesco vision.

As part of our plans to facilitate the development and growth of the school, an application will be made in 2013 to the NSW Board of Studies for registration of Years 11 and 12 and accreditation to teach Stage 6 courses. This will allow the school to offer students a variety of pathways to further study including the attainment of the Higher School Certificate.

In addition, a refurbishment proposal for the existing facilities is also being developed to ensure the school's physical environment compliments the curricula developments and planned student growth.

On behalf of the WEA Board of Directors I extend thanks once again to the committed team at Alesco Learning Centre and I look forward to the successes of 2013.

Dale Cairney
Chairman
WEA Illawarra Board

Principal's Message



Alesco Learning Centre Illawarra continued to grow in 2012, successfully completing its second year of operations. Thirty-nine students, from as far as Albion Park in the south to Austinmer in the north enrolled to complete their Year 10 studies..

Congratulations are extended to the nineteen students who graduated from Alesco Illawarra in front of their proud parents, grandparents and family members and of course, staff. The students' contribution on the night showcased their abilities in a public setting and helped all who were there understand the fine work that is being undertaken and equally how proud the students were of their own achievements.

These principles of success, i.e goals, effort, reward, recognition, have not changed over the years. These students achieved recognition at Graduation for setting goals, putting in the effort, achieving their rewards and finally gaining recognition. They have started the journey of success, and it is a sign that WEA's vision of a brighter future for individuals and their communities is being achieved.

An operational highlight of the 2012 year was the achievement of a five year full registration and accreditation by the NSW Board of Studies for Stage 5. This achievement reflected the commitment and effort of the small but dedicated team at Alesco Illawarra.

Alesco Illawarra was able to build on existing programs in 2012 due to the ongoing financial support of the Federal and State Governments as well as local businesses. Without this support the school would not be able to implement the programs that assist our students to achieve their goals.

As a community-based organisation, WEA values and nurtures its relationships with the broader community. In 2012 Alesco staff continued to develop key relationships with local community organisations so that pathways and support services could be offered to students. On behalf of Alesco Illawarra I extend our thanks to those organisations for their ongoing support, advice and contribution to the success of our students.

These achievements in 2012 would not be possible without the efforts of the dedicated team of teachers and support staff at Alesco Illawarra. The staff are to be congratulated for their drive, commitment and passion for the school and its community.

Greg Fisher
Principal Alesco Learning Centre
CEO WEA Illawarra

Vision, Mission and Philosophy

Context

Alesco Learning Centre Illawarra is a non-denominational independent school registered with the NSW Department of Education and Communities for Years 9 and 10, and accredited by the NSW Board of Studies to deliver Stage 5 courses. Alesco Illawarra offers young people aged between 15 and 18 years an alternative education option. Students who enrol at Alesco Illawarra typically face barriers to completing their education in mainstream school settings, including mental health issues, learning difficulties, social disadvantage and behavioural issues.

Alesco Illawarra operates under the auspices of WEA Illawarra. WEA Illawarra is a not-for-profit organisation that is part of the Adult and Community Education sector and has a vision to provide a brighter future for individuals and their communities. As a community college with a broad social inclusion agenda, Alesco Illawarra supports the achievement of WEA's vision and mission.

Alesco Illawarra Vision

Alesco Illawarra will provide a safe, respectful and inclusive environment in which young people can explore learning, develop their potential, and be well equipped to meet the challenges of education, work and life in the 21st Century.

Mission Statement

Alesco Illawarra strives to provide young people who have not found success in traditional secondary education models, an opportunity to learn, grow and achieve success in a smaller, more informal and supportive learning environment.

We do this:

- Through the provision of exemplary teaching and learning programs which encourage critical thinking skills, enabling students to hypothesize, pose questions, investigate issues and develop solutions.
- Through the provision of well qualified staff who are committed to the vision of Alesco Illawarra.
- Through the development of strong links with student support networks in the community including parents and carers.
- Through the development of a connected learning community that enables students to access their educational programs 24/7.
- By creating a culture of respect that focuses on equity and social justice.

Philosophy

Inclusion

The philosophy of Alesco Illawarra is inclusive education. Every child has a fundamental right to education, and must be given the opportunity to achieve and maintain an acceptable level of learning.

Inclusive schools are those 'which include everybody, celebrate differences, support learning, and respond to individual needs'. This inclusive orientation is the most effective means of combating discriminatory attitudes, creating

welcoming communities, building an inclusive society and achieving education for all.

Alesco Learning Centre Illawarra strives to achieve educational systems and programs designed and implemented to take into account the unique characteristics and needs of every young person. To further enhance this learning, staff work collaboratively with agencies within the wider community to provide opportunities to enhance student wellbeing.

The aim is to meet the challenge of 'Education For All'.*

* (UNESCO, 1994, *The Salamanca Statement and Framework for Action on Special Needs Education*, United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation, Paris.

Values

At Alesco Learning Centre Illawarra we believe in the core values of

Respect for Self
Respect for Others
Respect for Community

Our core values are reflected in the management and operation of the school and participation of students in the learning program. The student welfare plan, code of conduct and discipline framework focus on these values to ensure that our learning environment is positive and supportive.



Students of Alesco Illawarra have identified some of the core actions that help us demonstrate our core values, and have included these in our "Circle of Respect":

Acceptance
Learning
Empathy
Safety
Commitment
Oppportunity

Relationships and Personal Growth

We aim to create positive relationships with our students so we can help them to move forward with their education. Breaking down barriers between students and teachers creates an environment in which young people feel comfortable learning.



Our job is to help young people believe in themselves and to realise that they can shape their future and choose what it will be, regardless of what has come before. We seek to provide opportunities for each young person to:

- grow as a person,
- learn how to form positive interpersonal relationships,
- enhance their desire to learn for learning's sake,
- progress in their knowledge and skills.

We attempt to accept young people as they are, and however they choose to express themselves, within a framework of mutual respect.

We seek to provide learning opportunities for young people which prove their capabilities and help them reach their potential, in an environment that is designed specifically for their inclusion.

Adult Learning Principles

At Alesco Illawarra, students learn in an environment surrounded by other adult learners, who often unknowingly act as a community group role model. Students have the opportunity to take on the roles and responsibilities of learning as an adult does, in an environment that asks for greater responsibility but also offers greater freedom. The level of responsibility and freedom is tailored to meet the requirements and developmental stages of the young people enrolled.

The adult learning principles which guide the Alesco Learning Centre Illawarra program include:

- recognition that young people have a range of life experience and learning needs to connect to experience in a meaningful way.
- young people have a need to know why they are learning something.
- use of appropriate strategies to meet the young person's need to be self-directing.
- education and training needs to be learner-centred to engage learners.
- the learning process needs to support increasing learner independence.
- learning should be experimental and participative, recognising and accommodating each person's different learning style and reflecting individual circumstances.

Psychological Framework

Our underlying psychological framework is Dr William Glasser's Choice Theory which states that almost all behaviour is chosen and that behaviour is one's best

attempt, at any given time, given the skills one currently has, to meet one's needs.

Glasser summarised these needs as:

- Survival
- Love and belonging
- Power
- Freedom
- Fun.

We aim to help our students to evaluate their behaviours to see if what they have chosen to do or say is most likely to get them what they really want or to figure out a more effective way of meeting their own needs.

Choice Theory includes Seven Caring Habits. Our hope is that everyone involved with Alesco Illawarra, including staff and students, will use the Seven Caring Habits, and eliminate the Seven Deadly Habits which are used to try and control other people's behaviour.

Seven Caring Habits	Seven Deadly Habits
1. Supporting	1. Criticizing
2. Encouraging	2. Blaming
3. Listening	3. Complaining
4. Accepting	4. Nagging
5. Trusting	5. Threatening
6. Respecting	6. Punishing
7. Negotiating differences	7. Bribing or rewarding to control

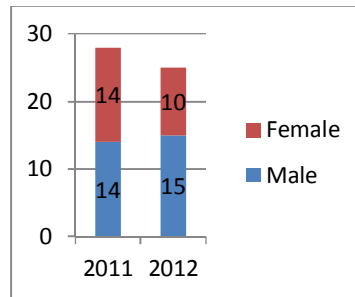


Alesco Illawarra students with visiting guest speaker
Lord Mayor of Wollongong, Councillor Gordon
Bradbery OAM

Characteristics of the Student Body

Throughout 2012 Alesco Illawarra enrolled a total of 39 students in the Year 10 program. Twenty-five (25) students maintained their enrolment until the end of Term 4, representing a 64% retention rate.

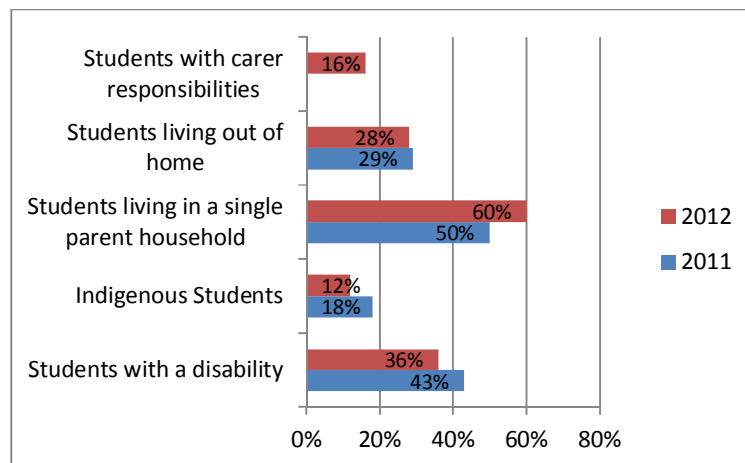
Chart: Student Enrolment Data as at End Term 4 (Gender Distribution)



Of the 25 students enrolled until the end of the 2012 school year:

- 36% had a disability which impacted on their learning and were supported by the Commonwealth Government National Partnerships Program with targeted literacy, numeracy and special needs funding administered through the NSW Association of Independent Schools
- 12% identified as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander
- 60% were living in single parent households
- 28% of students either live with a family member other than their parent, a family friend, independently, in out of home care, a youth refuge or other supported accommodation situation because they are no longer able to live at home.
- 16% had responsibilities caring for someone within their family.

Chart: Student Demographics



The NSW Minister for Education has granted Alesco Learning Centre Illawarra status as a Special Assistance School. This recognises that the school primarily enrolls students with social, emotional or behavioural difficulties.

Student Performance

NAPLAN

In 2012 Alesco Illawarra did not enrol any Year 9 students, therefore there were no students eligible to undertake the NAPLAN tests.

Year 10

A new Board of Studies credential, the Record of School Achievement (RoSA), was introduced in 2012, replacing the School Certificate.

Of the 25 students enrolled at completion of the 2012 school year:

- 19 students graduated having completed the Alesco Illawarra program and Year 10 requirements.
- 6 students failed to complete Year 10 course requirements.
- 4 students were eligible to receive their Record of School Achievement.

Course Results

English					
Grade	Students	School % 2012	School % 2011	↑/↓ % of student population achieving grade	State %
A	0	0	0	-	12.46
B	4	17.39	7.69	9.7% student population	27.03
C	10	43.48	30.77	12.71% student population	36.36
D	3	13.04	30.77	17.73% student population	16.63
E	6	26.09	7.69	18.4% student population	6.3

Mathematics					
Grade	Students	School % 2012	School % 2011	↑/↓ % of student population achieving grade 2011 - 12	State %
A10	0	0	0	-	6.5
A9	0	0	0	-	7.9
B8	0	0	0	-	10.7
B7	2	8.7	0	-	12.39
C6	5	21.74	7.69	8.7% student population	15.69
C5	6	26.09	30.77	4.68% student population	15.02
D4	3	13.04	15.38	2.34% student population	12.98
D3	2	8.7	15.38	6.68% student population	10.72
E2	5	21.74	7.69	14.05% student population	6.89

Science					
Grade	Students	School % 2012	School % 2011	↑/↓ % of student population achieving grade	State %
A	0	0	0	-	13.47
B	3	13.04	23.08	10.04% student population	23.81
C	8	34.78	30.77	4.01% student population	34.8
D	5	21.74	7.69	14.05% student population	19.01
E	7	30.43	23.08	7.35% student population	7.7

Australian History, Civics and Citizenship					
Grade	Students	School % 2012	School % 2011	↑/↓ % of student population achieving grade	State %
A	0	0	0	-	13.01
B	4	17.39	7.69	9.7% student population	23.39
C	7	30.43	38.46	8.03% student population	33.79
D	6	26.09	30.77	4.68% student population	19.98
E	6	26.09	7.69	18.40% student population	8.54

Australian Geography, Civics and Citizenship					
Grade	Students	School % 2012	School % 2011	↑/↓ % of student population achieving grade	State %
A	0	0	0	-	12.78
B	3	13.04	0	13.04% student population	24.28
C	8	34.78	38.46	3.68% student population	34.23
D	5	21.74	38.46	16.72% student population	19.47
E	7	30.43	7.69	22.74% student population	7.94

PDHPE					
Grade	Students	School % 2012	School % 2011	↑/↓ % of student population achieving grade	State %
A	0	0	0	-	15.24
B	4	16.67	18.18	1.51% student population	31.87
C	10	41.67	54.55	12.88% student population	34.01
D	5	20.83	27.27	6.44% student population	12.88
E	5	20.83	0	20.83% student population	5.08

Literacy and Numeracy Tests

Students who turned 17 and any Year 10 students not returning to full-time I study in 2013 had the opportunity to complete the new standardised literacy and numeracy tests set by the Board of Studies. These tests were developed in line with the Australian Core Skills Framework.

The levels used for reporting performance in the Literacy and Numeracy tests are derived from Levels 1, 2 and 3 of the ACSF for Reading, Writing and Numeracy.

The maximum possible mark for each test is 60 and:

- Level 3 corresponds to marks from 40 to 60
- Level 2 corresponds to marks from 20 to 39
- Level 1 corresponds to marks less than 20.

Six Alesco Illawarra students were eligible to complete the tests in 2012.

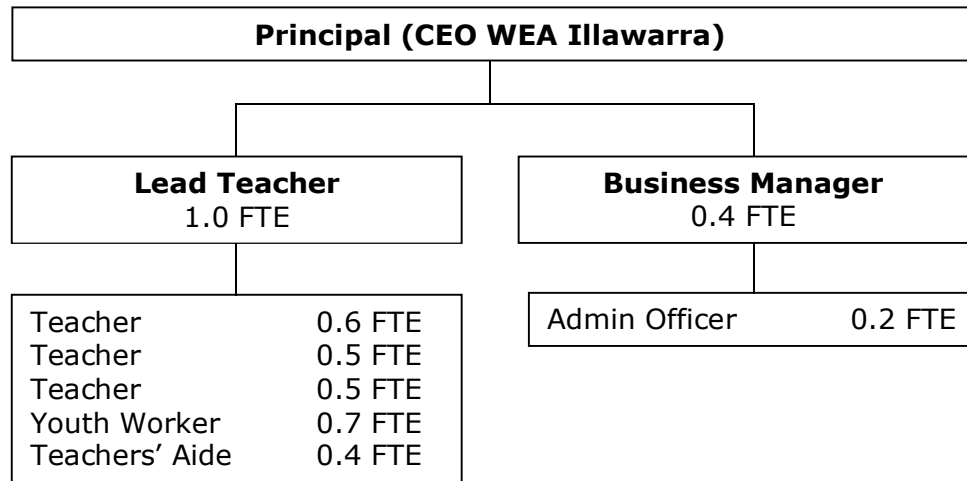
Table: Literacy and Numeracy Test Scores

	Literacy Test	Numeracy Test
	Number of Students	Number of Students
Level 3 Scores	6	4
Level 2 Scores	-	1
Level 1 Scores	-	1



Year 10 Geography Excursion

Workforce Composition



There were no teachers or ancillary staff who identified as being of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander descent.

Teaching Standards

All teaching staff met the professional requirements for teaching in NSW according to the following categories:

Category	Number of Teachers
(i) Teachers having teacher education qualifications from a higher education institution within Australia or as recognised within the National Office of Overseas Skills Recognition (AEI-NOOSR) guidelines	3
(ii) Teachers having a bachelor degree from a higher education institution within Australia or one recognised within the AEI-NOOSR guidelines but lack formal teacher education qualifications	1
(iii) Teachers not having qualifications as described in (i) or (ii) but having relevant successful teaching experience or appropriate knowledge relevant to the teaching context.	0

Professional Learning

Alesco Illawarra operates on a cyclic timetable with two hours every second Friday dedicated to professional learning. In 2012 staff used this time to review practices, determine areas of need and engage in professional dialogue. A number of pupil free days were also held throughout the year. Two key areas for professional learning were targeted in 2012. The first related to mental health issues facing young people and the second focused on assessment and reporting, in particular tiered assessment and summative and formative assessment.

Alesco Illawarra staff participated in the following externally held professional development sessions in 2012:

Participant	Course	Provider
Teacher	Early Intervention for Eating Disorders and Body Image	Butterfly Foundation for Eating Disorders
Business Manager	Briefing Session on Gonski Report and Future Funding for Independent Schools	Association of Independent Schools NSW
Lead Teacher Teachers x 3 Youth Worker	Dr Michael Carr-Gregg - mental health issues for young people, how to raise happy and resilient teens, parenting challenges	Catholic Care Wollongong
Lead Teacher Teachers x 2 Youth Worker	Generation Next Conference - Mental Health and Wellbeing of Young People	Health Ed and Generation Next
Lead Teacher	Visible Learning Foundation Day - Professor John Hattie	Visible Learning Foundation
Teachers x 2 Teachers' Aide Youth Worker	Youth Mental Health First Aid	Mental Health First Aid
Lead Teacher Business Manager	Asset Based Community Development	Peter Kenyon
Lead Teacher	Developing Stage 6 English Program	Association of Independent Schools NSW
Principal Lead Teacher	Professional Review and Development program - Appretio	Association of Independent Schools NSW

Participant	Course	Provider
Business Manager	The Changing Role of the School Business Manager: Stepping up to the challenge	Cambridge Education - Teacher Training Australia
Business Manager	The New Working With Children Check	NSW Commission for Children and Young People
Lead Teacher Teachers x 2 Teachers' Aide Youth Worker	CPR update	Surf Life Saving Australia
Lead Teacher	Special Educators Network Meeting - professional support in issues relating to disabilities, service providers, program building, current research, literacy and numeracy	NSW Association of Independent Schools
Lead Teacher Business Manager	Non teaching staff performance review	NSW Association of Independent Schools
Lead Teacher	Literacy Programs – Literacy Consultant	NSW Association of Independent Schools



The Alesco Illawarra Team, Graduation 2012

Student Attendance

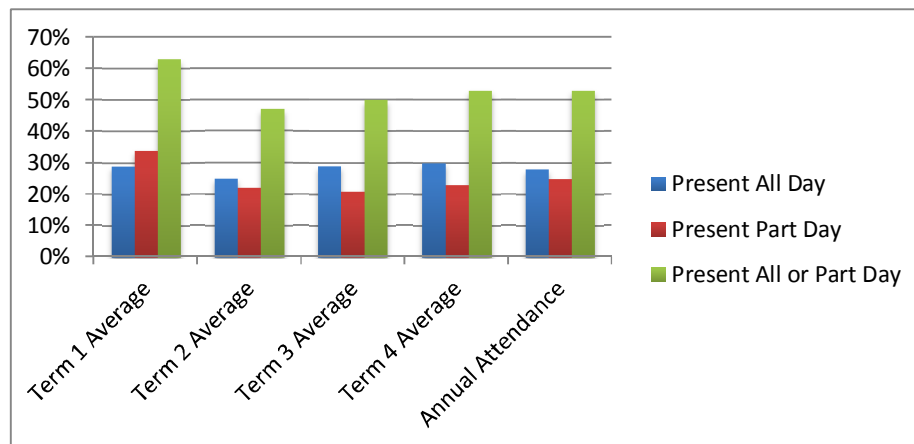
Attendance rates for students at Alesco Illawarra were generally low when taken on average, however there were individual students whose attendance rates were high (considering their special needs). It is important to take into consideration that a significant number of students faced personal, socioeconomic, and other barriers to completing their education. This is reflected in poor attendance rates.

Many students have been long-term school refusers. A significant achievement of Alesco Illawarra's program has been that students have had greater participation and engagement in learning than previously.

Average attendance rates in 2012 are detailed as follows:

	Present All Day	Present Part Day	Present All or Part Day
Term 1 Average	29%	34%	63%
Term 2 Average	25%	22%	47%
Term 3 Average	29%	21%	50%
Term 4 Average	30%	23%	53%
Average Annual Attendance 2012	28%	25%	53%

Chart: Percentage of enrolled students in attendance in 2012



Many strategies have been put in place to address poor attendance, with individual consideration given to each student and their particular circumstances. Strategies include attendance agreements with students, negotiated flexibility in attendance where a student can demonstrate a satisfactory work completion rate, support meetings with parents/carers and other service providers involved in the care of the young person, and exemptions from attendance where medical or mental health problems are present.

Staff of Alesco Illawarra are committed to continuing to work with students, parents/carers and other support people to improve student attendance.

Post-School Destinations

As Alesco Illawarra is only accredited to deliver Stage 5, a significant part of the Youth Worker's role was to support students in their transition to further study. Many students had a diagnosed disability, which led to Alesco Illawarra developing a strong working relationship with a local disability services provider who worked with the students in providing ongoing training and support both during their enrolment at Alesco Illawarra and following completion of Year 10.

Destination of students enrolled in Year 10 as at Term 4 in 2012 (n = 25)

Destination	Number of Students
Enrolled in year 11 at another high school or TAFE	5
Undertaking other education, training, apprenticeship or traineeship	4
Employed full-time, part-time or seeking employment	5
Re-enrolled at Alesco in 2013 to undertake year 10 again to further improve results	6
Unknown destination	5



Alesco Illawarra Graduation 2012

Enrolment Policies

Policy No: 1.5	Enrolment Policy
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Alesco Learning Centre Illawarra is a school specifically designed to help young people with barriers to education, or who are at risk of not completing their education, to re-engage with learning.

Our school aims to provide learning opportunities for young people, aged 15-18 years, who are unable to complete their education within the traditional school environment.

The selection process for Alesco Learning Centre Illawarra explores the following key areas to determine suitability for our program:

- Learning difficulties/disabilities
- Behavioural or emotional difficulties/disabilities
- Social or financial disadvantage or social isolation
- Previous academic performance and disconnection with learning
- Aboriginality, cultural and linguistic background
- Desire to overcome past difficulties and move on to future education, employment or training.

Alesco Learning Centre cannot cater to students who are functionally illiterate or who require intensive behaviour or health support. We provide case management to all students who are enrolled in the school but are not in a position to manage students who cannot operate within the adult learning environment and take responsibility for themselves, their learning and their actions.

All students who apply to attend Alesco Learning Centre Illawarra within the designated intake times shall be offered an interview as part of the application process. A 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 Alesco Learning Centre Illawarra.

All students who are enrolled at Alesco Learning Centre Illawarra will be required to undergo a literacy and numeracy assessment if the teaching staff deems it necessary. This may be conducted prior to enrolment if required.

Policy No: 1.6	Information required upon application to Alesco Learning Centre Illawarra
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Due to the nature of the target group attending Alesco Learning Centre Illawarra and the school's intended focus, Alesco Learning Centre Illawarra requires particular information regarding the student's history when applying to enrol.

This information includes:

- Personal details: name, age, address, DOB etc; (including proof of identity either through birth certificate or photo ID which includes a birth date)
- Parent/guardian contact details, if aged under 18 at time of application
- Current living arrangements

-
- Emergency contact details
 - Details of the referring service provider (if applicable)
 - Assessment and service provider support details (including any reports or letters of support from psychologists, psychiatrists, counsellors)
 - Demographic information: ATSI identification, cultural/linguistic background, disability
 - Medical conditions and medication (if applicable)
 - Previous education details (including most recent school reports)
 - Other training or employment information.

This information will be gathered through the *Application for Enrolment* form. No student will be accepted without a completed application form. No application will be processed without all of the essential supporting documentation being provided with the application.



Training in CPR skills



At Wollongong Youth Centre

Other School Policies

Alesco Illawarra policies and procedures were established prior to the opening of the school in February 2011. As part of Alesco Illawarra's review and improvement plan, policies and procedures are reviewed on a cyclic basis. Policies targeted for review in 2012 related to discipline and assessment.

Student Welfare

Alesco Illawarra seeks to provide a safe and supportive environment which:

- supports the social and emotional wellbeing of students
- encourages academic achievement
- minimises risk of harm.

The following policies are in place to support student welfare and are available on the Alesco Illawarra intranet or on request from the school.

Child Protection

Policy	2.1	Protecting and supporting children and young people
Policy	2.2	Role of staff in care and protection of children and young people
Policy	2.3	Mandatory reporting responsibilities of Alesco Learning Centre Illawarra staff
Policy	2.4	Working with Children Checks: volunteers, guest speakers, work placement students
Policy	2.5	Harm relating to the actions of a student, trainee or apprentice
Policy	2.6	Harm relating to the actions of a staff member

General Welfare, Security and Safety

Policy	1.11	Corporal punishment
Policy	1.14	Visitors to the Centre
Policy	1.15	Request for police assistance
Policy	1.18	Student excursions
Policy	1.21	Duty of care
Policy	3.8	Student supervision
Policy	3.9	Students travelling in staff vehicles
Policy	6.1	Welfare policy
Policy	6.2	Notification of concern for student welfare
Policy	6.3	Referral to support services
Policy	6.4	Accepting referral to support services
Policy	6.5	Students leaving premises
Policy	6.6	Anti-Bullying policy

In 2012, Alesco Illawarra developed and implemented a Welfare and Anti-Bullying Plan. This plan is available on the school intranet and on request from staff. The Welfare and Anti-Bullying Plan will continue to be developed and reviewed in coming years.

Discipline

Students are required to abide by the Alesco Illawarra Student Code of Conduct and follow the directions of teachers and other people with authority delegated by Alesco Illawarra. Where disciplinary action is required, consequences vary according to the nature of the breach of discipline, as outlined in the Discipline Framework.

All disciplinary action is undertaken in accordance with the principles of procedural fairness as outlined in the Procedural Fairness policy.

The following policies are in place to support student discipline and are available on the Alesco Illawarra intranet or on request from the school.

Policy	1.11	Corporal punishment
Policy	1.17	Procedural fairness
Policy	5.2	Student discipline
Policy	5.4	Student dress standard
Policy	5.5	Student code of conduct
Policy	5.6	Student rights and responsibilities

Complaints and Grievances

Alesco Illawarra views complaints, as well as compliments and other constructive feedback as a way of creating opportunities for the school to improve its services and prevent future problems.

A suggestion or complaint can be lodged by any person who is a user or potential user of Alesco Learning Centre Illawarra services including a student, a parent/guardian or carer or other community member. The suggestion or complaint can be about any aspect of the service provided or not provided, the behaviour or decisions of other staff, or about workplace practices, policies or procedures.

All complaints and grievances will be handled fairly by the appropriate people within the organisation in a timely and confidential manner

Full details of the Complaints and Grievances policy and associated procedures are available on the Alesco Illawarra intranet or by request from the school.

School Improvement Targets

A full school review was undertaken at the end of 2011 following the first full year of operation. In consultation with staff, students and parents it was decided to focus on the following priority areas for 2012:

- overall school plan;
- curriculum and program planning;
- assessment and reporting;
- student welfare and behaviour management;
- staff welfare.

The following is a brief overview of each.

School Planning

A significant focus for 2012 was the school culture. Discussion throughout 2011 indicated the need to develop a strong school culture that reflected the underlying assumptions, beliefs and practices of the school. It was determined that unless significant planning was undertaken to cement the school culture then each cohort of students would find little with which to connect. It was felt that it was very important to have a solid core of values and expectations onto which both staff and students could anchor themselves against the day to day issues that arose.

Two staff development days were allocated to developing long term goals and a strategic plan for Alesco Illawarra. These are to be continued into 2013.

As an integral part of this process, school review and improvement goals were also set for 2012 and 2103.

Curriculum and program planning

Gaps in certain curriculum programs were identified during the year. Staff were provided with relevant documentation and training to rework programs. Release time was also provided. Programs and relevant documentation are now of acceptable standard.

Assessment and Reporting

Reporting to parents was of a high standard with parents and carers being informed through email, post and telephone. A full school report was sent to parents and carers at the end of Terms 2 and 4.

Two workshops were held throughout the year. These focused on using the Assessment Resource Centre tools to help teachers effectively grade work samples and on formative and summative assessment.

One staff member also attended Visible Learning Foundation Day with Professor John Hattie.

Student Welfare and Behaviour Management

At the conclusion of 2011 staff expressed a need to modify Alesco Illawarra's behaviour management program. It was felt that there was too strong an

emphasis on punitive action. Following considerable research and discussion it was decided to move to a Positive Behaviour Support model.

AISNSW consultants worked with Alesco Illawarra to develop a model that would suit the culture of the school. New students in 2012 were introduced to the program and worked with staff to develop the Respect and Participation behaviour model under which the school currently operates.

Staff also attended the Generation Next conference and seminars with Dr Michael Carr-Gregg to gain further insight into the issues impacting on young people.

Staff Welfare

Following the first year of operation, it was recognised that there was a significant risk of staff 'burn-out'. Given the nature of the cohort and the stresses placed on staff to deal with the multifaceted issues that arise during the day it was decided to use time at the beginning of the year to support staff in planning for the year particularly around the use of a Teachers' Aide and Youth Worker.

Staff were also encouraged to be aware of their own personal needs and to take appropriate action to ensure their own wellbeing..

Initiatives Promoting Respect and Responsibility

The need to develop a strong school culture around respect was instrumental in the development of a positive behaviour support program for Alesco Illawarra.

Initiatives for 2012 were:

Anti-Bullying Policy

Alesco Illawarra is committed to providing a safe and secure environment for every student. During 2012 an Anti-Bullying Policy was developed. This policy addresses all forms of bullying and harassment including cyber bullying. The policy has a strong focus on responsibility, respect and resilience and incorporates all members of the school community.

The policy is one of a group of policies that provides the framework for student wellbeing within Alesco Illawarra. All programs designed to support student wellbeing evolve from the relevant policies. The Anti-Bullying Policy will be revised and updated in 2013 to include social and emotional wellbeing.

The Anti-Bullying Policy is posted on the Alesco Illawarra website.

The following programs were developed to acknowledge the positive behaviours of students and to encourage them to demonstrate respect towards each other and the community.

Respect and Participation (RaP) Program

Respect and participation were identified as two key elements in moving towards success at Alesco Illawarra. Many students demonstrated a lack of respect towards themselves and others and this impacted on their ability to engage positively in a learning environment.

The program was developed in consultation with students at the beginning of the year and key concepts were explicitly taught throughout the year. Student achievements were acknowledged by a simple star chart, coffee reward and letters to parents/carers. During Term 4, students who consistently demonstrated an understanding of the program through positive engagement were taken on an excursion. In 2012 this excursion was to Sydney for the Youth Eco Summit held at Sydney Olympic Park. Eleven students were eligible to attend and thoroughly enjoyed the day.

By keeping rewards small and consistent, staff were able to reward students frequently for small steps. This proved to be highly successful.

Student of the Week

Each week a student is acknowledged for a positive action they have taken during the week. The student receives a certificate and a letter of acknowledgement sent to their parent/carer. Students who receive more than five Student of the Week awards in the year receive a gift voucher at Graduation.

Restorative Justice

Restorative Justice principles are used to resolve conflict whenever possible at Alesco Illawarra. By using these principles, students are encouraged to listen to each person's stories, develop empathy for others and take responsibility for their own actions.

Students were taught these principles at the commencement of Term 1 and encouraged to apply them when resolving their own conflicts.

Drug and Alcohol Program

Students engaged in a drug and alcohol education program, developed in consultation with the Youth Drug and Alcohol Service and Alesco Illawarra PDHPE teacher. This program encouraged students to act responsibly and be respectful of others.



Year 10 geography excursion

Other Programs and Partnerships

National Partnerships for School Improvement

The Commonwealth Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations provides a number of grants for independent schools, administered through the Association of Independent Schools NSW. Alesco Learning Centre Illawarra received funding to support the following programs in 2012:

- Literacy and Numeracy. Funding was used to support the improvement of student literacy and numeracy levels. Intensive support was provided for students with identified needs as well as small group programs.
- Special Assistance Schools Funding for Students with Disabilities. Funding was used to employ a part-time Youth Support Worker and casual Teachers' Aide.
- Empowering Local Schools. Funding was used to support the growth and development of Alesco Illawarra through leadership development, performance review systems for teaching and non-teaching staff and improved staff recruitment, selection, induction and retention strategies.

National School Chaplaincy and Student Welfare Program

In 2012 Alesco Illawarra was able to employ the services of a qualified and experienced part-time Youth Support Worker for two days per week, with funding from the Australian Government Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations under the National School Chaplaincy and Student Welfare Program. The Youth Support Worker worked with teaching staff to provide individual support for students, focusing on social and emotional wellbeing.

Breakfast Program

Kindly supported by Collegians Football Club through the ClubGRANTS scheme. This program enabled students who had come to school without breakfast the opportunity to develop healthy eating habits each morning. Students were encouraged to have something to eat prior to coming into class and throughout the year students cooked breakfasts and lunches as part of a healthy eating program.

Rock and Water Program

Kindly supported by Collegians Football Club through the ClubGRANTS scheme. Students were encouraged to complete this program to build resilience, leadership and teamwork skills, develop self-confidence, self-awareness and learn new strategies when confronted with bullying or fighting. The program was delivered by Thirroul Neighbourhood Centre.

Wollongong Youth Centre



Alesco Illawarra has formed a close partnership with Wollongong Youth Centre. This partnership has been an invaluable part of the delivery of the Alesco program. The Youth Centre provides opportunities for the students to be involved in a healthy eating program that is supported through the Breakfast Program and the PDHPE program as well as a Graff Art program facilitated by Youth Centre staff.

Sport

Throughout 2012 a local indoor rock climbing business supported Alesco Illawarra in providing an opportunity for students to engage in physical activities which taught them team work and empathy.

Other Activities

Students were also involved in a number of other extra curricula activities throughout the year. These included excursions to view Healthy Minds Theatre (an interactive theatre production), the Illawarra Credit Union Careers Expo, CPR training and Eco Summit Sydney. A number of guest speakers also visited the school, including Lord Mayor of Wollongong, Councillor Gordon Bradbery OAM and Careers Australia.

Thanks to the Following

Alesco Illawarra also worked closely with the following organisations:

- headspace Illawarra
- Southern Youth and Family Services
- Bulli PCYC
- Illawarra Area Health Service Youth Drug and Alcohol Service

Parent, Student and Teacher Satisfaction

Parent Satisfaction

Throughout the year parents/carers are given the opportunity to meet with Alesco Illawarra staff to discuss their child's progress. Parents consistently expressed satisfaction with the procedures followed by the school, deeming them fair and reasonable. They frequently expressed their thanks for the support given to them. A key indicator of the success of Alesco Illawarra is the positive relationships that are built with families and support groups around the students.

Examples of feedback from parents/carers:

Just wanted to thank you for graduation night, I never got to speak to you, there was so many people you had to spread yourself around to, but it was most enjoyable and was so pleased I could attend. Thank you for all you did for I know it wasn't easy for the majority of the time. She has enrolled in TAFE, starting with retail So please know how much I appreciated everything you did for..... and the other teachers for what they did as well.

I really appreciate you going above and beyond your role for us. You are one in a million.

Student Satisfaction

Students were given the opportunity to give feedback on activities at Alesco Illawarra fortnightly during their pastoral lessons. This was highly successful as it gave students the opportunity to have discussion around their identified areas of concern. Overall student satisfaction was high, with many expressing their gratitude for being able to complete their Year 10 studies. A number of students indicated their desire to return to complete Years 11 and 12 when it becomes available.

Teacher Satisfaction

Overall, teacher satisfaction was good. Staff felt they were supported throughout the year and were able to discuss concerns openly. A number of key issues have been raised over the year and have been given priority for 2013.

Summary Financial Information

Chart 1: Recurrent and Capital Income 2012

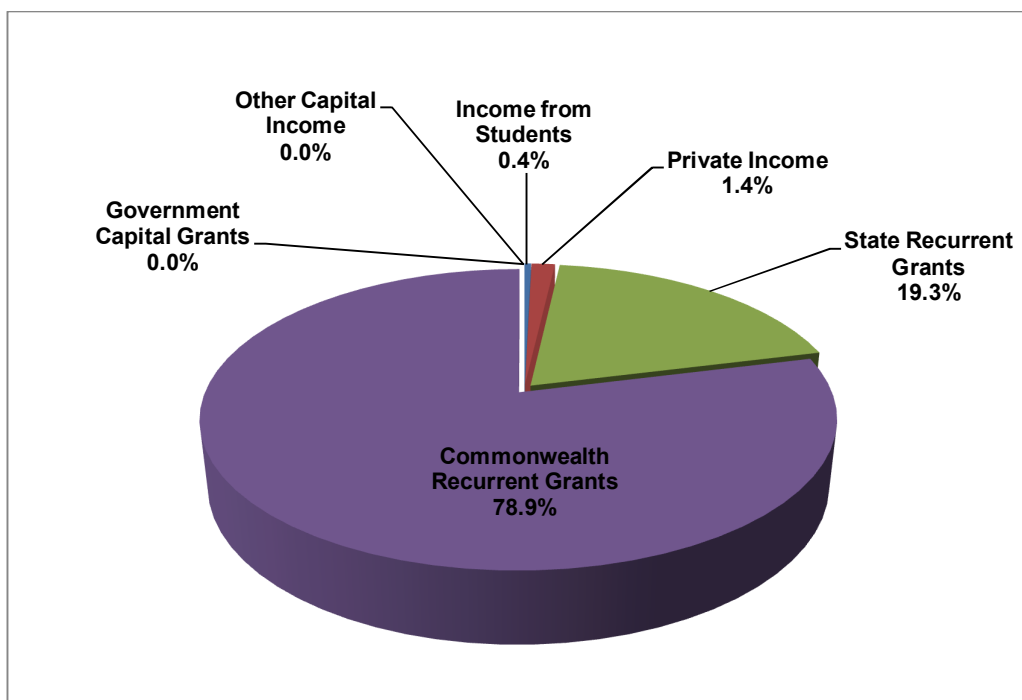


Chart 2: Recurrent and Capital Expenditure 2012

