



ANNUAL REPORT 2025



A Place to Belong

Margaret Jurd College is a ministry of the Uniting Church in Australia (UCA). We acknowledge the Indigenous peoples of the land on which we live and work and we pay our respects to their Elders past, present and emerging.

We are committed to fostering a culturally responsive and supportive learning environment where every student thrives. Our holistic approach supports academic success and wellbeing for all students, with a particular focus on improving outcomes for Aboriginal students. This includes targeted programs and resources that extend beyond the classroom to empower Aboriginal students and their families.



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Margaret Jurd College (MJC) is an independent Special Education school serving students in Years 9 to 12 who face complex social-emotional, behavioural, learning, and cognitive challenges. The College was born from a vision to empower young people through compassionate, trauma-informed education. Its roots trace back to Newcastle Youth Service (NYS), a street-based outreach ministry established by the Hamilton Uniting Church Parish to support at-risk youth. As needs grew, NYS developed a tutorial centre in Carrington in 1985, which evolved into Margaret Jurd College, officially becoming a registered school in 1996.

Named in honour of Dr Margaret Jurd, a Doctor of Psychology and passionate advocate for disadvantaged youth, the College continues her legacy of care, community, and innovation. Today, it operates two campuses—in Shortland and Tuncurry—serving a growing community of students, carers, and professionals.

MJC’s mission aligns with the broader goals of the Uniting Church: to walk alongside those most in need and ensure every student has a path to success.

The College offers a highly individualised approach to learning, tailored to students for whom mainstream education has proven inaccessible or unsustainable. Many students have experienced significant trauma, including adverse childhood experiences, leading to formal diagnoses such as PTSD, ADHD, ODD, and ASD. Emotional dysregulation, defiance, withdrawal, and social difficulties are common, often leaving students disengaged and disempowered.





To address these needs, MJC provides wraparound support. Each student is guided by an Individual Planning (IP) Team that includes teachers, educational caseworkers, carers, and allied health professionals. Case Plans are co-designed with students, encouraging agency and self-reflection. The College's Wellbeing Wheel—a self-assessment tool—helps students identify strengths and areas for growth across emotional, social, and academic domains.

Educationally, the curriculum aligns with the NSW Syllabus, with adjustments made to suit individual needs and learning styles. Students work toward the Record of School Achievement (RoSA) or Higher School Certificate (HSC), with teaching strategies designed to be flexible, creative, and relevant. MJC uses trauma-informed practices, Functional Behaviour Assessments, and Behaviour Support Plans to ensure safety and consistency.

The College's staffing model includes full-time caseworkers, specialist teachers, and external clinical consultants—including psychologists and social workers—who provide professional expertise and therapeutic input. MJC also acts as a registered provider with the Department of Communities and Justice, offering targeted early intervention support for students and their carers navigating complex life circumstances.

More than just a school, Margaret Jurd College is a community where difference is not just accepted but celebrated. Students are encouraged to defy their own expectations and grow into confident, connected, and contributing adults. This is the Jurd Way—where care meets education, and every young person is given the opportunity to thrive.

Margaret Jurd College is guided by a strong governance framework that supports our shared mission to provide high-quality education for students experiencing significant social, emotional and educational disadvantage. We are proud that the College is grounded in the social justice traditions of the Uniting Church in Australia.

Throughout the year, the Board worked closely with the Principal and leadership team to provide clear strategic direction and thoughtful oversight of the College's operations. Our focus included strategic planning, careful financial stewardship, policy development, risk management, and meeting all regulatory and compliance requirements.

At every step, we remained committed to securing the long-term sustainability of the College while responding with care and agility to the complex needs of students across our Shortland and Tuncurry schools.

The Board continued its oversight of the School's Strategic Plan and monitored financial performance and resourcing decisions to support the delivery of Margaret Jurd College's distinctive educational model. We also kept a strong focus on preserving the holistic, individual support provided to each student, recognising its central role in promoting student wellbeing, engagement and learning outcomes.



Ms Annemaree Jones

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Chair of the Board

Board members bring a diverse range of professional experience across education, church and ministry, finance, business, risk management, law and community services. Members serve voluntarily, with a genuine commitment to strong governance and informed decision-making in the best interests of students.

Finally, the Board acknowledges the professionalism and dedication of staff in providing safe, structured and supportive learning environments, and the leadership of the Principal in guiding the College with integrity and a strong focus on student wellbeing. We also recognise the vital partnership with parents and carers in supporting positive outcomes for students.



As we reach the end of this financial year, we say a heartfelt farewell to Jim Knowles after nine years of exceptional service to Margaret Jurd College. Jim has given so much of himself to the College and his presence has been a constant source of encouragement, clarity and momentum. For the past six years, as Chair of the Board, he has led with wisdom, kindness and unwavering integrity, always keeping the needs of our students at the centre of the Board's work. We are deeply thankful for Jim's generosity, time and care. He will be genuinely missed, and we send him our warmest thanks and very best wishes for the next chapter.

Over the past year, we have also been delighted to welcome several new Board members. Yvonne Ghavalas brings deep experience and a strong connection to the Uniting Church; Charlie Chubb offers extensive experience working with Uniting in New South Wales; and Andrew Syme who contributes a rich background in education, having served as Headmaster at a number of Schools, and worked within the Uniting Church.

From their first meetings, each has brought thoughtful insight and a willingness to roll up their sleeves in support of our students and staff. We are thankful for the commitment of each of these members to serve, and we look forward to the contribution they will make to the life of the College.

The Board remains confident in the future of Margaret Jurd College, and I sincerely thank the staff, students, parents and carers and fellow Board members for all they have contributed during the year.

This year, Margaret Jurd College continued its mission of providing a place of belonging, stability, and hope for young people who have struggled to thrive in mainstream settings. Across our Shortland and Tuncurry Schools, students once again demonstrated remarkable resilience as they worked toward personal, social, and academic goals. Many of them arriving with limited confidence, disrupted schooling, or complex life experiences. Their growth remains the heart of our work.

Our staff embody the values that define the College. Their commitment to trauma-informed practice, relational learning, and flexible pathways has shaped countless success stories this year. I am proud of the professionalism and dedication shown by our team, who walk alongside students not only in the classroom but in wellbeing, community engagement, and post-school transition planning.

Across the College, several key achievements stand out:

- Strengthening of our wellbeing and therapeutic supports, including The Resilience Project's School Wellbeing Program, Dress for Success, Suit-Up, Top Blokes Program, Equine Therapy and Waves of Wellness. We also welcome two staff to pivotal Wellbeing and Academic roles within the College including Sarah Cain as Assistant Head of Campus (Senior Caseworker Shortland) and Caitlin White as Head of Learning Support



Mr Darren Twist
BA BEd MA MAICD
Principal

- Continued development of personalised learning plans and targeted literacy/numeracy interventions, supported by our dedicated Casework Team, Our Student Learning Support Officers and our Student Services Staff.
- Growth in vocational and transition pathways, with students engaging in Operation Launchpad, The Student Support Program, The Pathways Fund, The YES Program, Supported Driver training and Job readiness classes.
- Increased community partnerships across the Hunter and Mid North Coast, enabling wrap-around support for students and families including extending our partnership with DCJ transitioning from the TEI program to Community and Family Support Program and continued partnering with Uniting, Wesley Mission, Carers Gateway and the School-Link Coordinators.



- Campus-specific milestones, including both Schools achieving accreditation during a NESAs Audit. In Shortland staff across all areas of the College worked tirelessly, consistently going above and beyond expectations to ensure every aspect of the process reflected the high standards and culture of our school community. Tuncurry completed its first full year of operation and moved from one class to a full enrolment of two classes.

This year also saw important operational and strategic progress. The College continued to refine governance, compliance, and reporting processes, ensuring strong alignment with NESAs requirements and the expectations of our Board. Staff engaged in professional learning focused on trauma-informed care, neurodiversity, behaviour support, and curriculum delivery, strengthening our capacity to meet the needs of a highly diverse cohort.

Our students achieved significant personal and academic milestones. Many improved attendance, re-engaged with learning, completed major projects, or took courageous steps toward employment

and further education. We celebrated 34 Year 10 RoSA completions and 13 senior pathway achievements, along with countless individual moments of growth that reflect the spirit of our College.

As we look to the year ahead, Margaret Jurd College remains committed to expanding opportunities for young people who need a different kind of school. One grounded in dignity, safety, and high expectations. We will continue strengthening our multi-school model, deepening community partnerships, and enhancing the supports that allow our students to thrive academically, socially, and emotionally.

A special thank you is extended to Jim Knolwes who retired from his position as Chair of the Board to work in an advisory position as Deputy Chair until his official retirement from the Board of Directors in mid-2026.

Finally, I extend my sincere thanks to our students, staff, Board, parents and carers, The Uniting Church and community partners for their unwavering dedication. Together, we continue to build a place where young people are known, valued, and supported to create new futures.



EDUCATION PROGRAM

In 2025, MJC delivered Stage 5 at both Shortland and Tuncurry, and Stage 6 at Shortland. This included two Year 9 classes across both campuses, two Year 10 classes across both campuses, and at Shortland, two Year 11 classes and one Year 12 class.

More than 15 teachers employed for their specific fields of expertise and commitment to disadvantaged young people delivered the Australian Curriculum (NSW). Whilst some of these teachers perform executive roles outside the classroom it would be foolish not to recognise their leadership and mentoring and the effect that this has had on the classroom overall.

The Planning Process works alongside the traditional Individual Education Planning process. Individual plans are developed for all students, with reasonable adjustments provided to ensure students can access education in the same way as their peers. Where required, additional plans are also developed, including Safety Plans, Behaviour Support Plans, Casework Plans and critical incident response plan

The focus Key Learning Areas on offer at the College are as follows:

STAGE 5

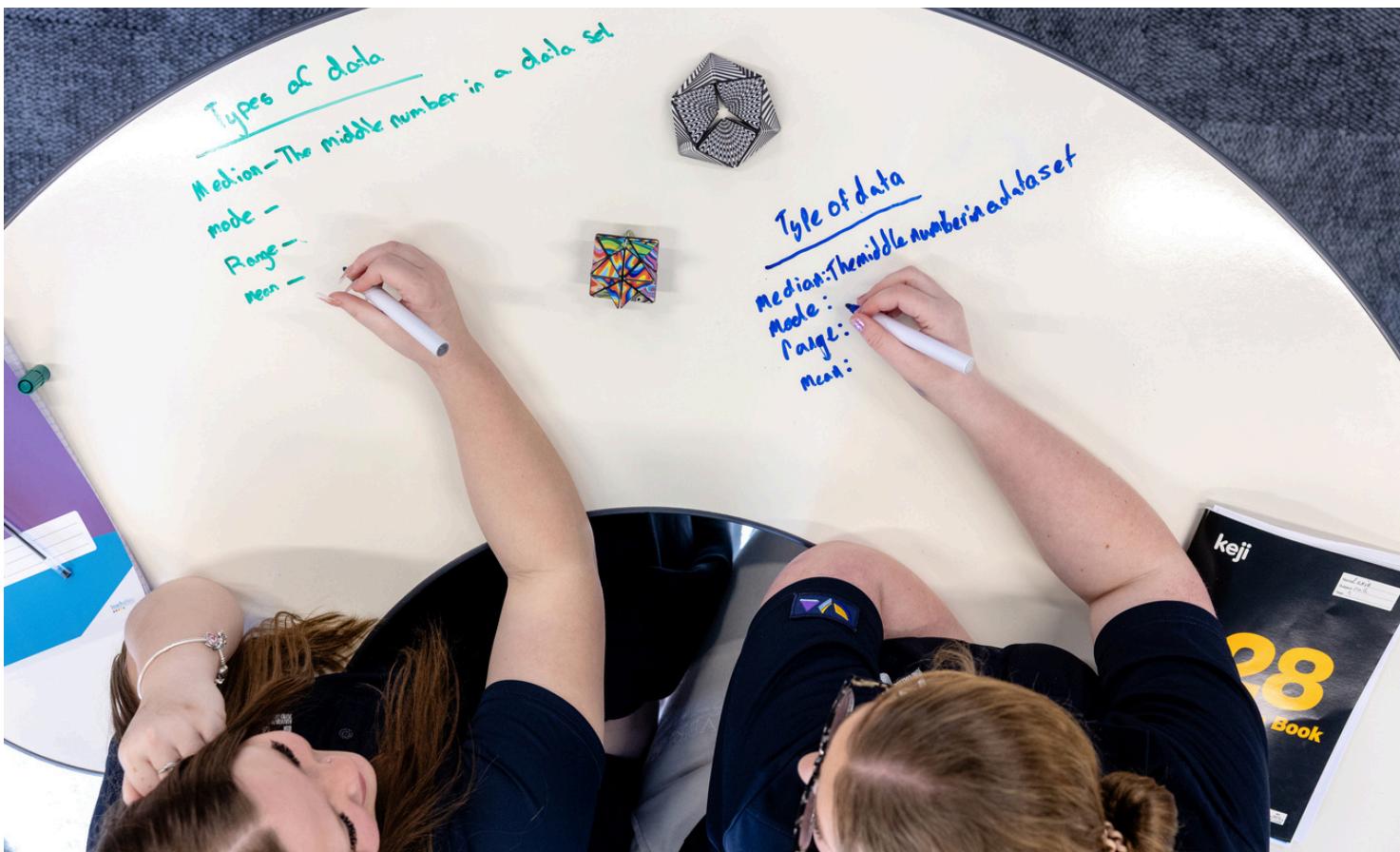
HSIE
Mathematics
Science
PDHPE
English

STAGE 6

Modern History (LS)
Science (LS)
English Studies
Mathematics (Numeracy)
Sports, Lifestyle & Recreation
Work Studies

In addition, students have the opportunity to engage in “Electives” focussed on real life learning. These electives include workshops such as cooking, fishing, technology, etc.

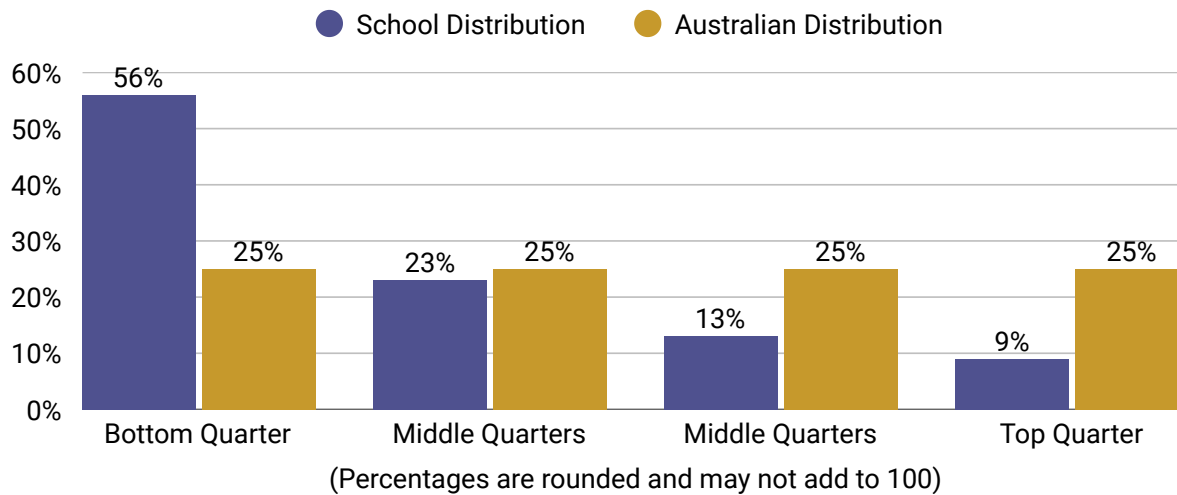
All students in the NAPLAN cycle as required (Year 9) and move through to complete the Minimum Standards standardised test throughout years 10-12.



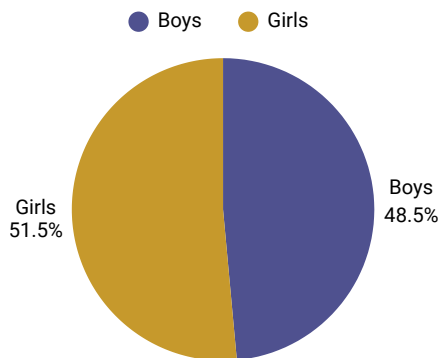
INDEX OF COMMUNITY SOCIO-EDUCATIONAL ADVANTAGE (ICSEA)



DISTRIBUTION OF SOCIO-EDUCATIONAL ADVANTAGE (SEA)

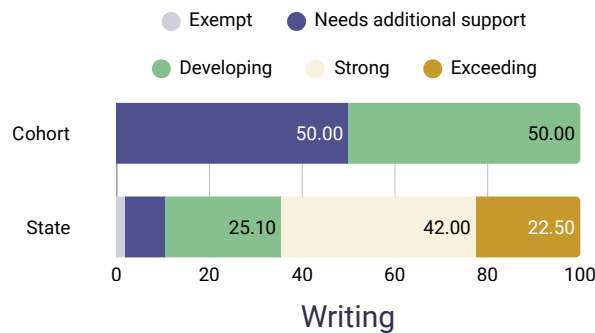
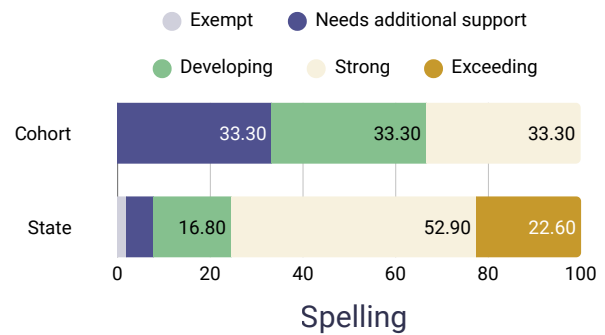
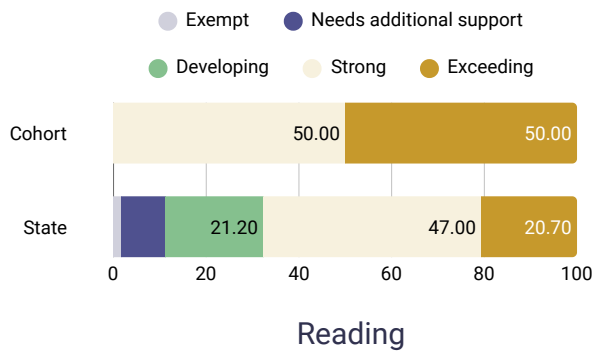
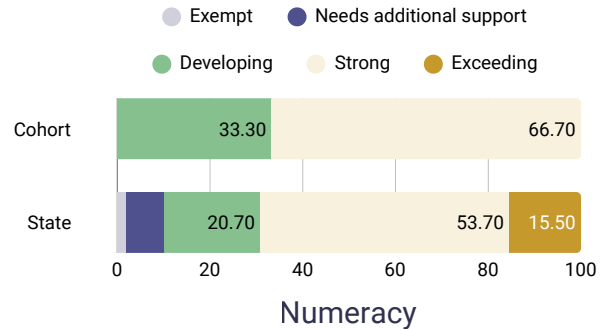
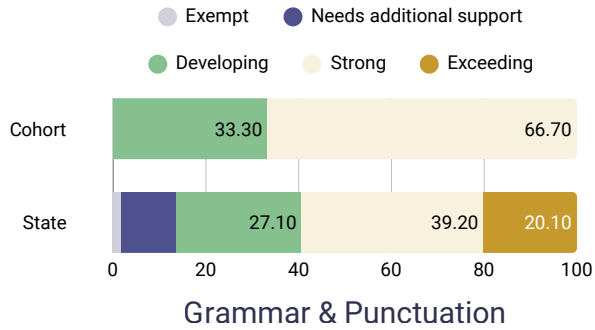


STUDENT ENROLMENT



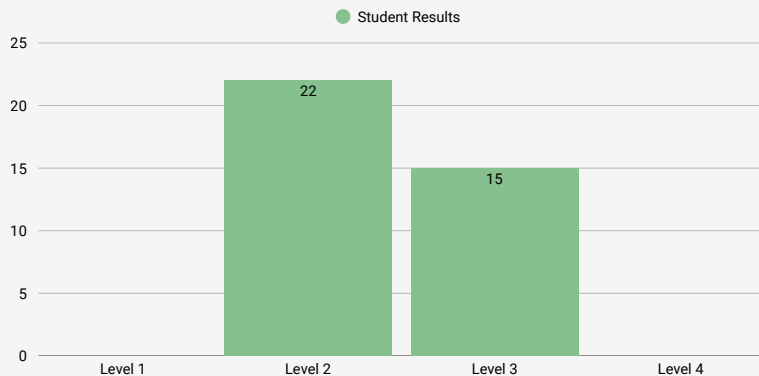
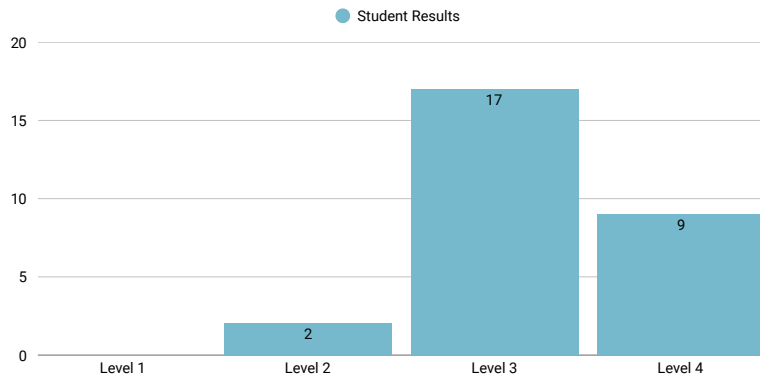
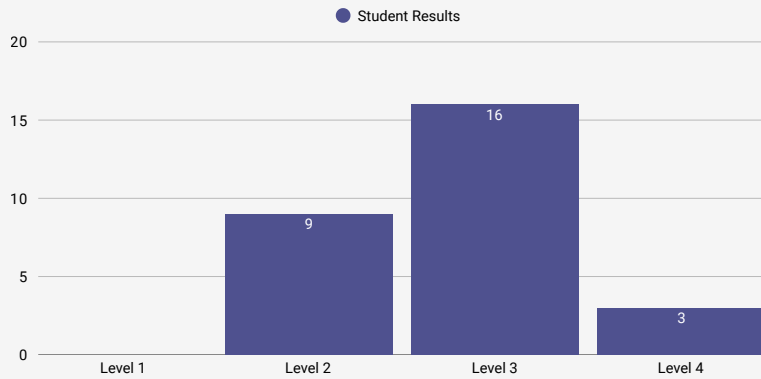
(Grammar & Punctuation, Spelling, Reading, Writing, Numeracy)

NAPLAN RESULTS



STUDENT MINIMUM STANDARDS RESULTS

Some students attempted tests multiple times over the academic year, their highest score was taken for this data set. A level 3 is a passing mark.



POST SCHOOL DESTINATIONS

FUTURE PATHWAYS FOR OUR STUDENTS

Margaret Jurd College continues to prioritise strong post-school transition outcomes through targeted planning, individualised support, and a focus on re-engaging students in meaningful pathways.

At MJC Tuncurry, this approach has remained highly effective throughout 2025. Students have been supported to rebuild confidence in education and develop clear, achievable post-school pathways, including transitions back into mainstream schooling for Years 11 and 12, as well as into alternative education and vocational training environments. As a result, 80% of students successfully transitioned into education or training pathways, 10% moved into full-time employment, and the remaining 10% are actively seeking employment with ongoing support. These outcomes reflect the strength of a consistent and structured approach to student transition planning.

At MCJ Shortland, many student pathways are still being finalised. This is partly due to the timing of external enrolments, with course availability still impacting some pathway confirmations. Despite this, some students have secured or are progressing toward defined pathways, including an upcoming electrical apprenticeship, planned TAFE study in electronics and music, and structured school-based volunteering. A number of students remain in the process of confirming their next steps and continue to receive targeted support. Overall, while Shortland's outcomes are still emerging, there is a clear focus on guiding students toward appropriate and sustainable post-school pathways as opportunities become available.



STAFFING INFORMATION

During 2025, Margaret Jurd College employed a multidisciplinary workforce to support its educational and wellbeing programs. The workforce comprised, in full-time equivalent (FTE):

- **Teaching staff:** 14.8 FTE
- **Non-teaching staff:** 26.0 FTE

The non-teaching workforce comprises staff engaged in administrative, operational, and student support functions, including classroom support personnel, wellbeing staff, and other student services roles, who collectively support the delivery of the College's educational programs. The College continues to develop an integrated workforce model that reflects the needs of students with complex backgrounds and supports a holistic approach to education and wellbeing.

TEACHER ACCREDITATION

All teaching staff at the College hold appropriate qualifications and accreditation under the NSW Education Standards Authority (NESA). The composition of teaching staff by accreditation level is as follows:

- **Conditional Teachers:** 6.7% FTE
- **Provisional Teachers:** 0% FTE
- **Proficient Teachers:** 93.3% FTE
- **Highly Accomplished:** 0% FTE
- **Lead Teacher:** 0% FTE

No staff are currently employed in roles that fall outside the NSW accreditation framework. All teachers maintain current Working with Children Checks and are registered with NESA as required.

PROFESSIONAL LEARNING

The College is committed to ongoing professional development that reflects our mission and the needs of our students. In 2024, key areas of focus included:

- Trauma-informed practice and inclusive education
- De-escalation and behaviour support training
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural competence
- Development of the Integrated Student Growth Model (ISGM)

The total invested in professional learning and development for the 2025 year was \$47,900.

STAFF ATTENDANCE AND RETENTION

This figure reflects the average attendance rate of permanent and temporary teaching staff during the school year, excluding approved leave.

- **Teacher attendance rate:** 94.42%

The College experienced stable staffing levels in 2025, with minor changes reflecting natural attrition and strategic recruitment to meet evolving program needs.

- **Staff retention rate:** 87%

STAKEHOLDER SATISFACTION

Margaret Jurd College maintains a strong and intentional culture of feedback, reflection, and continuous improvement. The College actively engages with students, families, and staU through a range of formal and informal mechanisms to ensure it remains responsive, adaptive, and aligned to the evolving needs of its community. This collaborative approach underpins decision-making and supports a shared commitment to student growth, wellbeing, and success.

PARENTS AND CARERS

Families contributed feedback through structured meetings, surveys, and ongoing casework interactions. Consistent themes reflected a deep appreciation for the College's trauma-informed approach, highly personalised communication, and the strong sense of safety and belonging experienced by their children. Many parents and carers also reported noticeable improvements in their child's confidence, engagement, and willingness to participate in learning.

Response: The College has continued to strengthen its commitment to accessible, responsive communication, and streamlined enrolment processes. Learning supports remain highly individualised and aligned to each student's wellbeing and engagement needs. MJC has introduced weekly targeted outreach for students experiencing challenges with attendance or engagement. This ensures that families feel supported, barriers are addressed early, and students remain connected to their learning pathway. Transition support programs have also been enhanced to support students returning from extended absences.



STAKEHOLDER SATISFACTION



STUDENTS

Student voice was captured through regular check-ins, small group reflection sessions, and informal daily engagement. Students consistently expressed that they feel known, respected, and supported within the College environment. They also identified a strong preference for creative, hands-on, and interest-based learning experiences.

Response: In response, the College has strengthened its student-centred approach through several key initiatives. Students now benefit from regular and consistent contact with their caseworkers, ensuring continuity of care and support across all aspects of their educational journey. An expanded electives program has been introduced, designed to engage students in areas of personal interest and strength such as cooking, gaming, music, and sport. These offerings are complemented by wellbeing programs and projectbased learning experiences that promote creativity, collaboration, and real-world application of skills.

STAFF

Staff feedback was gathered through professional dialogue, supervision structures, and culture-focused check-ins. Staff demonstrated a strong commitment to the College's mission and values, while also identifying opportunities to further enhance clarity, consistency, and collaboration across teams. Weekly staff meetings have been refined to ensure a clear balance between professional learning and operational focus, supporting both continuous improvement and effective day-to-day functioning. Internal planning processes have been streamlined, with updated role statements, clearer reporting lines, and defined escalation pathways to strengthen organisational coherence and collaboration.

Response: The College has continued to invest in a supportive and growth-focused professional culture. Professional Development Plans (PDPs) are implemented through structured one-on-one discussions, enabling personalised goal setting, reflection, and career development.

STUDENT ATTENDANCE RATE

Student attendance data for 2025, recorded at just under 64%, reflects the complex and multifaceted needs of the young people we support, rather than a lack of engagement or effort from students or staff. Many of our students present with significant trauma backgrounds, and for some, consistent school attendance can be a confronting and gradual process. Diagnosed and emerging mental health conditions, including anxiety, depression, and neurodevelopmental differences, can impact a student's capacity to attend regularly, particularly during periods of heightened stress or change. In addition, external factors such as transport limitations, housing instability, and family circumstances can further influence attendance patterns in ways that are often beyond a student's immediate control.

Within this context, our approach prioritises connection, safety, and individual readiness for learning. We pride ourselves on maintaining small class sizes and high teacher-to-student ratios, which allow for personalised support, flexibility, and the development of strong, trusting relationships, key factors in re-engaging students with education. Attendance, for many of our young people, is not a linear journey but one that requires patience, consistency, and a trauma-informed approach. The data should be viewed alongside the significant progress students make in building confidence, regulating behaviour, and increasing their capacity to engage over time.





HOW THE SCHOOL MANAGES STUDENT NON-ATTENDANCE

The College remains committed to balancing its duty of care with its mission to re-engage students identified as “at risk.” It aims to foster an environment that promotes consistent attendance and supports student success.

Attendance is closely monitored and recorded in line with the procedure detailed below:

1. Student attendance is recorded each school morning and maintained on the College’s online Student Information System *Seqta*.
2. If a student is absent from the College and the parents/carers have notified the College as to the reason why, administrative staff are to modify the attendance register to reflect the given reason
3. If a child is absent from the College and a reason has not been supplied, then an automated text message notifying parents of student’s absence is sent to parents/caregivers. This text message prompts a response for parents to provide a return text to explain the absence.
4. If a student is absent from the College without a reason being supplied, the Caseworker is to attempt to contact the parents/carers within 5 days to understand why the student absence occurred.
5. If a student is absent from the College for 5 consecutive days, the student’s Caseworker will attempt to contact the parents/carers to ascertain a reason for the absence.



6. If contact with a student's parent or carer cannot be established after an absence of 5 consecutive days then the College will contact the parent/carer in writing to express their concern regarding the student's attendance and request the parent/carer contact the College to meet with the Wellbeing Coordinator
7. If the parent/carer does not respond to the written letter of concern and the student continues to be absent for a following 5 days a written letter of warning will be sent to the student's parent/carer outlining that the student's placement will be at risk if the student does not attend within the following fortnight.
8. After a further 10 school days of non-attendance, after the Warning Letter has been sent to the parent/carer then the student's file will be submitted to the Leadership team for discussion.
9. If it is assessed that the student should be withdrawn from the College, then a letter will be sent to the parent/carer outlining the Leadership team's actions. A Student Enrolment Unknown form will be submitted to enrolments@det.nsw.edu.au. A Risk of Significant Harm Report (Neglect) will be made if deemed appropriate by the student's Caseworker and the Wellbeing Coordinator.
10. If it is deemed necessary to withdraw a student from the College, it may be necessary to send a further letter to the parent/carer to outline some other organisations or educational environments that may be better placed to provide the student with the services they need.

MJC POLICIES

The College's policies can be found on our website: <https://mjc.nsw.edu.au/policies/>

CHILD PROTECTION POLICY

Sets out staff responsibilities for child protection and processes that staff must follow in relation to child protection matters.

STAFF GRIEVANCE POLICY

Provides a fair, transparent, and consistent process for addressing workplace grievances for staff.

STUDENT ENROLMENT POLICY SHORTLAND | TUNCURRY

Outlines the framework and procedures MJC uses to manage student enrolments, ensuring compliance with relevant legislation.

DISCIPLINE POLICY

Aims to clearly define expectations for student behaviour, acknowledging the complexity and diversity of our student cohort.

COLLEGE COMMUNITY GRIEVANCE POLICY

Provides a fair, transparent, and consistent process for addressing grievances raised by or between members of the MJC community.

STUDENT ANTI-BULLYING POLICY

Clearly outlines our commitment to identifying, addressing, and reducing bullying within the College community.

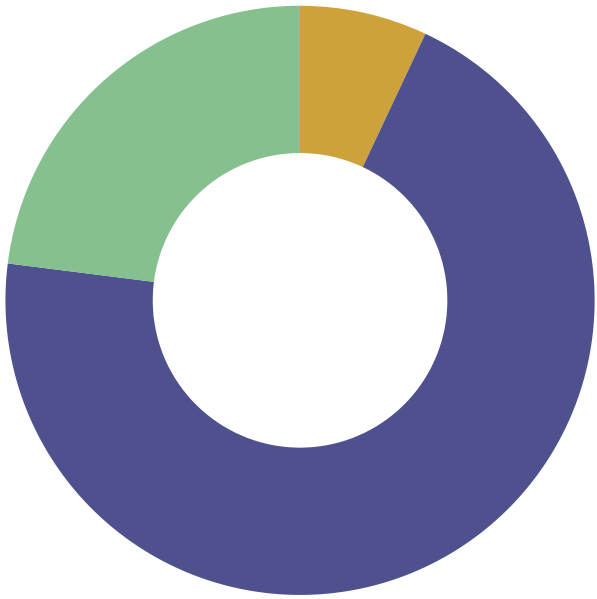
COLLEGE COMMUNITY CODE OF CONDUCT POLICY

Outlines the expected standards of behaviour for all members of the College community of MJC including parents, carers, guardians, extended family members, and other visitors.

STUDENT WELFARE POLICY

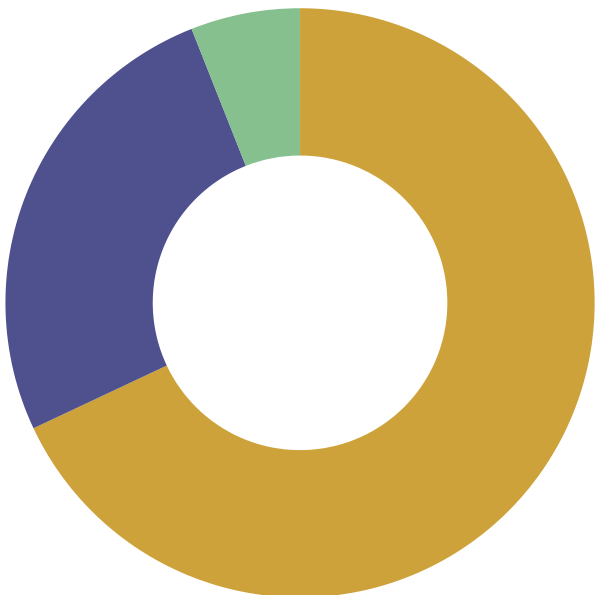
Outlines MJC's commitment to fostering student wellbeing, creating a supportive educational environment, and ensuring all students have the necessary support to complete their secondary education successfully.

2025 RECURRENT AND CAPITAL INCOME



- 7% Fees and Private Income
- 70% Commonwealth Recurrent Grants
- 23% State Recurrent Grants
- 0% Capital Fees and Levies
- 0% Other Capital Income
- 0% Government Capital Grants

2025 RECURRENT AND CAPITAL EXPENDITURE



- 68% Salaries, Allowances, & Related Expenditure
- 26% Non-Salary Expenses
- 6% Capital Expenditure

The financial information presented is a summary only and has been prepared from the College's audited financial statements.

STRATEGIC OUTLOOK

Margaret Jurd College continues to pursue a purposeful and values-driven approach to meeting the needs of students, families, and communities. Our focus is on strengthening educational provision, supporting student wellbeing, and ensuring the College is well placed to grow thoughtfully and sustainably. These priorities reflect the College's commitment to long-term impact for students and the communities we serve.

STRENGTHEN EDUCATIONAL ACCESS AND SUPPORT STUDENT PATHWAYS

Continue to expand access for students with complex needs, with a focus on engagement, retention, and successful transitions beyond school. This includes planning for future campuses and ensuring our settings are responsive, supportive, and aligned to student needs.

ENHANCE DIGITAL AND LEARNING SUPPORT SYSTEMS

Further develop secure and reliable digital systems that support teaching, learning, and student support services. Improvements in enrolment and student information systems will help streamline processes, strengthen communication, and enable more responsive support for students.

DEEPEN FAMILY, COMMUNITY AND SERVICE CONNECTIONS

Strengthen relationships with families, partner organisations, and allied services to support a more connected and consistent experience for students. This includes continuing to develop wellbeing programs and individualised supports that respond to the broader needs of each student.

STRENGTHEN STAFF CAPABILITY AND SUPPORTIVE PRACTICE

Invest in staff development, collaboration, and reflective practice to support high-quality teaching and student support. Ongoing attention to staff wellbeing and organisational culture will help ensure the College remains a stable and supportive environment for both students and staff.





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