HOW WELL IS WAKAKIRRI MEETING ITS OBJECTIVES?

FINAL REPORT

Prepared by

EMMA PARTRIDGE
INSTITUTE FOR SUSTAINABLE FUTURES, UTS

For

WAKAKIRRI ASSOCIATION

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ABBREVIATIONS

ISF	Institute for Sustainable Futures
UTS	University of Technology, Sydney

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 ABOUT THIS REPORT

This report was prepared by the Institute for Sustainable Futures at the University of Technology, Sydney and provides the results of a research project carried out on a consultancy basis for the Wakakirri Association.

1.2 ABOUT THE INSTITUTE FOR SUSTAINABLE FUTURES

The Institute for Sustainable Futures is a research institute of the University of Technology, Sydney. Our mission is to create change towards sustainable futures through independent, project-based research and consulting projects. Since our establishment in 1996, we have helped our diverse clients translate sustainability principles into action in a number of different research areas using a variety of approaches.

More information about the Institute can be found on our website (www.isf.uts.edu.au). Most of our published journal articles and conference papers, and many of our research reports are available as PDFs. Recent electronic newsletters featuring our research are also available.

2 BACKGROUND

2.1 ABOUT WAKAKIRRI

Wakakirri is a national story sharing arts festival accessible to every school in Australia. The Wakakirri program encourages students to explore the concept of sustainability and to create stories with a message. Participating schools create stories using dance, song, telling, film, arts and writing and share them with other schools and the general public around Australia.

2.1.1 ORGANISATIONAL OBJECTIVES AND VALUES

The four main objectives of Wakakirri are to:

- **Promote important community messages**

    Wakakirri encourages young people to explore issues of importance to them through the arts and offers a positive avenue of expression. Schools that participate in Wakakirri create stories with a variety of important community messages. Examples include: life cycles, bullying, bushfires, sport, friendships, drugs, peer pressure, cultural diversity, natural disasters, technology nature and water conservation.

- **Promote sustainability**

    Wakakirri promotes understanding of sustainability far beyond reduce reuse recycle. Sustainability can be applied to every aspect of our lives. Sustainability can relate to how we maintain our physical and mental health, our relationships with people, our careers and lifestyles right through to how we interact with the environment and treat the planet. For everyone, especially children, to understand, appreciate and practice sustainability is vital for the future of the world.

- **Bridge cultural divides**

Wakakirri promotes story sharing as a way of bridging cultural divides across Australia and promoting understanding, respect and inclusion. Every year thousands of students from city, country and remote outback schools around Australia share stories at Wakakirri live festivals and through Wakakirri online events. Story telling is the world's oldest form of teaching and learning, and stories generated through Wakakirri have amazing reach to the general public, often being performed or exhibited to audiences beyond Wakakirri

- **Provide a unique teaching tool for teachers**

Wakakirri provides teachers with a unique resource to enhance children's learning. Reported outcomes from students' participation include: literacy and language development, fostering resilient behaviors, physical activity appreciation, environmental awareness, self-confidence, teamwork and bridging cultural divides

The organisation's guiding values are to ensure that Wakakirri:

- is accessible and affordable for every school and student in Australia
- makes extra effort to promote participation by indigenous communities
- provides support, training and resources for teachers
- supports other organizations by promoting their public health messages as potential story subjects to schools
- uses sustainable practice in its office and management decisions

2.2 PREVIOUS RESEARCH UNDERTAKEN

Wakakirri has previously carried out a teacher-based evaluation of the Wakakirri programs, using the *surveymonkey* online survey software. The 2009 survey included a mix of questions that focus at the process or output level – that is on the actual running of the event (e.g. judging, website, merchandise), as well as some questions that focused more on broader outcomes (e.g. awareness of particular messages, benefits of teaching resources, student learning and development outcomes, awareness of sustainability).

3 ABOUT THIS PROJECT

3.1 OBJECTIVES

Wakakirri commissioned ISF to conduct independent research to explore how well the organisation is achieving its four broad objectives; namely promoting community messages, promoting sustainability, bridging cultural divides and providing a unique teaching tool.

The focus of the research was at a higher or broader level than the previous teacher evaluations, in that the question it sought to answer is less about how successful any particular year's programs or events have been, and more about how well the organisation is performing in a more general sense – whether and how it is achieving its overarching, longer term objectives.

In addition to exploring whether Wakakirri was achieving its four main objectives, ISF also sought to check whether it was effectively putting its organisational values into action. These are to ensure that Wakakirri:

- is accessible and affordable for every school and student in Australia
- makes extra effort to promote participation by indigenous communities
- provides support, training and resources for teachers
- supports other organizations by promoting their public health messages as potential story subjects to schools
- uses sustainable practice in its office and management decisions

For pragmatic and methodological reasons, the research focused on the **first three** of these values only, as it is possible and appropriate to explore these values by consulting teachers and students. The other two values – shown in grey above – are areas that Wakakirri may wish to explore in the future, however these would require a different research methodology focused on other organisations and internal Wakakirri office and management decisions.

The intended audiences for the research results are multiple. This report is expected to be of primary interest to the Department of Education, but may also be of interest to school, teachers, students and parents.

3.2 APPROACH

3.2.1 COLLABORATIVE DESIGN

ISF worked with Wakakirri in a collaborative way to develop and refine the precise approach to this research from the project outset. ISF provided research expertise and advice, and Wakakirri staff shared their knowledge of the organisation's needs and priorities, and their assessment of what kind of approach to conducting research with Wakakirri's various stakeholders would be most realistic and achievable in the timeframe. ISF then designed and undertook the research independently, and prepared this report for Wakakirri.

3.2.2 INVOLVING CHILDREN IN RESEARCH

From the project outset, ISF was keen to involve children in the research. While previous research had been undertaken with teachers, ISF was of the view that extending the research to students would help gain a broader picture of how well Wakakirri is perceived to be meeting its objectives. This approach is in line with best practice principles for enabling the participation of children and young people in research. As the NSW Commission for Children and Young People points out, including children in research has the potential to add new knowledge to the research process and provide a different perspective on issues. Importantly it also gives children and young people a say on issues that affect them (NSW Commission for Children and Young People 2005). Such an approach also brings benefits to organisations that work with children as it can lead to better evaluation and improved practice (Save the Children UK, 2000).

3.2.3 MIXED METHOD APPROACH

The research included both quantitative and qualitative elements. Two electronic surveys were prepared and distributed to teachers and students respectively. This quantitative data was then complemented by qualitative research, comprising a small number of semi-structured interviews with teachers. This mixed method approach allowed ISF to gather and analyse the views of a large number of participants, as well as exploring key questions in greater depth with a smaller number of stakeholders.

3.3 METHODOLOGY

The project used a mixed method approach to data collection, employing surveys and interviews, as detailed below.

3.3.1 SURVEYS

The first component of the research was a set of two online surveys, designed to reach a large number of Wakakirri stakeholders and generate largely quantitative data.

Wakakirri staff had already prepared some questions for a survey of teachers about the 2010 Wakakirri program, so ISF decided to append some additional questions to this survey that would explore the broader issues that are the focus of this evaluation. This approach avoided sending teachers two surveys, and potentially reducing the response rate for both. ISF designed the survey questions, which were they added to the surveymonkey survey, and distributed by Wakakirri to teachers on the organisation's database.

In addition to this teacher survey, ISF developed and designed a survey specifically for students. The student survey was developed separately to allow adaption of the design and wording in order that the research process was suited to children's communication styles, and easy for them to understand. This is in line with best practice principles for including children in research the NSW Commission for Children and Young People (2005: 10). The survey was distributed by Wakakirri to teachers on their database, with a request that they invite their students to complete it.

Teacher survey responses

The teacher survey received **108** responses. A fairly good geographic spread was achieved, as shown in Figure 1 below, although it is not possible to say how representative this sample is of teachers participating in Wakakirri (as the State breakdown of participants is not known). Of the teachers who responded, 70% were from schools that had been involved prior to 2010, while 30% were first time participants. The majority (92%) had entered the 'story-dance' category in 2010.
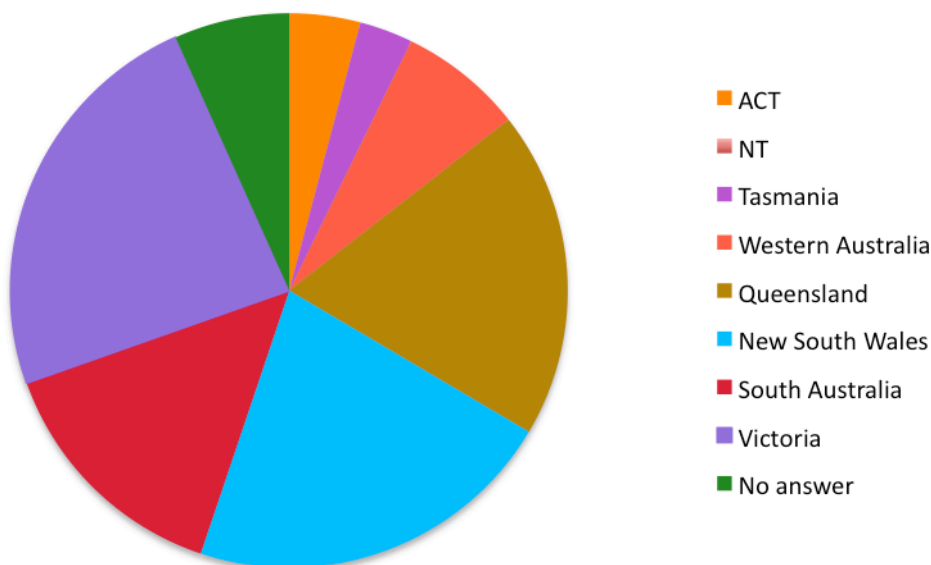
Figure 1. Teachers' state of residence

Student survey responses

The student survey **142** responses. The majority of respondents were in Year 6 (57%), with 28% in Year 5 (28%), and smaller proportions in Years 2, 3, 4 and 7. There were no respondents from Kindergarten or Year 1. The survey can thus be said to most accurately reflect the views of students in Years 5 and 6.
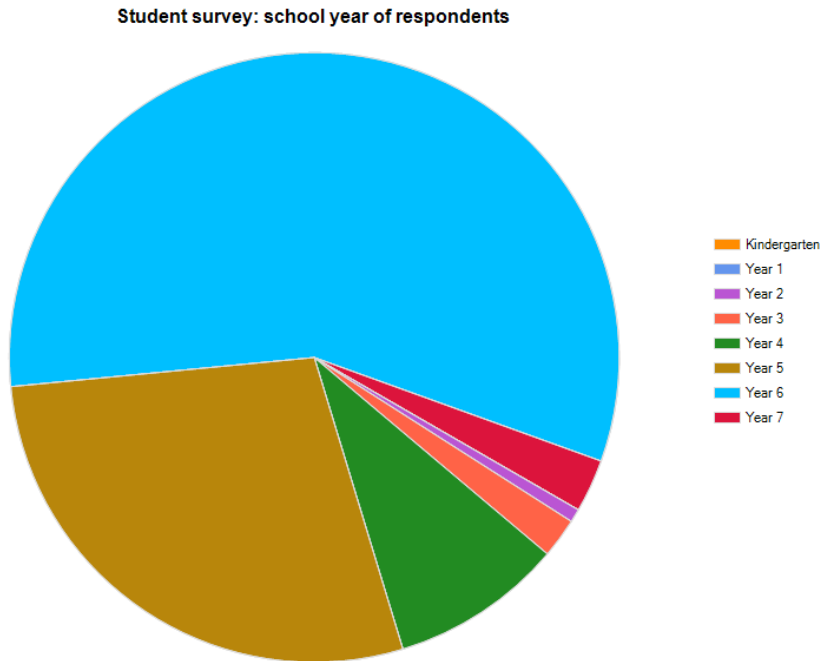
Figure 2. School year of respondents

Girls were overrepresented in the sample (76% of respondents) and boys underrepresented (24%). A fairly good geographic spread was achieved, as shown in Figure 3, although it is not possible to say how representative the sample is of all participants (as State breakdown of participants is not known).

Figure 3. State of students' residence

Overwhelmingly, respondents were from schools that had participated in Wakakirri in 2010 (98%), with almost all respondents (96%) having participated themselves in 2010. For half the participants this was the first time they had participated, whereas one-third had also participated once before, and 17% more than once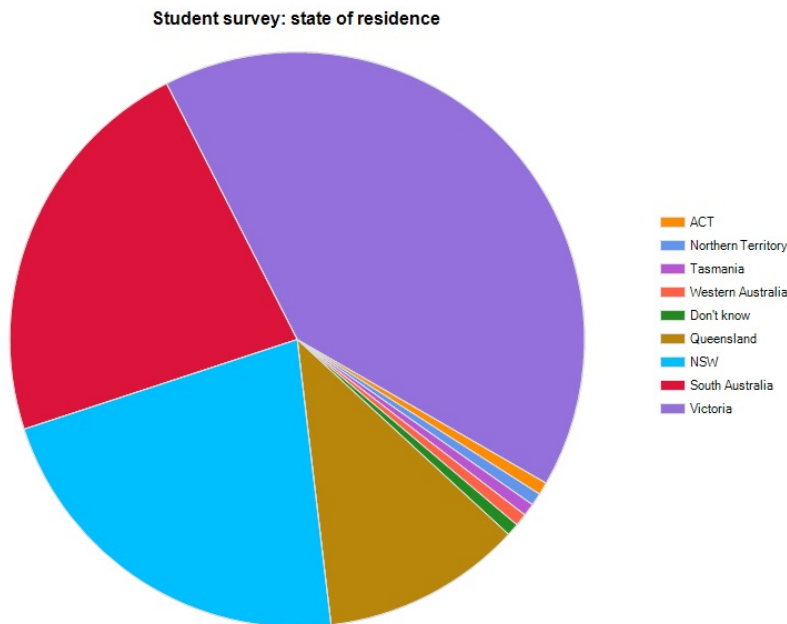 before. The vast majority of respondents (94%) had participated in the 'Story-dance' category in 2010. The survey is therefore not a good indicator of the perceptions of students participating in the other categories.

3.3.2 INTERVIEWS

At the end of the teacher survey, respondents were asked whether they would be willing to participate in a follow up interview, to explore the issues in more depth. From those who volunteered, ISF selected 6 to interview, chosen at random from six different jurisdictions (New South Wales, Queensland, South Australia, Tasmania, Victoria, and Western Australia).

ISF developed an interview framework to guide the semi-structured interviews, as well as information materials and consent forms for interviewees, to ensure that the process conformed to relevant guidelines for the conduct of ethical research by the University of Technology, Sydney. Telephone interviews were conducted with each of these teachers, with interviews recorded and professionally transcribed to ensure accuracy and to enable the inclusion of (non-identifiable) quotes in this report.

The purpose of the interviews was to speak to a smaller number of stakeholders but in greater depth than could be achieved in a survey. The interviews explored issues arising from the survey, and were able to draw these out in greater detail, as well as allowing interviewees to lead discussion in new and different directions in a less constrained way than is possible in a survey.

Note: Interviewing students and/or parents was considered, however it was decided that this would involve substantial logistical and ethical hurdles, and as such that it is was impractical within the scope of this project. For this reason, the interviews targeted teachers. Wakakirri may wish to consider the possibility of interviewing students and/or parents in future evaluations, to provide a greater range of perspectives.

3.3.3 ANALYSIS AND REPORTING

ISF analysed the quantitative and qualitative data and findings from both the online survey and the interviews, with a view to both answering the original research questions and exploring other issues that emerged.

The research results are described and explained in this report. The report provides an independent assessment of how well Wakakirri is meeting its objectives, based on the views of survey and interview participants, and ISF's own observations and conclusions based on the findings of the research. Throughout the report, selected quotations from teachers and students are included.[1]

The report also provides some suggestions for potential improvement, or ways in which Wakakirri's work might be enhanced.

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[1] In this report, where quotations are shown with bullet points and italicised, these are written comments made by survey respondents (teachers or students, as indicated). Where quotations are indented and not italicised, these are comments taken from the transcripts of interviews with teachers. Some quotations have been edited for length or clarity, or to remove information that could identify the participant's school – where this has occurred, the additions or omissions are indicated with square brackets.

4 FINDINGS

4.1 VIEWS ON ACHIEVEMENT OF ORGANISATIONAL OBJECTIVES

The main purpose of the project was to explore perceptions of how well Wakakirri is meeting its objectives, namely to:

- Promote important community messages
- Promote sustainability
- Bridge cultural divides
- Provide a unique teaching tool for teachers

This section of the report outlines the findings of the research in relation to each of these objectives.

4.1.1 PROMOTING IMPORTANT COMMUNITY MESSAGES

Both students and teachers were asked questions relating to this objective, although the student survey question was less direct as it was adapted to ensure that children would understand it.

Teachers were asked how well their Wakakirri item raised awareness of their chosen issue or message, and answered on a scale of 1 to 3 (where 1 = not at all, 2 = fairly well and 3= very well). Results (Figure 4) show that teachers felt their item raised awareness most effectively among the students who were involved (on average this was rated 2.89 on the scale – with 89% suggesting it did this 'very well'). Teachers thought awareness raising was also achieved 'very well' among school staff, although slightly less effectively among parents and the broader community. There was less agreement that other students at the school had their awareness raised about the chosen issue, with approximately half of respondents suggesting that this was only 'fairly well' achieved.
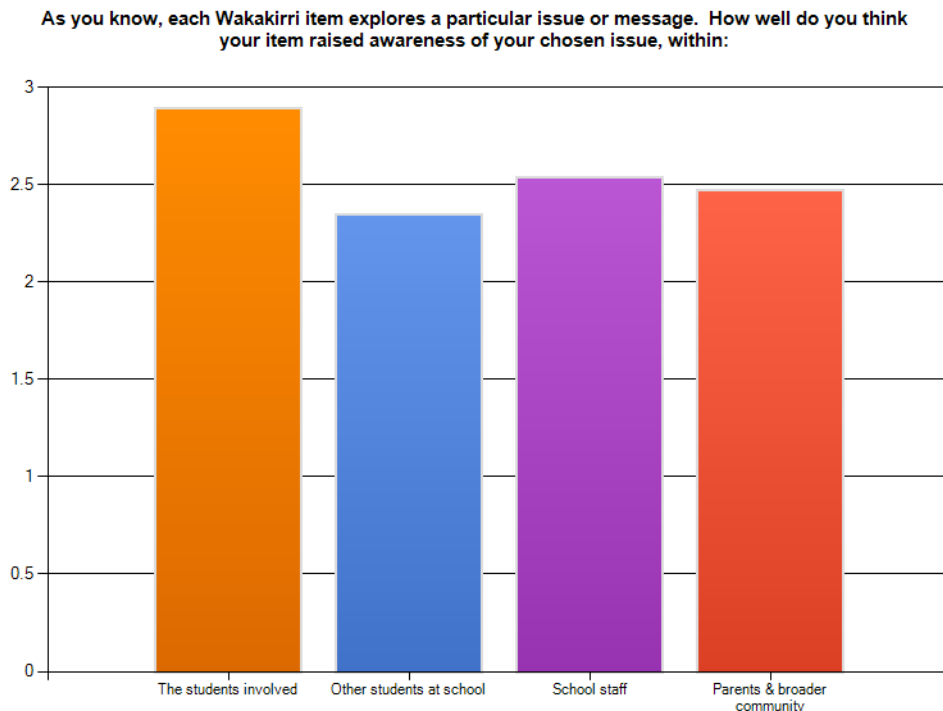

Figure 4. Teachers' perceptions of effectiveness in raising awareness

Students were asked what they thought about the message, issue or theme that their school chose for their recent Wakakirri item, and asked to categorise it as either 'important', 'interesting',' boring' or 'confusing' (or a combination of these). They were also given the option to write their own description or comment if they wished. Results show that the majority (61.5%) thought the message or issue was important, and 44% found it interesting. The proportions selecting 'boring' or 'confusing' were negligible.

Students' own comments on this question also suggest that their involvement in Wakakirri had produced a high level of engagement with the issues, as these examples suggest:

- *It was a good message for other students to know, especially when you're in need of help.*
- *Our school did an important message in life. It's when people have been rejected or not wanted in the playground but there's always a door that opens up and leads you to happiness.*
- *Our Wakakirri performance was about the journey that we have been through to get our new school and about never giving up.*
- *Our story-dance message tells that being left out is not good but try everything there is and to never give up.*
- *Our message was very important because it was about not excluding people in life because excluding is like bullying and no one can cope with this behaviour.*
- *I think our story/theme was interesting and helped people understand about the Indian culture more.*
- *I think that our item made an effect on people because it was about what happens in most peoples lives.*
- *People of different races should be treated all the same.*
- *I liked our message as we take part in operation christmas child at school*
- *Ours was something you don't always think about but it is just as important as those you do*

The issue of how well Wakakirri was promoting important messages and issues was also explored in the teacher interviews.

Many teachers spoke positively about how they were committed to incorporating messages and issues into their own entries.

> I'm very aware of having a strong storyline. I try and make sure it's something that's basically relevant to the children, or to our town, our city. So that it has a bit of meaning out there.

One suggested that it was important for the students to understand the message in the story 'so that they can put those emotions into the acting part of it'.

Others spoke positively about the incorporation of messages in their own schools' entry and also in those of other schools. One felt that this aspect 'comes across pretty strongly' in other schools' entries. Another shared this view – having watched other entries on the same performance night he felt that many had 'very [much] focused on getting a message of something across', and that this ranged from messages about recycling to personal growth and development issues. Another thought that while the messages in some other schools' performances were sometimes 'a little bit obscure', overall the messages were 'coming through quite well' and were also the kind that his children could understand:

> Our own kids can actually tell you what's happening in other stories, or can see what's happening in other stories. So I think in that regard Wakakirri is hitting the mark.

One teacher spoke of a need to strike a balance between serious messages that can sometimes be 'a little bit dark for primary school children' and messages with 'entertainment value', and reported that while her earlier efforts focused more on serious message, in later years she had tried to develop something that 'was a bit more fun but that did have a message'.

While most were generally positive about the incorporation of messages into Wakakirri entries, some teachers were less sure that this was always a priority for all schools, or that the judging necessarily rewarded the incorporation of messages:

> [Performances are] not always [message based], and if we're looking at the ones that are successful in gaining places and awards, no not necessarily. […] Sometimes they can be based on a fairy story that doesn't really have a great message.

Another thought that the promotion of messages and issues had 'lost its importance a bit' over time and that this might be improved if Wakakirri set a clearer theme each year, making it easier for schools to develop a message-based entry, and for judges to compare entries:

> When we were first involved there was a clear direction for what you needed to be doing. I just think it has got really broad now. It's very wishy washy and you can do anything basically, which I guess is a good thing in one way, but for new people coming in it might be a bit daunting because it is just so hard to pin down what your story or message is going to be. It might be good to have a category – still a really broad category – but a category that you want the stories to draw from. I also think that might make it a bit easier for the judging with the criteria because it is drawing from a pool of things that are talking about the same message. Whereas, how do you compare apples and oranges when you have people doing such a broad range of things? It is very difficult.

Conclusion

Both the teacher and student responses suggest that this objective is generally being achieved well, with involvement in Wakakirri effectively engaging both participants and others in the chosen issue or message.

One area for improvement might be to consider ways in which the awareness of the issue or message that is developed among the participants can be more effectively spread to or shared with other students in the school. There is also a need for the organisation to maintain a strong focus on the importance of 'stories with a message' to make sure that this remains an important aspect of the program, and one that is understood and adhered to by all participants. Another issue that may be worth reviewing is the value that judges give to the incorporation of messages when they are making their decisions, to ensure that participants perceive this to have been an important rather than optional criteria in determining awards.

4.1.2 PROMOTING SUSTAINABILITY

In the survey, teachers were asked three questions that relate to this broad objective:

- how well they thought their school had followed the three waste reduction principles (reduce, reuse, recycle) in the development of their entry,
- whether their Wakakirri item caused students to understand or practice sustainability in any other ways, and
- how well Wakakirri helped develop students' environmental awareness.

Responses to the question about waste reduction were very positive, with teachers rating for their adherence to all three of the principles (reduce, reuse, recycle) being slightly higher than 8 out of 10. Although it should be noted of course, that the question asks people to assess their own performance and there may be a tendency to rate this more highly than an independent assessor might. However, in their comments teachers provided numerous practical examples of how they had implemented these principles in the design and development of their props and costumes, and how the students had been engaged by the issue of waste reduction. For example:

- *I found it helped them to find different uses in normal things... from an old box to previous Wakakirri costumes.*
- *Our item was a remake of a previous Wakakirri item and students remembered seeing their older siblings in most of the costumes. So students were very aware of how we reused and recycled for our item.*
- *Students helped with design ideas for old uniforms in to new uniforms*
- *We discussed the strategies we were using, with the children, at length so that they understood the reasons for some of the costuming and props decisions that were taken.*
- *Reusing and recycling costumes*
- *They are a little more aware of the nature of recycling and limiting the purchase of new materials.*
- *They became more aware of caring for costumes in case we need them again in the future.*
- *Every costume, prop, and backdrop was recycled*
- *Whole school approach to recycling costumes through our dance program.*
- *Adapting previous sets and props*
- *Made them aware of costumes that we can reuse again and again in a different form*
- *I always asked the students "do we really need this?", and "can we use something we already have?"*

Teachers who were interviewed provided similar examples. Many talked about the discussions they engaged in with students about sustainability of props and costumes, for example:

We discussed the concept of sustainability with the older students. We all got together and sat down and worked out how we could put this performance on, keeping in mind it needed to be sustainable. So we had a look at what costumes we had. When we were writing the storyline and designing everything, we had a look at what we already had in the shed from previous performances at school concerts to see what we could use again.

As we go through the item I tell the students we used these costumes before. Quite often they've had older siblings who've worn them so they're familiar with them. And we do reuse as many props as possible. I say all the way along as I'm making the costumes or refitting them, I'll tell them what they've been used for and we often show them a video of how they were used before and especially with our props as well.

Because we have a fairly limited budget, we try to recycle as much as we can. So we try to recycle, for example, costumes from previous Wakakirris and use those whenever we can.

We aim for the whole thing to try and spend less than $100 on our items. So while I actually don't do stories that are about recycling or sustainability or anything like that, we focus on that in not actually spending money. Like reusing our costumes and sets and props. So [the issue of sustainability] is not really in our storylines that we do. We do it as part of developing the sets and costumes.

Teachers felt that the need to produce a sustainable entry was clearly communicated by Wakakirri, and that the experience of being involved was raising students' awareness about the waste reduction aspects of sustainability:

> [Recycling and reuse] is promoted [by Wakakirri]. There's a section we fill out [in the application form] to say what we've done in order to achieve that. So they're really driving that message across.

> Yes I think [the promotion of sustainability] is great. The message is really clear and the message is getting through to the kids that that's what it's about, so it raises their awareness. They are always saying 'oh no, we can't throw that out, we might be able to use it for Wakakirri'. So I think the sustainability message is really strong and clear and positive.

While teachers felt that their own schools had worked hard to implement principles of waste reduction, they had mixed views on how well other schools were committed to these principles. Some thought other schools had demonstrated their commitment to sustainability very effectively:

> You could see that all the schools that were performing on the night had definitely thought about how they were going to put on their performance in a sustainable way.

> [In other schools' performances] I do recognise some things that have been used before. I can see how other schools have been quite ingenious with some of the items that they've used - like air-conditioning piping and things like that. You can see it.

However others were less sure that sustainability was always a priority for all schools, with one commenting that:

> Some of the schools that enter aren't exactly up front with how they go about gaining their props. I know one school that says they reduce, reuse and recycle, and they don't. They go out and buy all the stuff. With my own school, we're flat out spending $200 on our Wakakirri item. We do religiously reduce, reuse and recycle. That's the whole message behind what we do. [But with some other schools] the focus is being taken off what the children can do and taken to how whizz-bang some of their props are.

This teacher is not convinced that there is a level playing field on this issue because Wakakirri relies on schools telling them how sustainable their entry is:

> I don't know how Wakakirri can get around that. You know it's really good faith in what they're being told by the Wakakirri co-ordinator. I don't know the answer. All I know is that it does happen and it's quite distressing for schools that do it the right way. The kids say 'well how come they've got this costume, that costume and some other costume?' You say 'well, I don't know'. Because some of the stuff that people turn out in in routines, there's just no way you can recycle that sort of stuff.

As a result of these experiences, this teacher feels Wakakirri needs to be stricter about the criteria for sustainability, and 'start rewarding the schools that are making a genuine effort'. She suggests that maybe there should be a requirement for 'someone higher up in the school' than the Wakakirri coordinator to sign off on the application form to say that sustainability criteria have in fact been met for their entry.

EXTENDED AWARENESS OF WASTE REDUCTION PRINCIPLES

A number of examples were provided of how the experience of implementing waste reduction principles in relation to props and costumes for their Wakakirri item, had then been extended to the development of new waste-related initiatives within the school more broadly. For example comments in the survey included:

- *Our students encouraged others to pick up litter around the school.*
- *Many classes have introduced recycling boxes in their rooms*
- *There were many links made with recycling in our kitchen and garden. Students decided to compost in all classes for the garden.*
- *The school has continued composting, water recycling and reusing costumes for the end of year concert.*
- *We had wrap free day, clean up days and we are getting worms to cut down on food scraps. We are also rehabilitating school land*
- *We have a garden. We bring things we have recycled from home to school for the use of art*
- *Some were interested in further art activities relating to reusing.*
- *The year 5s are working out how to produce a sustainable Xmas play now*
- *Our Prep - 6 end of year school concert in December is following the same philosophy.*

These comments suggest that the experience of putting waste reduction principles into practice as part of developing their Wakakirri entry was helping to trigger or promote an awareness of waste reduction opportunities in other areas of life.

BROADER SUSTAINABILITY ISSUES

Apart from waste reduction, it is perhaps less clear whether Wakakirri is helping develop a broader understanding of sustainability. Only half the respondents provided an answer to the second related survey question about whether Wakakirri was promoting a greater understanding of, or capacity to practice sustainability in any other ways, and of these, many provided examples that were again about waste reduction, reuse or recycling of props and costumes.

However, while comments that went beyond issues of waste reduction, reuse and recycling were fewer in number, there was some evidence of engagement with other sustainability-related issues – possibly depending on the particular messages or themes chosen for individual items. For example teachers suggested the following as evidence of the development of a broader understanding:

- *They have a greater understanding of the need to sustain natural environments in urban areas.*
- *Our story helped the children understand the importance of our water ways.*
- *The item was about reducing graffiti in our community, hopefully we have stopped these children and others from doing graffiti and causing a lot of costs in the clean up/repair.*
- *Our students were happy to rehearse outside whenever it was possible because they realised that it was better for the environment.*
- *A School Environmental Team was formed*
- *Helped students to become aware of importance of forests*
- *Worked without lights, used public transport*
- *Our story helped students understand more about environmental sustainability, i.e.; breeding programs for endangered native animals*
- *It helped to develop an understanding of how precious water is*

- *It was embedded into the upper school curriculum and gave our students an understanding of what's happening to our marine life […] due to human waste and destruction*
- *Our students then went into another environmental comp and won first prize based on the knowledge they had developed.*

In the interviews another teacher reporting that her participants considered the question of transport as a sustainability issue:

> Keeping in mind [the performance] needed to be sustainable […] We worked out the best way that we could get to [the venue] where we were performing. The students decided that bus was the best way for us.

It is clear that teachers thought Wakakirri was effective in developing students' environmental awareness, with the majority of survey respondents (58%) thinking it did this 'very well' and 36% 'fairly well'. Only 5% thought it did not help develop students' environmental awareness. It is useful to note however, that for some teachers the perception appears to have been that Wakakirri supported existing values rather than developed radically new ones – as two teachers put it:

> *Because many of these things are already crucial to our school ethos and the very reason we chose to participate, we are unlikely to say we got a lot 'more' from the experience. But it certainly supported what we already believe in.*

> *It stimulated discussion and further awareness but our school already is very aware and practices sustainability.*

Students were not directly asked a question about the sustainability objective in their survey, however they were asked how well they thought Wakakirri had helped them develop an understanding of environmental issues. Responses were positive, with 57% saying it had helped them 'a lot' and 35% 'a little'. Only 5% said it had not helped developed their understanding at all. This finding is interesting as students' assessments about the effectiveness of Wakakirri in developing their understanding of environmental issues are almost identical to those of their teachers (see findings related to students' environmental awareness, discussed above). On the other hand, when students were asked how well Wakakirri helped them develop nine different skills (see discussion at 4.1.4 below), 'understanding of environmental issues' was ranked lowly compared to the others – eighth out of the nine.

Conclusion

There is clearly a high degree of understanding of, and engagement with waste reduction principles, and teachers in particular feel that participation in Wakakirri is clearly giving students valuable experience in putting these principles into practice, by thinking carefully and creatively about the most sustainable ways they can produce their props and costumes. There is also evidence that this experience is also causing students and teachers to reflect on how else they might be able to address waste reduction issues in their school more broadly, and, in those schools where other initiatives are already in place, Wakakirri appears to be effectively reinforcing those values.

While it is less strong, there is also evidence that Wakakirri is enabling greater awareness and understanding of other sustainability issues (beyond waste reduction) and that the program is being effectively linked to environmental education more generally in some schools.

It is interesting to note however, that when students reflected on the kinds of skills they developed by participating in Wakakirri, 'understanding environmental issues' was one of the lower ranked skills.

This may have been because of the wording of the question – future research might seek to ask students more specifically whether Wakakirri helped them learn about waste reduction, or how to put the principles of reduce, reuse and recycle into action. However, this finding may also indicate a need for Wakakirri to support teachers to better explain the environmental reasons for these specific waste reduction principles, and to locate them in the context of the broader environmental issues associated with the production of new materials (such as resource depletion, energy and water use and pollution and so on).

Another area for improvement might be to encourage schools to look beyond the issue of waste reduction, and consider in what other ways they might make their Wakakirri entry more sustainable (for example, by considering, as one school did, the environmental implications of different types of transport to the performance venue, or as another teacher suggested, talking about the energy savings that might be achieved if they did their rehearsals outside, or without lights).

There is also a need for the organisation to continue to send a clear message about the importance of demonstrating a commitment to sustainability in one's entry, to make sure that this remains an important aspect of the program, and one that is understood and adhered to by all participants. A related issue that may be worth reviewing is the value that judges give to evidence of the sustainability of entries when they are making their decisions, to ensure that participants perceive this to have been an important rather than optional criteria in determining awards.

4.1.3   BRIDGING CULTURAL DIVIDES

Teachers were asked about the effectiveness of Wakakirri in 'bridging cultural divides' in two different survey questions. Firstly they were asked directly how well Wakakirri was achieving its objective of 'bridging cultural divides by promoting inclusion and developing understanding and respect between cultures'. Responses to this question were somewhat mixed but fairly positive, with 58% saying Wakakirri does this 'well' and 36% 'very well'. Secondly, teachers were asked this question in the context of the kinds of learning outcomes that Wakakirri produces for students. Again, responses were mixed, with the overall perception slightly less positive – the most common response being that it helps bridge cultural divides 'a little' (47%). Slightly fewer (42%) thought this learning outcome was achieved 'very well'. Of a range of ten learning outcomes that teachers were asked about (see 4.1.4 below) the ability of Wakakirri to 'bridge cultural divides' was ranked lowest of the ten. It was the only one for which the most common answer was 'a little' rather than 'very well' and it also had the highest proportions of respondents who felt it did this 'not at all' (5%) or they were 'not sure' (6%).

This issue was explored further in the interviews, with a mix of responses given. One teacher reported that, while she had appreciated another school's 'performance about multiculturalism', she 'didn't include anything like that in ours because up until recently we've been basically an Anglo-Saxon school. So there wasn't the need there'. However, other teachers had a less narrow view of the opportunities to address this objective. For example, one teacher saw two ways that the objective of 'bridging cultural divides' was being achieved, depending on the level of cultural diversity within each school. She felt that for schools with culturally diverse populations, Wakakirri was providing positive opportunities for children from different cultural backgrounds to work together. However, she stressed that there were also opportunities to address this issue within schools whose student body was less culturally diverse – such as her own. For example, she had developed a storyline based on the school's relationship with a school overseas, an approach that helped promote cultural understanding by beginning with a cultural issue the students had some knowledge of, and using the Wakakirri experience to extend their thinking about it. She also mentioned a number of other schools that had taken a similar approach to the development of their storylines.

In the survey, teachers were also asked how well they thought Wakakirri helped developed students level of 'understanding/respect and inclusion', which might have been interpreted by some as referring to understanding, respect and inclusion of different cultures. However, it appears from the result that this question was interpreted more broadly, as including other dimensions of respect and inclusion, because, compared to the more specific questions above, a much larger proportion (88%) thought Wakakirri produced this learning outcome 'very well'.

In the interviews, teachers did tend to interpret this question broadly – speaking about how Wakakirri helped students understand the importance of respecting a range of differences (such as age, skill, ability), and practicing inclusion across this spectrum:

> We don't do auditions for our Wakakirri, we just open it up and anyone can come along. We've got children in wheelchairs, we've got all sorts of things, children with cerebral palsy, and they're all included, we don't turn anyone away. And [the students] know that it's open - we're not just looking at the students that go to dance classes – because we don't have many. They know that anyone can get in and have a go.

> One of the positives of opening it up to kids from prep to Grade 6 is that you see the older kids taking the little ones under their wing. On the day they are shepherding them around and making sure they are okay. It is such a great bonding experience for the kids involved.

In their survey, students were not directly asked a question about the objective of bridging cultural divides, however they were asked how well they thought Wakakirri helped them learn 'understanding and respect for different cultures' and 'respect and inclusion of other people'. Results were positive; with 64% saying Wakakirri had helped them learn understanding and respect for different cultures 'a lot' and 28% 'a little'. Notwithstanding the slightly different wording, it should be noted that this result is *more* positive than teachers' assessments of Wakakirri's ability to 'bridge cultural divides'. Whereas teachers ranked 'bridging cultural divides' as the least well achieved of the list of ten learning outcomes they were asked about, students ranked their equivalent item ('understanding and respect for different cultures') more highly – placing it sixth out of the nine they were asked about.

Students' responses to the question about learning respect and inclusion were more positive, with 74% saying it had helped them 'a lot' and 23% 'a little'. It is interesting to note that this is still slightly *less* positive than teachers' assessments of students' learning in relation to this principle (discussed above).

Conclusion

Results suggest that Wakakirri is achieving this objective reasonably well, with both teachers and students feeling fairly positive about the way Wakakirri helps to bridge cultural divides, promote inclusion and develop understanding and respect between cultures. However the *degree* of positivity about this aspect is less than that found in relation to other aspects of Wakakirri – particularly among teachers – and there was quite a difference of opinion about the *extent* to which this is achieved. This suggests there is perhaps room for improvement in respect of this objective. A worthwhile goal might be for future surveys to generate a higher proportion of respondents who feel that this objective is achieved 'very well' rather than just 'a little'. It should be noted however, that students responded more positively to this question, and further research may be valuable in understanding the reasons for this difference in perspective.

Indeed, ISF suggests that the different findings on similar issues across the two surveys confirm the value of seeking both teachers' *and* students' views, in order to gain different perspectives on Wakakirri, and we suggest that this might also be a useful general approach for future evaluations.

4.1.4 PROVIDING A UNIQUE TEACHING TOOL

To gauge Wakakirri's value as a teaching tool, the teacher survey asked how well Wakakirri enhances children's learning, across a range of outcomes. As shown below in Figure 5, results were extremely positive, with the most common answer by far being that it does this 'very well' for each of the outcomes they were asked about (with the exception of 'bridging cultural divides' discussed above).
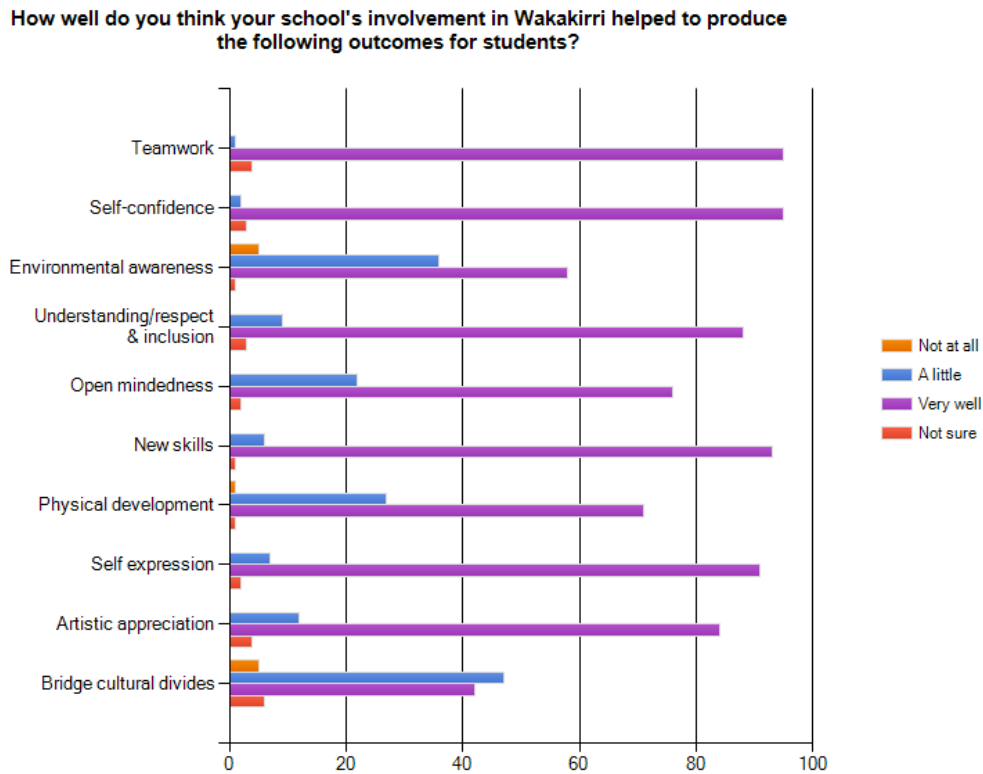

Figure 5. Teacher perceptions of learning outcomes

Teachers were most positive about the capacity for Wakakirri to improve students' teamwork (95% thought this was achieved 'very well'), self-confidence (95%), help develop new skills (93%) and improve self expression (91%), as well as its ability to promote understanding/respect and inclusion (88%) and develop artistic appreciation (84%).

Teachers were also asked to rate how 'educationally valuable' Wakakirri is on a scale of 0 to 4 (where 0 = 'not at all' and 4 = 'very valuable'). Results were very positive with 65% giving it the highest rating, and a further 27% rating it 3 out of 4 on this criteria.

These extremely positive responses are supported by the optional comments that teachers made in the survey about how effective Wakakirri is a teaching tool that enhances students' learning:

- *The students always enjoy Wakakirri and making a film gives them a better idea and understanding behind what goes on behind the camera.*
- *Our item consisted of 50% of students who were in Year 2 and they were quite difficult to work with at rehearsals but their performance and team work at the heats was amazing. They left us gobsmacked by the way they just got on and organised themselves. So Wakakirri is wonderful at building teamwork, even from little people who are very ratty at rehearsals.*

- *As our item had a direct impact on our school community I feel that the kids gained a great deal from having their say through dance.*
- *Our ragtag bunch became a polished team of performers*
- *This was the only performing arts activity offered at the school. The students loved being involved!*
- *Students had input into the story line and the choreography to tell the story. A group of older girls choreographed quite a lot of the sections, assisting younger students with their parts. Several students who had never participated before commented on how they loved it and how proud they were of themselves for going in it. Wakakirri is fantastic for developing teamwork. With 90 students participating, they need to work as a team. Our older students really help out with the younger ones.*

Similarly in the interviews, teachers mentioned a wide range of skills that they thought students gained from their participation in Wakakirri. **Teamwork** skills were perhaps the most commonly mentioned, with many suggesting Wakakirri was a particularly good vehicle for teaching these. One suggested that an extremely valuable lesson that participants were learning was to experience 'being part of a team' in the sense that 'you are part of something that's bigger than you'. By being involved in the production and performance process they learned that:

> Yes, you are an individual, but your individual bit adds onto somebody's bit, which adds onto somebody's bit, to make something where you are a small part of something bigger. I say to them, you may be one of seven but if we only had six would it work the same way? They say, 'well no it wouldn't because this role needs seven'. You go, 'well that's right'. So even though you might just do this, this whole thing wouldn't work without you. I say it's like if the triangle player wasn't in the orchestra, we'd miss them.

One teacher stated that 'if I had to pick the one thing that I think is the most beneficial, I would say it's the learning how to work as a team'. Others clearly agreed that Wakakirri was particularly effective at developing teamwork skills:

> The sorts of skills they learn is working together as a team and learning about team work.

> The team work that just developed, it was just fantastic to see everyone working together.

> Definitely [the students] are learning to work together. […] We call ourselves a team right from the word go. So there is very much a team atmosphere.

In addition to teamwork, many teachers also pointed to the kinds of **interpersonal and leadership skills** that their students developed, for example:

> [They learn skills such as] when it's not their group on the stage, just standing quietly and waiting on the side. Just all those little things that are really important skills that they need outside of Wakakirri as well. You know, taking turns and listening and when they are on stage what they need to do. It's just all those other things that come together.

> [Participation helps with] inter-personal [skills] where the older students get to mentor some younger students. We had quite a few Preps involved who had never done anything like this before. Our Grade 5s and 6s, some of them have done dancing and so they were able to help the younger ones, especially on the night when the stage fright started to kick in.

> Some leadership skills come out of [the experience of working together]. Our older children mentor our younger ones and assist in behaviour management and all of that sort of stuff.

The experience of developing their Wakakirri entry clearly also provided students with the opportunity to learn a range of **production skills** – these were mentioned by teachers who had entered both film and stage-based items:

> The sorts of skills they learn [include] how to put together a story. So they usually do a brainstorming session at the beginning of putting together the movie. Then there's also the technical side of actually putting together a movie, using a video camera or story boards and sound editing and so forth. So they've got the technical side, they've also got the literacy side to it and they've also got the social side of it. It's given them a very unique opportunity to be able to put something together. When they do have it together, they can also be proud of it.

> They learn about putting a story together. They have a lot of input with their ideas and particularly our older students, they choreograph some parts of the dance. So it really is about involvement and the kids learning how to put it all together.

> For me it's a process, from nothing to performance.

> The actual process for them of bringing together a production – the production side of it – that sort of process I find is really worthwhile for the kids because it's something that they wouldn't otherwise experience.

The development of **performance skills** is another clear benefit of students' involvement, particularly at schools where the students would not otherwise have such an opportunity:

> They're learning drama skills and dance skills, because we're not a school that has a lot of students participating [in] outside dance. So they're learning that and they've having access to it where they wouldn't normally.

> They learn about acting, they learn about dancing, they lean about movement.

> They're learning how a routine goes together, they're learning dance steps, they're working out how to move to the music, what the music means, how the music fits in with the story. And then the actual performance side of it – stage presence and how we move in lighting, what different lighting we can expect and all of that sort of stuff as well.

Many teachers specifically mentioned the opportunity to perform in front of a large (paying) audience as a strong benefit of Wakakirri. One suggested that this experience could benefit both those students who enjoyed it and those who did not:

> I use it as an actual performance based tool, in that if one kid from that [experience] decides that they don't ever want to go on stage again, then that's good! But if someone decides 'gee I loved that and I want to go up there again', well that's good too. So I do it for them to actually have an experience of getting up in front of a real audience in an actual theatre and perform. […] My ultimate goal is for them to have that experience on a real stage in front of a real audience that aren't all their mum and dads. It's not a school assembly. It's something bigger than that, and to come away with a feeling – one way or the other – about that whole experience.

Many other kinds of learning were also mentioned – including the learning that comes from engaging with the particular content of the chosen story:

> There is so much [the students learn] that comes from your story, depending on what your story is. Like last year ours tied in Japanese culture, because we do Japanese as a second

language, and our garden because we have a school garden. So we tied those two ideas together. So all the time they are bringing in what they know about Japan, what they know about the gardening and creating a garden. […] So it is just a way to bring in different parts of the curriculum and learn about it in a really exciting and engaging way.

Another aspect of Wakakirri as a teaching tool, that teachers appeared to appreciate was the flexibility it offered in terms of how it could be run at individual schools. For example, some incorporated the program into their music or performance program, while others offered it as an extra-curricular activity. Some ran it with a particular class cohort, while others enabled any student in the school to participate. This flexibility seems to be a clear strength of the program.

Not everybody does it like I do it. [Some people] will audition and they'll actually do it all out of school time. They've obviously got different objectives for doing it to what I do. Because mine is to give every kid that experience of being on stage.

A number of teachers noted that the flexible structure of Wakakirri meant that in their school it provided a means for the school to offer performing arts when they could not otherwise fit it into their teaching time.

The ability of Wakakirri to provide an innovative, effective and enjoyable means of **engaging** students in learning was also very clear from teachers' comments:

They don't realise they're learning because they're having so much fun.

The kids keep saying to me 'when are we going to do it, what's the theme and everything?' They asked me in the first week of school and I thought 'oh at least give me a chance to get my preppies in line first before I start thinking about Wakakirri!'

I involve all our Year 4 children as part of their music program. The kids hang out for Year 4 because they know they're going to be doing Wakakirri. They just can't wait. Of course it's one of those things that they get off the stage and say, 'I wish I could do that again!'.

Students themselves were also asked how well Wakakirri helped them develop a range of skills. The list of skills they were asked to respond to was based on that used in the teachers' survey but simplified and adapted slightly by using more child-friendly language.[2] As shown by Figure 1 below, students' perceptions of the skills they had developed through their participation in Wakakirri were also very positive, although slightly less so overall than teachers' assessments of this. Still, the most common answer for every skill was that Wakakirri helped them develop that skill 'very well'.

The skills that students thought Wakakirri was most useful in helping them develop were teamwork (85% thought it helped with this 'a lot'), and self-confidence (84%), which were also the skills that teachers perceived to be most effectively developed. The skills students thought Wakakirri was less effective at developing were physical development (51% thought it did this 'a lot', 40% 'a little bit' and 5% 'not at all') and understanding of environmental issues (although this may have been as result of the question wording, as discussed in the conclusion to 4.1.2 above).

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[2] The wording of 'environmental awareness' was changed to 'understanding environmental issues'. Similarly 'understanding/respect and inclusion' was changed to 'respect and inclusion of other people'. 'Self-expression' was reworded as 'how to express myself' and 'bridging cultural divides' as 'understanding and respect for different cultures'. Finally 'new skills' and 'artistic appreciation' were collapsed into one category, expressed as 'artistic or performing skills', meaning the students list comprised nine rather than ten skills.

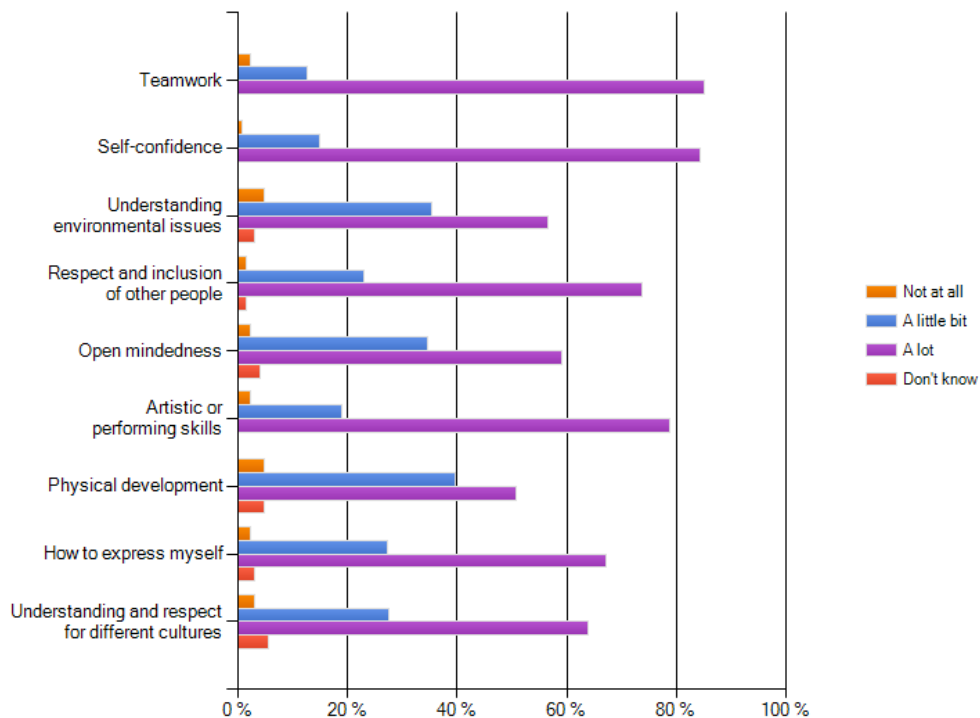## How well do you think Wakakirri helped you develop these skills?

Figure 6. Student perceptions of skills developed

While the students' responses to the survey question about skill development were very positive, the value of Wakakirri as a unique teaching tool is even more effectively expressed by the optional comments some students added in response to this question:

- *Wakakirri has helped me a lot and is a big confidence booster. Wakakirri helps you grow as a member of a team.*
- *It really helped me with my shyness and many other people. I like how you could express yourself and not get embarassed.*
- *Wakakirri has opened up all these skills for me and I feel much more confident.*
- *It was a great opportunity to meet others from different schools.*
- *They helped me believe when you have a dream you can achieve it.*

Furthermore, it was very striking that when students were asked (in a separate survey question) what they found to be 'the best thing about taking part in Wakakirri', while many mentioned how fun it had been, many also specifically and spontaneously mentioned the learning dimension, and the wide range of particular skills they had developed as a consequence of their participation:

- *The best thing about joining Wakakirri is meeting other students from different [schools]. It was also a great opportunity to improve on my acting & dancing skills. Being apart of the Wakakirri program is great fun & there's heaps to enjoy.*
- *I developed new dancing skills. I got to perform in front of huge audiences and on stages that the prime time people have stepped on.*
- *The best part would have to be just enjoying yourself and having fun. It also is good at developing your skills on stage.*
- *It was amazing because you get to be confident.*
- *We got to learn great dance moves and had a chance to be a part of the production.*

- *I have improved my dancing and grew self confidence.*
- *I learnt more about dancing! It was AWESOME!*
- *That I could learn new skills about dancing and acting.Having the chance to take part.*
- *Learning new stuff!*
- *working as a team having fun meeting new people*
- *The best thing about taking part in Wakakirri was being brave and confident enough to stand on that stage to produce a flabbergasting performance along with all your friends [...] It was a good opportunity for students to express their talents in Performing Arts.*
- *I liked learning all the different skills and the most important thing was that is was fun.*
- *It was really fun to learn the dances.*
- *its fun and you get to make new friends and get to develop dance skills*
- *It was fun to learn how to make your facial expressions that showed your character*
- *The best thing was I improved so many important skills such as CONFIDENCE and developing friends. Wakakirri also gave me a chance to enjoy myself and show the comunity my skills of gymnastics. THANKYOU!*
- *its a great experience and it was good to develop my dancing skills*
- *It was really fun to learn the dances and working out the costumes was fun.*
- *i had heaps of fun and learnt alot of new skills and boasted my confidence*

These comments have been included here at length, because it is impossible to understate the significance of these student comments to this evaluation. The fact that so many students are so enthusiastic about their experience, and can nominate the numerous and specific ways in which Wakakirri has contributed to their learning and development is an extremely strong endorsement of the program.

Conclusion

Wakakirri is clearly the unique teaching tool that the organisation intends it to be. Both students' and teachers' responses confirm that it enhances students' learning across many dimensions, and that it does this by engaging students in an effective and enjoyable way. The diverse range of skills it helps to develop, and the enthusiasm it produces in students' who participate are clearly two of the program's great strengths.

4.2 VIEWS ON ORGANISATIONAL VALUES IN ACTION

In addition to exploring whether Wakakirri was achieving its four main objectives, the research sought to check whether it was effectively putting its organisational values into action. These are to ensure that Wakakirri:

- is accessible and affordable for every school and student in Australia
- makes extra effort to promote participation by indigenous communities
- provides support, training and resources for teachers
- supports other organizations by promoting their public health messages as potential story subjects to schools
- uses sustainable practice in its office and management decisions

The research explored perceptions on the **first three** of these values only, because the method that was adopted as being suited to the budget, timeline and main project purpose was not suited to exploring how well other organizations feel supported by Wakakirri, nor investigating Wakakirri office and management decisions. These values – shown in grey above – are areas that Wakakirri may wish to explore in the future.

4.2.1 ACCESSIBILITY AND AFFORDABILITY

Teachers were asked how accessible and affordable they thought Wakakirri was, on a scale of 0-4 (where 0 = 'not at all' and 4 = 'very'). Responses were mixed but fairly positive, with the average ranking for affordability being 3.13, and over half (50.5%) thinking it was very affordable. The average ranking for accessibility was similar 3.31, with 59% thinking it was very accessible.

A number of teachers noted that their schools are able to make participation very affordable and accessible for students:

- *We make a point of making it affordable and accessible. We want all students to have the opportunity to participate. We do not hold auditions. All students can participate from prep to grade 6. It is not about being the best dancer, actor, etc. We had several students with high needs participating this year. Wakakirri supported this with an extra adult pass.*
- *As school we did not hold auditions and included all our special needs students.*

However a significant proportion of survey respondents ranked these aspects less positively, with 24% giving Wakakirri a ranking of only 1 or 2 out of 4 for affordability, and 17% ranking it only 1 or 2 out of 4 for accessibility.

This may reflect teachers' perceptions that because each school approaches the process differently, the degree of inclusivity and accessibility, as well as the financial resources dedicated to an entry varies greatly in every school. A number suggested that these were issues that Wakakirri should consider more closely. For example one suggested that Wakakirri could do more to promote the principle of accessibility by encouraging schools not to hold auditions, because to do so '*takes away from the Wakakirri ethos of inclusivity'.*

> That's an area [promoting inclusion] that I think is a bit of an issue. We go out of our way, like we don't audition our kids. It is open to whoever. We open it up from Prep to Grade 6. And I know a lot of other schools don't do that, like they have one class that does it or they do run auditions. I just think that's not really what it is about. […] I believe that Wakakirri should be […] about everyone being able to be included and have a go and any school being able to be involved. I just think that sometimes that is not what happens.

Another suggested that schools' efforts to be accessible to and inclusive of a wide range of children of different ages might actually have disadvantaged them in the judging process:

> As a new school with very little resources and students who have never had dance lessons before and many prep students, I find the judging comments quite off. You cannot get the same performances out of preps as you can from grade 6, and many schools in our heats only had grade 5 and 6 in their acts. I allowed any students to be part of this and it disadvantaged us as you cannot get preps to stay in time like you can a grade 5 or 6 child.

Similarly, another said in interview that Wakakirri could do more to promote the principles of accessibility and inclusion so that schools that included a diverse range of children were not disadvantaged:

> I think that there should be a criteria that relates to inclusion and schools who have done that really well. Because we have kids with high needs. Last year we had two kids with autism who were involved. That is difficult. It would be much easier to say, right, I'll only have kids in Grades 5 and 6, or we are only going to have those kids who are talented, or who don't have high needs and who behave beautifully. But we don't do that and I think that

makes it difficult with rehearsals. It makes it challenging on the day when you are trying to manage the kids. [...But] I think that's what the values should be for all schools that are involved in Wakakirri and I think there needs to be a criteria that addresses that. Because at the moment that is not happening. I know absolutely that that's not happening.

This teacher thought that the application form did not adequately address this issue, and that whether or not this issue was taken into account was left to the judges' discretion:

I put down on the judging notes that those things were part of our item and that I thought that was important to point that out. However there wasn't anything in the criteria that really – the criteria doesn't bring that into it. That's I guess a subjective thing that the judges can bring in or not, depending on what they want to do. [But] there is nothing in the criteria that addresses that. If that is an important value of Wakakirri I think that should be in there.

Most teachers explicitly organised their school's entry so that the cost of participation would be minimal, and entry would be affordable – suggesting that many view this as a critical aspect of Wakakirri:

The first comment on the letter that I send out [to parents] is please do not spend any money on costumes – borrow them or whatever. We've got a bank of things at school now where we use bits and pieces. So there's no cost to the children in that way. There is however the cost of a ticket for the parents on the night. But I think Wakakirri have done an excellent job in that I think in the whole time I've been doing it, the cost has stayed the same.

If I wanted to, I could have a huge budget. But I refuse. I say if it's going to cost us more than $100 or $150 then we're doing something wrong. Because I see reuse, recycle [...] that's the philosophy that I carry in doing a story and saying to the kids, this is not about spending money. It's about being resourceful.

Some teachers were less positive in their assessment of how affordable Wakakirri is, with several noting the cost of transport as a particular challenge:

- *Although it is relatively 'cheap' to enter and perform, access/transport for country schools in Victoria is incredibly expensive*
- *Schools with limited budgets struggle just to get involved. Then the ticket prices make it almost impossible for the parents from our community to come along and support us. This is disappointing after all the effort that goes into the Wakakirri preparation.*
- *It is not accessable or affordable if you live a long way away.*

One interviewee pointed to the cost of transport as the 'biggest problem' her school faced in participating in Wakakirri as their only option was to hire two private buses to transport students to the venue, and this was very costly. This same teacher suggested that if, in future, Wakakirri could try to select venues based on their proximity to a train station that would greatly assist schools to transport their students there affordably. Another teacher made an interesting suggestion as to how the cost of travel might be seen as better value:

- *Please be more mindful of how much it costs schools/students to travel to practices. To make it more worthwhile it would be better if there were other parts to the day other than just a practice. Perhaps there could also be guest speakers about dance/drama/music or workshops or activities about the environment?*

A number of teachers also made comments suggesting that while Wakakirri is affordable for schools to enter, there is a wide discrepancy between different schools in terms of the resources that they are able to (or choose to) dedicate to their entries, and this can create something of a perception that schools are not participating on a 'level playing field':

- *It is affordable, but it is obvious the schools that can afford to hire choreographers and make brand new costumes over those who can't. That isn't really fair.*
- *I worry that to try and reach the standards of schools who have outside performing arts teachers organising their item, it will not be accessible to the average public school whose teachers are organsing the items with the skills they have. I am sure those schools accessing outside professional dance teachers have the students paying a very large bill for those skills.*
- *Our school adhered to the "low budget" reuse theme where we tried to spend as little money as possible and reuse all our props and costumes from previous performances. However, some schools did not and they were the ones that made it through to finals.*
- *It was evident that schools had varying budgets and that a lot of costumes and props were bought brand new, as opposed to recycling these. This was very obvious and sets schools apart.*
- *I've got to admit that I feel a little disappointed about the competitive nature of the competition because I know our item was beautifully done by the kids but we didn't get any real recognition of the qualities of our work. […] I still think Wakakirri is an extremely well organised event but probably a little out of our league in terms of resources within the school. That is not your fault but just the nature of being in a disadvantaged school.*
- *I believe private schools should be in a different category. They seem to monopolise most of the wins in each competition.*

Another issue that was raised by a small number of teachers was the cost of tickets, with one suggesting Wakakirri might consider a subsidy scheme to assist parents for whom the cost might be a barrier to attending:

- *Coming from a low SES school it is difficult for parents to afford the tickets to come along and watch. It would be great if there were some sort of subsidising of tickets for schools from low SES backgrounds. The students would feel more supported by their families and community and the families would get to see what the students work so hard for on a proper stage.*

The issue of the discrepancy between different schools was explored further in the interviews, with many making similar points and suggesting that not all schools were similarly committed to the principle of affordability:

There's always the schools out there that go overboard and you can see that. [The fact that they have bigger budgets] shines through, you can see that. I don't know [how Wakakirri could address that] unless they see your budget and how you stick to your budget. That's the only way.

There are some schools who are involved and with the sustainability thing I have to laugh. There are some schools lucky enough to have a budget for a wardrobe. So they buy things but their idea of sustainability is 'oh well we will use it again next year'. You think, well hang on, you know, here is our school struggling. We make do, we make things out of bottle tops, we scrounge things together. The kids bring their clothes from home to wear. It's not really about going out and buying a new beaut, you know, Disney costume, and then saying 'oh well we'll use it again next year that's sustainable'. I just don't think that is really fitting in with the message.

One suggested that the discrepancy in resources was discouraging some schools from participating:

> I think [the question of accessibility] kind of gets back to the competition aspect of it and I think that there are some schools who are not choosing to go in because they feel like they can't compete. I have a friend who works in probably one of the most difficult socio-economic areas in [the state]. She has a small school and I've said you should go in it, your kids would love it, it would be fantastic. She said, I know but we just can't compete. You know, it's that feeling of because they haven't got the resources – and even though she knows that is not what it is about – the fact is you are up against the private schools who have beaut budgets and can get the choreographer especially. […] Whereas it should be just a matter of, yeah let's go in it, let's give it a go, it would be a great experience for our kids. It shouldn't be about competing and winning.

However, one teacher cautioned against making judgements about other schools' level of spending on their item, because it was sometimes difficult to tell:

> I know a lot of schools do not spend any money. The ones that look like they might have, I've never actually asked them. So I can't really say whether they have or haven't. Some schools you look at and you think, 'whoa that was huge'. Then you learn that they've actually borrowed all the costumes from the local high school or something. So I think that's a bit hard to judge because you actually don't know where their stuff comes from.

She also added that schools might spend money one year, but then reuse those items in future entries:

> I'm not going to go up to ask somebody how much they spend on their items. [Laughs] One year I do know that - some lady said to me, we bought - I don't know, 200 metres of fabric or something. I thought, Hooley dooley, that's a lot of fabric. I'm thinking well I hope you use it again next year. That's another thing. If you spend money this year, that's all good as long as you use it again somehow.

However, notwithstanding this note of caution about judging the resources spent by other schools without knowing the facts, there does appear to be a widespread perception that some schools are spending significant amounts of money on their entries. This is not only contrary to the values of affordability and accessibility that Wakakirri seeks to uphold, but it may also be influencing the judging in an in appropriate way and possibly discouraging some schools from participating.

Conclusion

Generally Wakakirri appears to be an affordable and accessible experience. Many teachers spoke of how it was possible to participate for very little cost, and this aspect of Wakakirri was highly appreciated.

However, there are a number of issues that Wakakirri might choose to investigate further, or address in some way. Firstly, the cost of transport can be a challenge for some schools, and this should be taken into consideration when selecting venues – with proximity to public transport being a priority. Secondly there is perhaps a need for Wakakirri to promote the principles of accessibility and affordability more strongly, and to explain the connection between the two (i.e. to point out that if individual schools make a commitment to keeping their own costs down, this creates more of a level playing field between schools and increases perceptions of accessibility in general). There is perhaps also an opportunity to draw a clearer connection between the principles of affordability and sustainability (for example, by explaining that spending large budgets on the purchase of props

compromises both these principles). Further, Wakakirri may wish to consider reviewing the application form to include information about the budget for each entry, or questions about how schools have upheld the principles of affordability and accessibility.

4.2.2 PARTICIPATION BY INDIGENOUS COMMUNITIES

Teachers were asked how well they thought Wakakirri was achieving its objective of promoting and enabling participation by Indigenous communities. Results suggest that views about this aspect are quite mixed. The majority of respondents thought Wakakirri does this 'well' and another 30% responding that it does this 'very well'. However 10% thought that this objective was not well achieved.

Some teachers seemed to find this question difficult to answer as the following comments suggest:

- *Unable to comment on [this] objective, as at our school we do not have many indigenous students, so [this] objective is not relevant to our school.*
- *At [our school], everything we do is inclusive, I do not understand why in this time, these areas are needed to be promoted. I do not know how you promote participation by indigenous communities - we did not see another school that would come near this catergory. We did see however, many schools with a variety of backgrounds - which is indicative of today's society.*

This question was explored further in the interviews, with teachers reporting a reasonable awareness of the efforts of Wakakirri in this regard. For example:

> I do see Wakakirri DVDs when they come out. They usually make an effort towards the Outreach Program and I find that particularly inspiring. I reckon they've done a really good job with that.

Another teacher said she had noticed some of the efforts Wakakirri makes to encourage Indigenous participation, including showcasing some of the Indigenous entries 'on the big screen' at the events, and she thought Wakakirri was 'doing a good job' at this. She added that Indigenous students at her school had been involved in their entry, and she thought this dimension of Wakakirri is 'working really, really well'.

Similarly another teacher spoke positively about the involvement of Indigenous students at her school:

> I just think it's fantastic. We have Indigenous students here who are involved and they love it. Often that's something that they really shine at.

Conclusion

The majority of teachers were positive about Wakakirri's efforts to promote and enable participation by Indigenous communities. However comments from some teachers suggest that this is an area that Wakakirri needs to continue to promote.

Furthermore, it should be noted that this evaluation is quite limited in its capacity to properly address this question, as it did not involve specific strategies to seek feedback from schools with high proportions of Indigenous students. As an area for future research it may be worth considering a specific evaluation with these schools – perhaps as part of the Outreach Program – to ensure that the views of Indigenous students (and their teachers) are properly represented.

4.2.3   PROVISION OF SUPPORT, TRAINING AND RESOURCES FOR TEACHERS

Teachers were asked to rate their own experiences of Wakakirri, on a scale of 0 to 4, where 0 = 'not at all' and 4 = 'very'. Responses were positive, with average ratings of 3 or more on all criteria, as shown in Figure 7 below. However, it should be noted that the statement that most teachers agreed most strongly with was that 'Wakakirri is a lot of effort'. A number of teachers who were interviewed confirmed this, for example:

> We put in so many extra hours than we thought was going to be needed. We spent most of our holidays in at school. It was a lot bigger than we originally anticipated. We didn't have many parents, we didn't ask for help from parents because we just didn't think it was going to be that big. Then when we realised it was as big as it actually was then it was too late to ask for help.

However, it is fair to say that most would be likely to agree with the teacher who said:

> I just think it is a fantastic thing for our students and that's why we keep doing it. It is hard work but it is certainly worth it because the students get so much out of it.

These findings confirm that while teachers find Wakakirri incredibly rewarding, the program is, as Wakakirri already knows, heavily dependent on the significant time and effort that teachers put in to the program.
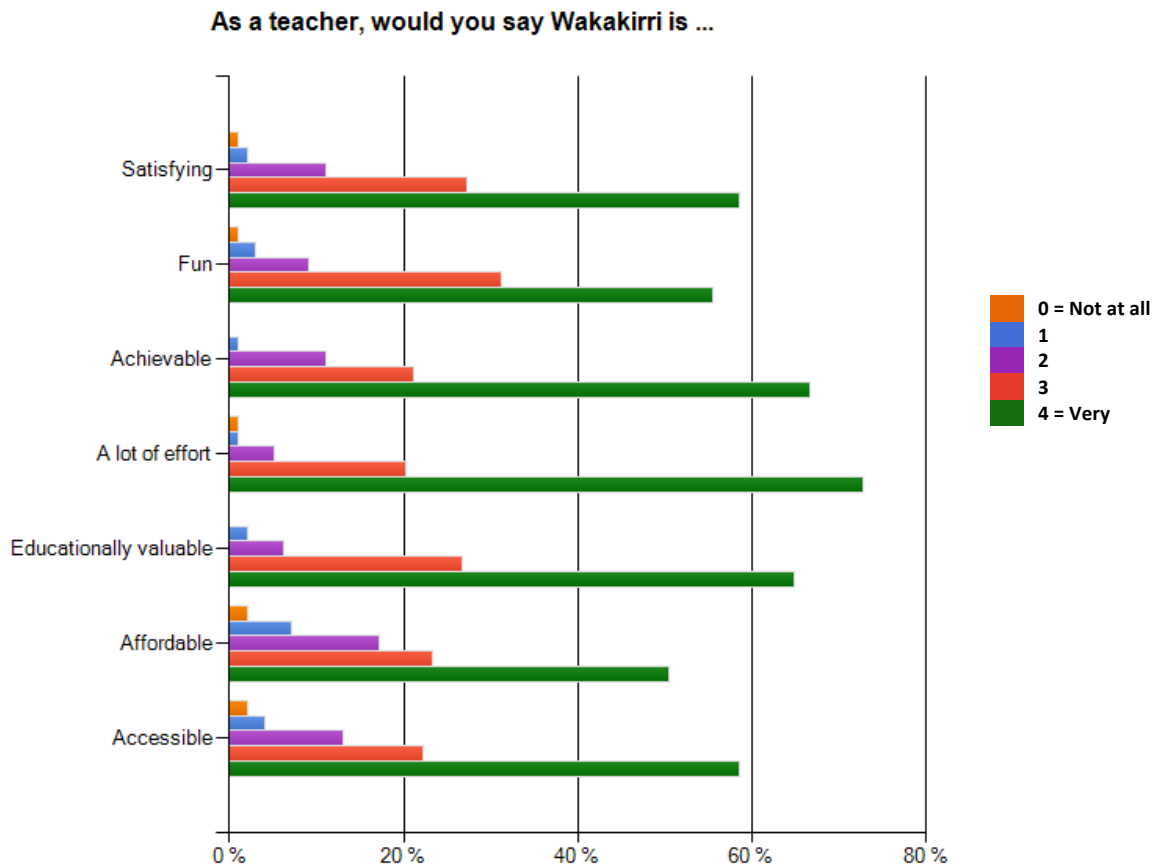

Figure 7. Teachers' experiences of Wakakirri

With this in mind, Wakakirri explicitly aims to provide a high level of support, training and resources to teachers, from online resources to newsletters and telephone customer service. The research sought to gather teachers' views on how effective they found this support.

Respondents to the teacher survey were asked to rate a number of Wakakirri components on a scale of 1 to 5 (where 1 = 'poor' and 5 = 'excellent'). Results (Figure 8 below) show high levels of satisfaction across these components, with each aspect rated 4 or above by a majority of respondents.

Teachers were most satisfied with the quality of customer service they received from Wakakirri staff, with over half the respondents rating this as 'excellent'. Together with customer service, the other components, to receive average ratings of 4 or above in the survey were the website content, overall running of the day and venue security. The components teachers rated least highly were the 'amount and quality of paperwork' (34% rated this as only 'average') and the online showcase (29% rated this 'average'). However it should be noted that this average rating was brought down by the 22% who marked the online showcase as 'N/A', suggesting that they had not viewed the showcase.

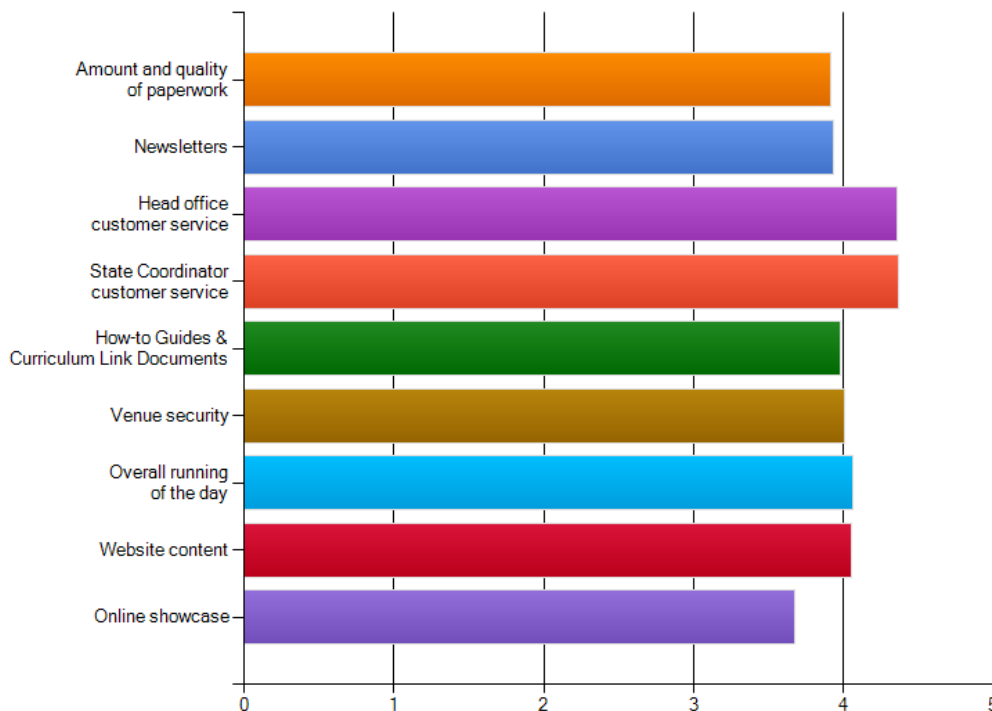**Average teacher ratings for various Wakakirri components (1=poor, 5=excellent)**

Figure 8. Teacher ratings of Wakakirri components

WAKAKIRRI CUSTOMER SERVICE

Customer service was the aspect of support that teachers were most satisfied with (over half the survey respondents rated this as excellent). Many of the optional comments teachers provided on the survey confirmed this:

- *The Wwakakirri team/crew were outstanding! :)*

- *The state coordinator is fantastic. She answers queries immediately and is keen for every school to have a fantastic experience.*
- *staff over phone usually very helpful and prompt, except during Wakakirri comp.*
- *I would once again like to thank the admin team for all their help leading up to Wakakirri. Every phone call was answered with a smile and great patience. I know they must have been driven crazy by over anxious teachers asking the most ridiculous questions but they were always very professional and helpful. Well done.*

In the interviews, teachers were similarly very positive about the customer service they had received from Wakakirri staff.

> They [Wakakirri staff] were all so supportive. [The State coordinator] was always sending out emails … and she was always checking and making sure everything was okay.

> I have always found [Wakakirri staff] to be really supportive. If you ring and ask a question they get back or they answer it straightaway. They are really good, Because [in our state] our terms are different we sometimes struggle with some of the timelines, but they are really flexible and really good with that. So yes I have always found them to be very helpful.

> I know that if there was anything I ever needed to ask them about or to approach her for, that [the state coordinator] would stop doing what she's doing and help me. So there's great support from our coordinators.

> If ever I ring up [the Wakakirri staff in Sydney] they always answer me promptly or always get back to me. Whenever I've had any enquiries or wanted to know something or whatever, they always respond. So I've had good support.

While there were very few negative comments about Wakakirri staff, one survey respondent did report a poor experience:

- *The staff were not very friendly. The only staff member I felt comfortable speaking to was Nathan. Staff need to remember for some of us its our first time, its a huge day, big committment and we are all there for the kids not ourselves... I'm sorry if this is harsh but I was so excited to try Wakakirri this year and am very unhappy with this year's experience and don't think I would enter again unless there were big changes and more information before we started. It was hard always just refering to the website which is where I was refered to constantly :(*

It should be noted that this respondent was very much in a minority, however it is included here to draw attention to the possibility that first-time entrants may face particular challenges and need a higher level of customer support.

VENUE AND LOGISITCAL ISSUES RELATING TO PERFORMANCE EVENTS

The two aspects about which survey respondents' views were most mixed (i.e. where responses were most spread between the positive and negative ends of the scale) were 'overall running of the day' and venue security'. This presumably reflects different experiences at different venues and on different occasions. A number of specific problems and negative experiences were mentioned in

survey comments, for example:[3]

- *the grand final in particular was just way behind in time and my group could have been doing other activities outside. We all have mobiles - we could be given a call when it is definite that we would be needed in 20 mins.*
- *lack of security officers allowed for unauthorized entry and exits compromising safety of students*
- *At the event we were not informed about day or evening and where to be and when*
- *I was disappointed by the fact that our school had arrived and been at the venue for half an hour before anyone even came to let us know what we needed to do.*
- *Having been involved in Vicmoves and Jrock the [Wakakirri] show day was severely lacking in downtime entertainment for the students*
- *We found that the venue was a poor place to stage a school based production. The staff there were not supportive of having students there and made it feel like we were in the way. The Wakakirri staff were either understaffed on the performance day or very annoyed with the students - who very excited but not causing any issues.*
- *The host of the evening was not professional and spoke inappropriately more than once.*
- *One little criticism I have was that the compere/host tried to make jokes and be 'entertaining'. Most of my parents felt his comments detracted from what the children had to say. My students were very young and one ended up in tears afterwards as the host jokingly told him to hurry up so he only said one line of his speech.*
- *The evening was a little too long for the students. the interval before the awards ceremony caused a lot of distress among parents and teachers.*
- *The ratio of staff to students at the live events is not adequate if you need support staff for certain students.*
- *the Lighting Techs at the Final did nothing except experiment with colours. My detailed Lighting Schedule was clearly followed at the Heat, but in the Final, the Techs completely ruined our performance by students being lit when they were changing the set and in darkness during the story telling*
- *The lighting was dreadful and was behind our action for the whole performance. This was disappointing as we had spent many hours in rehearsal and a lot of the action was not seen by the audience.*
- *At the grand final the gentleman in charge of lighting was less than helpful as well as not following the cues given. He did his own thing even though the lady in charge of our lighting was ready for the cues, he finished up having the children in the dark. he seemed to be asleep. Other schools also commented on their lighting being affected by the slowness of his responses.*
- *I was under the impression that there were going to be two spotlight operators like there are every year. Apparently this year there were not. This can really ruin an item, if you have planned your whole item around two spotlights and setting/creating a mood with them. Please be specific about equipment available.*

A number of logistical issues about the various performance events were also raised in the interviews. A number registered their dissatisfaction with the backstage areas at particular venues. For example:

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[3] For a range of detailed and specific comments about logistical and technical issues at specific venues, please see the open text responses to questions 11 and 23.

The most negative thing is the cramped room that we have backstage in the venues. our venue to perform in is absolutely fantastic. But it's not always great backstage because the air conditioning isn't working or you've got 60 kids in a room the size of an average dining room.

Another had a similar complaint about the space they were allocated at one particular venue, describing it as too small, and shared with four other schools which 'was an absolute nightmare', because it was very noisy and crowded, and as a result many of their children, particularly some of those with high needs, 'didn't cope very well'. This teacher reported that these conditions made it very difficult for teachers to manage the children, and could potentially discourage teachers from volunteering to help in future years. She feels that in the future this issue needs to be handled more carefully:

I just think there needs to be some consideration about who is in [the room] and what are their needs and trying to make sure that on the day that the best spaces are available for each school. I mean if we didn't have eight teachers to come along on the night and support us and be there for the kids we wouldn't be able to be in. [...] So just some consideration around that would be really good. Because the times when we have either had a space of our own or it's been partitioned [into] a separate space where you can have some quiet time, that has worked really well.

A number of specific suggestions for improving the logistics of the performance events were made. One suggested communication with teachers could be improved:

The other thing is on the night, just being kept informed of what's happening. How far away you are to getting on stage and that sort of thing. Because we have had the experience of someone walking in and saying to us once, you're on in two minutes. We hadn't been told 20 minutes or 10 or five, and they've come in and told us two! [...] But just making sure that when you're backstage you know what's happening. You assume that everyone else knows what's happening. I think [they need to] make sure that on the night that the backstage people keep everybody up [to date] with what's happening,

Another suggested a need to consider the time that students were waiting around, and how tiring this can be, and to perhaps include more activities to keep them occupied while they were not performing:

- *Student activities during the day would be great to keep them occupied. We had a very early and then performed last at the finals. Our kids were so tired by the end of the night. Maybe some way to prevent this would be good.*

A number suggested greater attention needed to be paid to the selection of appropriate comperes for the event. One added that the long speeches given by schools were unnecessary and could be more effectively focused:

- *Can we loose the speeches? Or at least the thank you speech? This means nothing to most of the audience and I am sure each school said their thank yous in letters and assemblies at school. And rather than asking the same questions, why not ask each school to prepare a 90 second speech that says 'what does Wakakirri mean to me?' This can include the story.*

Incidentally, this suggestion might also address the previous comment, in that it might help shorten the overall length of the event, and hence the tiring nature of such a long commitment – particularly for younger children.

Finally, one teacher reported that the opportunity to view other performances was very valuable, and suggested that Wakakirri ensure this is possible in future years:

- *This is the only competition in which my students and other teachers could learn a lot by viewing other performances during rehearsals at the heat and also viewing most of the show at the Grand Final. This aspect is vital for learning. We went up above the audience between acts, as did other schools, and we learnt a lot about how acts can be presented etc. It was invaluable for all teachers and students. I hope you will allow this in the future. It will only lift the standard further.*

As can be seen from these comments, experiences of the performance days are extremely mixed. This is likely to be something that Wakakirri needs to address on a venue by venue basis, however, the comments above might help provide some general principles, or criteria to inform future processes of venue management and logistical planning.

WAKAKIRRI WEBSITE

The survey results clearly indicate that teachers find the Wakakirri website useful, with this resource receiving an average rating of just over 4 out of 5.

In the interviews, many also spoke positively about the online resources that Wakakirri provides:

> [The online resources are] really good. You know if you want to look up the directions for what you need to do for make up or what you need to do for lighting or whatever, the resources on the web are fantastic.

> Their website, when it gets a bit closer [to the event], I'm on there all the time looking at bits and pieces. Downloading their information for parents and downloading their sheets and things, so I don't have to type out a letter. So I do use their website and when their newsletters come online I always read them.

> The resources online are great and it is fantastic having all the forms on line now so that you can just click on and find what you need on the website.

However, one did suggest that the new online story function was not practical for her school:

> I do find, and this is just personally and I know that you can choose to go with it or not, but they have brought in the website where you can do your story online. For us it's too much, we can't manage to do that. […] maybe in a bigger school you might have the capacity to manage that. But we just haven't managed to do that.

While experiences of the website are overwhelmingly positive, in their optional survey comments some teachers did report some technical difficulties or issues of poor design associated with the website, such as:

- *The website is difficult to use when downloading forms. The different categories are too close together*
- *The website would not load properly on all computers. Had to do everything from home with a wide screen*
- *Hard to manouevre around the website although the content there is good*

- *At times it was hard to access the website and download documents. Most documents were PDF and sometimes it would be nice to type up the information instead of handwriting it. e.g. lighting sheet and music form*
- *Difficult to upload videos, maybe they were too big. Shame to only put photos on the site.*
- *Had some trouble negotiating the website as it changed during the term. Had trouble getting through the various tabs*
- *There was not enough information about the 'how to' for the event. […] I am very much able to search websites to find info, but I could not find the information that I required.*

JUDGES' WRITTEN FEEDBACK

One aspect of teacher support and resources that perhaps could perhaps be improved is the written feedback that judges provide on each entry. When asked about this, half the respondents rated it between 1 and 3 ('poor' to 'average') on the scale of 1 to 5. In their optional comments, quite a number of respondents stated that they had not received any written feedback at all, and others suggested that it could be improved, particularly with the addition of more constructive criticism:

- *We were given a comment in our heats' feedback that we weren't really sure how to take. We were aware that you are not supposed to change anything between the heats and the finals. However, the comment lead us to believe that we should, i.e.: "Don't rely on too many signs to tell your story". When we questioned what to do with the comment we were told we weren't allowed to change. Constructive criticism is a good thing but maybe judges need to be careful how they word it, and ensure they only give tips on improving your performance in the finals feedback sheets.*
- *I don't think it is constructive to receive the judges feedback on the heat performance before the finals as you cannot alter your performance once you make it into the finals therefore you enter the final knowing all the weaknesses of your performance. I feel all feedback should be handed out once the finals are complete.*
- *Could have used more constructive comments about how to improve for next year!!!!*
- *[I would like] written feedback from finals too, for future reference*
- *On the cover letter [accompanying the judges' comments] it stated that the judges would be providing positive feedback and room for improvement. However, we did not make it to the Grand Final and all our comments were fantastic. There was no mention of room for improvement which I would have appreciated as I could have looked at it with my team and found ways to improve for 2012.*
- *Might have been nice to get feedback on our performance at the finals as well as the heats*
- *I would have liked a little more detail about our weakest area so that we could improve it.*
- *[judge's] comments were very general...*
- *The written feedback was vague and didn't explain why we didn't achieve some sections*
- *Schools spend lots of time preparing for the big event. It would be nice to have the judges comment on the performances regarding the good and negative points, so schools can go back and reflect on what they need to consider for future performances.*
- *I think it would have been nice for the children to receive some sort of feedback on their performance at the grand final*

- *I was very dissatisfied with Judging, not enough feedback, no mark/score? Not enough prizes given out (such as certificates for best choreography, soundtrack, props, lighting etc). These were mentioned at the heats […] but there was no mention of them at the "Grand Final" - lack of continuity.*

The issue of judges' feedback is explored further in section 4.3.2 below.

'HOW TO' GUIDES, TRAINING AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

In the survey, teachers rated the 'how-to' guides very positively, with an average rating of just under 4 out of 5. Similarly in the interviews, many teachers spoke positively about these guides and other related resources provided by Wakakirri.

> The resources that we got were fantastic. It was the step-by-step guides that we wouldn't have survived last year if we didn't have. Everything that we go was just amazing.

> [The resources] are great too. They're easy to read, they're easy to download. […]I access all of that very regularly.

While they were not specifically asked about professional development and training in the survey, in the interviews a number of teachers mentioned these elements as very positive sources of support for teachers:

> [The support and training is] 'absolutely fantastic. I love how they put everything online. I'm actually going to Wakakirri workshop and it's a four hour intermediate or advanced story telling or story dance workshop. I regularly check their website; I book in for professional development. I think it's just fantastic.

> I have gone to a workshop to help with your storyline and that was great. I have been to another workshop about lighting. So the support that's given by Wakakirri is great.

One teacher found the resources provided to be 'not too bad' but not sufficiently specific for film-based entries, which 'they only briefly touch on'. However he did find the DVD showing other schools' films very useful in order to show his students examples of previous years' entries. This teacher also thought there could perhaps be more training and professional development focused on film:

> I think the training side on the dance part is really, really good, but there probably isn't so much training so much on the story-film side. Most of the stuff I've learnt [about film] I've pretty well taught myself. It's probably a little bit limited. It would be good if there was training available for story-film.

This teacher felt that in general Wakakirri tends to have less focus on the film-based entries, particularly when it came to training and resources for teachers. He would like to see more professional development focused on this area, such as 'workshops on storyboarding or some sort of technical workshops, that sort of thing'.

Conclusion

Teachers appear generally very satisfied with the various resources and assistance provided to support them in their role and are particularly positive about the quality of telephone (and email) customer service they receive from Wakakirri staff.

There are some aspects that Wakakirri might wish to consider improving, including reviewing the timeliness and quality of judges' feedback, improving ease of use of the website, and increasing the support (both online resources and training opportunities) available for teachers participating in the story-film category.

Furthermore, as noted above, teachers' experiences of venue security and the running of the performance days varies quite substantially, presumably depending on the venue they performed at. This perhaps reflects a need to evaluate participants' experiences of the different venues separately, and address specific issues that arise in relation to each venue.

On a minor issue, the fact that 22% of survey respondents marked the online showcase as 'N/A' suggests that they had not viewed it. There is perhaps a need for Wakakirri to promote this resource more effectively.

4.3   EMERGING ISSUES

In addition to investigating the original question of how well Wakakirri is achieving its objectives and putting its organisational values into action, the research provided an opportunity to explore a range of other issues as raised by the survey respondents and interview participants. In the analysis of the survey findings, ISF identified a number of emerging issues, some of which were then incorporated into the interview schedule for further exploration. These included the competitive nature of Wakakirri, the rules, judging and fairness of the competition and the degree to which the organisation's values are perceived to be reflected in the judging, results and feedback.[4]

4.3.1   COMPETITIVE NATURE OF WAKAKIRRI

One of the issues to emerge in the survey was the nature of Wakakirri as a competition. For example one teacher suggested:

- *I feel that Wakakirri need to review their values and the basic principles that they support. All students and school should feel they have an equal basis for participation. The prizes could be scrapped - our students enjoy the experience. Perhaps the competitive feel could be phased out. This would promote a sense of teamwork and encouragement across all schools*

This issue was explored in more depth in the interviewees. Responses were an interesting mix of perspectives. Some were very positive, suggesting there were benefits to Wakakirri being competitive:

> I absolutely love how it's structured [as a competition]. I think that [the students] have something to work towards. [...] They put more into it and they get more pride out of it. They do the best that they can. If it wasn't structured as a competition and it was just a 'get up and perform', I don't think they'd put so much effort into turning up for every rehearsal. Especially for children at that age, [the competitive nature] is definitely a motivator for them.

Another suggested that even though the competition produced winners and losers this provided a learning opportunity in its own right:

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[4] For the full range of 'other comments' made by teachers at the end of the survey, please see the open text answers to question 23.

We didn't make it through the second round and our students were very disappointed with that. But then we said, 'well, now we know what we can work on for next time'. They are already planning next year's one. […] and they need to learn how to lose.

Interestingly, many teachers reported that they chose to consciously play down the competitive aspects of Wakakirri in their work with their students:

I try not to get the kids too concerned about the competitive side because it's very easy for them to be consumed with just worrying about that side and then miss out on the other side, the more important [aspect] of them working together and that sort of thing. So I try to down play that particular side. […] I say to them, if we get any prizes, that's good, if not, then hey, the experience that you got out of it is the main thing anyway.

I say to the children, this isn't for me about coming first, second, third or whatever. It's me putting you on the stage and you coming off that stage, and how you feel about what you've just done.

However, some teachers noted that even though they may choose to play down the competitive aspects within their own school, students inevitably became aware of the competitive attitudes of other schools. One reported that she promotes Wakakirri to her students simply as an opportunity 'to perform on a stage and have a great time doing it', rather than as a competition, but that she is aware that when the students get to the event and 'hear other schools talking' they become aware of the very competitive nature of the event. However, she does not have a strong view on whether the competitive nature of Wakakirri should be changed, because her school is committed to participating on their own terms, and she is confident her school would enter whether or not it was a competition, simply because it provides 'the chance to perform on stage' and also because it is free to enter.

Many teachers noted that the competitive nature of the event had both advantages and disadvantages:

I guess [the competitive aspect] has advantages where people do strive to make the entry as best as they can. I guess it's a bit of a double edged sword in a way. I usually just down play it to the kids [but] it's always good to have the judges' comments so that way we can improve.

Because it is a competition, I think the level of performance is probably better. But sometimes I'm not too sure about it - it's a bit of a Catch-22 because you do want quality. Because ultimately your audience is paying a reasonable amount of money for a ticket to watch what you're doing. I do say that to the children. You have got people paying to see this. So you do want a certain standard but you also don't want to knock away the people that are having a go.

However there were a number who stressed the specific downsides to Wakakirri being structured as a competition. One said that, while her own school does not promote the competitive nature of Wakakirri, she is aware that for some schools the event can be very competitive and this has a potentially negative impact:

I think it can become extremely competitive. There are schools out there to win and they want to know why they haven't won and all of that. I think that can actually destroy the impact that Wakakirri can have in a school community.

Another teacher suggested that the reactions of some children suggest that the competitive nature of Wakakirri may be undermining some of its aims:

> Last year I saw kids from another school crying because they hadn't won and I saw that the year before. There was another school that went in and the kids were all devastated because they didn't win. You know that's not what it is about.

Another thought that the competitive nature of the competition might be somewhat off-putting for schools or teachers who are involved for the first time.

> I think a negative of [it being a competition] is that it may not necessarily encourage new people to come back if they miss the point the first time they do a story. Someone coming in new might think that they've got the right thing and not perhaps have it. Because everyone goes in feeling good about themselves. I'm talking - not children, I'm talking about the actual directors of the items. You take an item that you feel really good about, and I think if you were a new person and it wasn't received as well as you thought it was going to be, I don't know that that would encourage you to do it again next year. That's the one thing that I see as a downside of it [being a competition].

While most teachers interviewed did not have a strong view that the competitive nature of Wakakirri should be changed (or could see both positives and negatives to this) some suggested that the organisation consider the benefits of removing this aspect:

> I'd actually prefer the competitive nature to be taken out, I don't think that really adds to it. I think it would be better if it was more just [about] sharing and maybe if each school got something for going in it. You know, as a recognition of the students' work and what they have put into it.

> We [previously] did the Rock Eisteddfod and they had a non-competitive aspect for primary schools for the first year. That was much better because it kind of took all that pressure off and you just went into it for the fun of it. The kids were fantastic and the sense of team and the way that the kids from different schools worked with each other was just lovely. They were so encouraging, whereas [in Wakakirri] there's a bit of that bitchiness and 'oh look at what they've done' and sometimes you hear the kids say stuff about other schools, you know? It would be better not to have that aspect I think.

Others suggested that if the event was to remain a competition, certain measures – like additional awards – should be put in place to reduce some of the potentially negative aspects of this:

> If you get to the finals, it is wonderful but unfortunately a lot of schools and a lot of children go home very disappointed that night. It's a real downer if you don't get a place. The places are so limited, there might be 14 schools and there's only three awards given out. It's very, very hard for the kids because they're on this high that they've got to the final and then it's such a downer. They feel like a failure […]. It's fine to be competitive but with the awards if everyone could get something rather than just 'thanks for showing up'. At the grand final stage, they've cut back on the number of awards. Some schools are getting two awards so you're standing there like a shag on a rock trying to smile with your kids and hoping they'll get something and you come away with nothing and it's very hard. It's very crushing [for the children]. They don't understand that they've done such a wonderful job to get to that level.

Another made a similar point, noting that the various smaller prizes (for teamwork, or recycling for example) were a positive feature and were generally well distributed but that the major prizes were perhaps perceived more negatively:

I think when they start giving golds and silvers and bronzes. Then down the track, firsts, seconds and thirds, I think that's a bit [difficult for the students]. The kids go from 'whoa' to 'oh'.

One suggested that perhaps scrapping the grand final would improve the experience for students:

On the actual performance night when everyone's done their item and the kids and the staff, just come off on such a high. It's just so fantastic. Then it's like – I don't know – I sometimes wonder whether they need to have a grand final. [Perhaps they should] award a winner over the three nights - that it's just judged then. Because everyone is still on a high. Then three weeks later someone learns that they've won it. Then you can still go away from the night feeling yay, yay, yay. […] So perhaps if they separated the performance night from the learning about the results, people could still go away from the performance on a high and excited and positive. Then find out the results a little bit later.

There are clearly a range of views on this question, and this is an issue that Wakakirri may wish to consider investigating further in the future. A number of related issues are also discussed in 4.3.2 section below.

4.3.2 RULES, JUDGING AND FAIRNESS OF COMPETITION

Teachers were asked in the survey to rate various aspects of the judging, on a scale of 1 to 5. Respondents views on judges' feedback are discussed above at 4.2.3. Other aspects investigated were the certificates, judging criteria and results. There was generally a high level of satisfaction with all these aspects, with over half the respondents rating them either 4 or 5 out of 5. However for each of these criteria, at least a third of respondents rated them 'average' or below. Some of the comments provided in the survey and follow up interviews suggest that, although they are in a minority, some teachers have a number of reservations about the fairness, consistency or transparency of the judging:

- *Would like a little more insight into what the judges are looking for. The process is a bit of a mystery.*
- *We kept our item basic and sustainable, without fancy costumes. The feedback we were given indicated we could have had better costumes and more props. Must admit I was a bit confused by this as was trying to reduce costs and environmental impact.*
- *we are so upset with the judging that i will need to write a proper letter... but this needs to be addressed. Either make it clear to the judges what the criteria are, or explain it better to us. And maybe adopt a policy like other professional meets, if one judge's score is vastly different to others, you discount it.*
- *Also the dance aspect is often overlooked [in the judging] which I feel is not appropriate in a story-dance item.*
- *I am very disappointed that some schools received the same results (gold, silver etc) yet didn't get through. […] The criteria still remains unclear. We did ask for feedback but never received any.*
- *It would be nice if all schools were treated equally and made to follow the same rules and that there should be consequences for breaches of said rules....*

The issue of judging was explored further in the interviews. In general interviewees seemed generally positive about the judging:

I think [the judging] is reasonably fair

The judges' results reflect pretty much the story telling or story dancing whatever it is that's been in front of them. I think they do a pretty good job.

I think the judges have pretty much always got it right. […] When you look at the items that win you think, that was pretty good.

I think having the one judge that sees all the items is important. Because I think a while back we might have had different nights with different people [judging]. It was all a bit hard.

However, a number did bring up the issue of judges' feedback that was raised by some survey respondents, suggesting that this could be improved:

I like how we got the feedback [from the judges]. But I would have found it really, really helpful if it said how we could improve instead of, 'you did this and this well, but you got a bronze'. I could use at least a suggestion on how to improve. It was all positive. I didn't find it very constructive. Most teachers would feel, I'm sure, the same that we need constructive feedback to improve.

What I find with the judging evaluation, we got all these wonderful comments but we didn't sort of get [any negative comments] so you thought well, 'how come we didn't win anything if we were that good?' So you obviously need some negative to see where you're not performing well. To know where they see our weak points are, how we can make it better.

However others did report receiving useful feedback:

I think the judges try very hard to be positive, give positive feedback.

I quite like the judging actually. I find all the comments that I've been receiving so far on various entries have been quite fair and quite good because you get those comments and we can then use that in the next year's entry, to improve. [The judge's feedback] has been a good mixture of both positive and constructive criticism. It's been really good.

One teacher appreciated the specific awards that were given out as part of the judging process:

We won a the teamwork award, and teamwork was a big one for us because it's pretty much all we were focusing on was, 'you've got to act as a team. We've got to be good, we've got to do this, we've got to help each other'. Then when it worked, when we got the award, [we said] 'see - all our work paid off'.

Another teacher, who would prefer the event not to be run as a competition, thought that if it did remain structured as a competition, the judging criteria could be improved:

If they are going to go down the competition pathway I think it needs to be a lot clearer the criteria and what exactly is being judged. Because it is so difficult to try and work out each year what it is that has made the winning entry the winning entry. It doesn't seem to be consistent. It is too all over the place for who has won and why. […] I have read the criteria and I know what it is that they are looking for, but I just think that sometimes you think, 'oh gee, I don't understand why that decision was reached'. I just think it's too subjective with the judging. Because it's not the same judges each year, every year they are looking for different things. So it's a bit of a game of try and guess what the judges want this year.

Conclusion

While generally teachers appear reasonably satisfied with the rules, judging and fairness of the competition, there are some qualifications to this.

Firstly, the comments made earlier in this report concerning the lack of a 'level playing field' between schools with different resources to dedicate to their entry, suggest that there is a perception that the competition is not always 'fair' in this respect. Secondly, other comments also made earlier in this report suggest that not all teachers are satisfied that the criteria of sustainability or 'stories with a message' are always fairly applied when it comes to judging. This need for greater consistency between organisational values and judging is discussed in more detail in section 4.3.3 below.

Thirdly, perceptions of how useful judges' feedback is appear to be quite varied. It may be useful for Wakakirri to consider ways in which the nature and consistency of this feedback might be improved.

4.3.3 REFLECTION OF ORGANISATIONAL VALUES IN JUDGING, RESULTS AND FEEDBACK

Of particular concern for some teachers who responded to the survey was a perception that the judging criteria are not always consistent with Wakakirri's values and objectives:

- *It was disappointing to see that some schools did not embrace or adhere to the 'rules' of Wakakirri and yet they were still the ones that won all the awards. What is the point of having rules if they are not enforced across the board.*

- *The judging criteria needs to be careful not to place too much emphasis on overly dramatic items. The finals night judging needs to be more diverse in acknowledging the different categories of criteria e.g. award for most entertaining school, award for best dance / drama school.*

- *Of course this is subjective. However I feel that the criteria weightings need to be reviewed. I also feel that there needs to be a criteria which assesses a school's commitment to inclusion and the Wakakirri principles - i.e. everyone can participate. […] Schools which can afford a huge wardrobe budget and specialist choreographers have an advantage which I felt showed in this year's judging. Our school could never afford this. Saying you reuse wardrobe items that are expensive to buy is not really an appropriate way to reuse and recycle.*

- *Judges need to be more vigilant with the 'reduce reuse recycle' aspect as the winning team had what looked like half of Spotlight in their costumes at our performances!*

- *I was disappointed that the two private schools won the major prizes in our category - especially when in their speeches one of them thanked their sponsors for their contributions! I thought this went again Wakakirri philosophy!*

- *We were disappointed when the story about Cinderella won. We had thought that one of the criteria important to Wakakirri was the telling of different and individual stories that were created for Wakakirri. The winning school also did not incorporate the signature item which I know you only say you are encouraging but surely there should be some sort of point system about the way the signature item is used.*

- *The criteria seemed to be thrown out the window when it came to the finals. The judges' comments before presenting the winners emphasized this. it seemed more like Rock Eisteddfod where schools with big budgets and no efforts at recycling etc were rewarded. This was disappointing.*

- *We were also a bit disheartened this year by the judges comments at the Finals as to how a winner was determined. It appeared that the criteria were thrown out the window at the finals and schools that used massive props (that were not recycled or sustainable) and brand new costumes etc were rewarded. […] If the aim is to be sustainable and entertaining then it should be judged as such. Comments made to the public by judges at a final should also reflect this.*
- *I was very disappointed this year with the outcome of the heats. Our school, being a very low financed, low socio economic school did it by the book. Everything was recycled, we fundraised all our money to pay for buses and lunches, we made sure it was cost-free for the students because most of our students are refugees, indigenous, or come from varying difficult backgrounds. Our theme was based on promoting sustainable practices in [our local area], as it is the year of sustainability. As a school, we did not have the luxury of after or school practices, or holidays, it was lunch times and class time. We put our heart and soul into it and the received the best comments of the evening, four gold and one silver and yet didn't get through to the final. A very polished, rehearsed and funded performance did. Wakakirri is about the students putting together a piece that brings together communities, who need the arts to grow and learn. This was not the case this year and I was truly saddened.*

This issue was explored further in the interviews. One suggested that sometimes the connection between the judge's results and the organisation's values is 'not as clear' as it might be, and that in particular she wonders how some schools are able to put on the kind of show they do without spending a lot of money. However, another felt that judges 'do take note' of the answers teachers provide on their entry forms, as a means of judging whether their entry follows sustainability principles.

Conclusion

In addition to the comments in this section, as noted previously, there are a number of comments made throughout this report that suggest there is perhaps a need for Wakakirri to improve the connection between the organisation's core values on the one hand, and the criteria used for judging and providing feedback on the other. In particular, there is room for improvement in perceptions of how well the organisational values of sustainability, accessibility and affordability are reflected in the competition results and judges' feedback. This may be not necessarily be a question of changing these processes, but simply of making the connection more transparent. However this question perhaps needs further investigation within the organisation.

4.4   VIEWS ON THE RELEVANCE OF ORGANISATIONAL VALUES AND OBJECTVIES

As described at 3.1 above, the aim of this evaluation was to consider how well Wakakirri is meeting its organisational objectives and values, namely:

- promoting important community messages
- promoting sustainability
- bridging cultural divides
- providing a unique teaching tool for teachers.

During the interviews, ISF also took the opportunity to seek teachers' views on these objectives themselves – that is, to ask what they thought about these aims, and whether they felt them to be

still relevant and appropriate for the organisation. Overwhelmingly, teachers agreed that they were, describing them in very positive terms:

> They are very appropriate and definitely still relevant

> I think they're still relevant in today's age, yes, definitely. [Those values are] what I promote at school

> All those values are absolutely still relevant

> I think they're very relevant. I think they're easy enough to be able to interpret to suit individual schools – to suit where you are or who you are. I think that the organisation really lives by them as well.

While endorsing these objectives, one teacher suggested a need for a focus on a broader sense of inclusion, rather than limiting this notion to the sense of bridging cultural divides:

> [It's about] bringing the kids together, it doesn't necessarily just have to be just culture, but even different social backgrounds, and kids from different ages as well. So it doesn't necessarily have to be a culture thing, it can even just be an individual thing. Kids that don't normally hang around with other kids in the playground, they come together as part of the [Wakakirri] group. One of the comments a Year 7 made on his graduation is that he met some new friends by doing Wakakirri – people that he wouldn't normally hang around with. So he's expanded his social group due to that.

Another teacher endorsed the view that inclusion, in a broad sense, 'is probably one of the most important values for Wakakirri'.

Clearly then, at least in the views of those teachers interviewed, Wakakirri's objectives remain relevant and appropriate and are widely endorsed. That these kinds of objectives are shared by teachers involved with Wakakirri is also apparent from the numerous comments they made (included throughout this report) explaining why, as teachers, they value Wakakirri.

This project set out to evaluate Wakakirri's performance against its stated objectives and values, rather than to review those objectives per se. However, in the course of conducting this research, ISF has observed widespread identification with these current objectives and values – both among teachers and students – and suggests that they are widely understood, endorsed and shared.

5   CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1   VALUE OF THIS RESEARCH

The aim of this project was to conduct independent research to explore how well Wakakirri is achieving its four broad objectives, namely:

- promoting important community messages
- promoting sustainability
- bridging cultural divides
- providing a unique teaching tool for teachers.

In addition, ISF also sought to check whether the organisation was effectively putting the first three of its five[5] organisational values into action. These are to ensure that Wakakirri:

- is accessible and affordable for every school and student in Australia
- makes extra effort to promote participation by indigenous communities
- provides support, training and resources for teachers

In both its focus and methodology, this research has gone beyond previous Wakakirri evaluations in a number of ways. Firstly, its focus was broader than any particular year's event, with the concern being how well the organisation is performing in a more general sense – whether and how it is achieving its overarching, longer term objectives.

Secondly, the research methodology consisted of both quantitative and qualitative elements, with semi-structured interviews with a small number of teachers being used to explore the issues in greater depth than is possible in a survey. As this report demonstrates, these interviews were extremely worthwhile, yielding rich insights into the research questions.

Thirdly, the research included a survey with students, in an attempt to implement best practice principles for enabling the participation of children and young people in research. Again, this aspect of the project proved extremely valuable. Not only did it ensure that the students were able to 'have a say' on a program that is ultimately designed for and aimed at them, but it also added new knowledge to the research process, and allowed comparison and reflection on how students' perspectives and views compare with those of teachers. As the current literature on including children in research suggests, this approach has the potential to lead to better evaluation and improved practice among those organisations who work with and for children and young people.

5.2   GENERAL REFLECTIONS ON THE FINDINGS

As a general reflection, in conducting this evaluation, ISF found the level of positivity about Wakakirri among research participants to be striking. In surveys and interviews, both students and teachers expressed high levels of satisfaction with their experience of Wakakirri and demonstrated a high degree of respect for the organisation. It is clear from these findings that Wakakirri is effectively achieving its organisational objectives. As an additional observation, participants also clearly understood, endorsed and shared the organisation's values and objectives as they are currently expressed.

While some participants had negative comments or criticisms of one kind or another, they were in a minority. Furthermore, criticisms tended to be about very specific aspects of the program (as discussed throughout this report) rather than about the organisation as a whole, and for the majority they appeared to be fairly minor aspects of what was generally a positive experience. More common than direct criticism were a range of constructive suggestions for how Wakakirri might continue to achieve its objectives. In general, these might best be described as suggestions for fine-tuning various aspects of the program in order to achieve a more consistent connection between Wakakirri as it operates in practice, and the organisation's core values and objectives.

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[5] As noted at 3.1, evaluating the implementation of the remaining two values (concerning support provided to other organisations, and the sustainability of Wakakirri office and management decisions) would require a different methodology, so have not been considered here.

These specific suggested areas for improvement have been discussed in detail throughout this report, and are also summarised at 5.3 below.

5.3   SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

The various suggestions for improvement that were either expressed by participants or developed by ISF in response to the research findings have been included throughout this report (particularly in the 'conclusion' comments at the end of each section. Ideally, these recommendations should be read in context in the body of the report, however, for ease of reference, they are summarised in short form here:

Promoting community messages
- Support teachers to consider ways in which the awareness of the issue or message that is developed among Wakakirri participants can be more effectively spread to or shared with other students in the school.
- Maintain a strong focus on the importance of 'stories with a message' to make sure that this remains an important aspect of the program, and one that is understood and adhered to by all participants.
- Review the value that judges give to the incorporation of community messages or issues when they are making their decisions, to ensure that participants perceive this to have been an important rather than optional criteria in determining awards

Promoting sustainability
- Consider ways of supporting teachers to better explain the environmental reasons for Wakakirri's specific waste reduction principles, and to locate them in the context of the broader environmental issues associated with the production of new materials (such as resource depletion, energy and water use and pollution and so on).
- Encourage schools to look beyond the issue of waste reduction, and consider in what other ways they might make their Wakakirri entry more sustainable
- Continue to send a clear message about the importance of demonstrating a commitment to sustainability in one's entry, to make sure that this remains an important aspect of the program, and one that is understood and adhered to by all participants.
- Review the value that judges give to evidence of the sustainability of entries when they are making their decisions, to ensure that participants perceive this to have been an important rather than optional criteria in determining awards.

Bridging cultural divides
- Adopt the aim that future surveys generate a higher proportion of respondents who feel that this objective of bridging cultural divides is achieved 'very well' rather than just 'a little'.

Accessibility and affordability
- Continue efforts to keep transport costs down for schools. In particular, this should be taken into consideration when selecting venues – with proximity to public transport being a priority.
- Consider ways to promote the principles of accessibility and affordability more strongly to schools, and explain the importance of upholding these principles in one's own entry in order to help maintain a 'level playing field' for all participants.
- Review the application form with a view to strengthening the focus on accessibility and affordability. This could include asking schools to provide information about the budget for their entry, or about how they have upheld the principles of affordability and accessibility.

- Continue to promote participation by Indigenous communities, and to communicate this objective more consistently to all schools.

Support, training and resources for teachers
- Review the timeliness and quality of judges' written feedback
- Continue to upgrade the Wakakirri website, with a focus on improving ease of use
- Consider ways to expand the kinds of support (both online resources and training opportunities) available for teachers participating in the story-film category.
- Consider evaluating participants' experiences of different venues and associated logistics issues, in order to identify and address specific issues that arise in relation to each venue.
- Consider ways to promote the online showcase more effectively.

Rules, judging and fairness
- Consider ways to address the perception that the competition is not always 'fair' because the fact that schools have different levels of resources to dedicate to their entry works against the maintenance of a 'level playing field'
- Consider ways in which the nature and consistency of judges' feedback to schools might be improved.
- Consider ways to improve the connection between the organisation's core values on the one hand, and the criteria used for judging and providing feedback on the other. Aim to ensure that the organisational values of sustainability, accessibility and affordability are clearly reflected (and perceived to be reflected) in the competition results and judges' feedback.

Recommendations for future research (methodological)
- Consider repeating this evaluation using a similar methodology in 2-3 years time, in order to track changes over time
- Include both quantitative and qualitative aspects in any future research
- Include both a student and teacher survey
- Consider conducting interviews with students, to supplement the student survey
- Consider seeking the views of parents on these research questions, as a means of accessing another perspective on how well Wakakirri is achieving its objectives[6]

Recommendations for future research (content)
- Ask students more specifically whether Wakakirri helped them learn about waste reduction, or how to put the principles of reduce, reuse and recycle into action.
- Investigate more specifically the difference between students' and teachers' perceptions of the capacity of Wakakirri to help bridge cultural divides, and the reasons for students' apparently higher levels of positivity about the degree to which Wakakirri achieves this.
- Consider conducting a specific evaluation with schools with high proportions of Indigenous students – perhaps as part of the Wakakirri Outreach Program – to ensure that the views of Indigenous students (and their teachers) are properly represented in future evaluations, and to more effectively evaluate the degree to which Wakakirri is promoting participation by Indigenous communities.

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[6] Interviewing students was considered as part of this research, however it was decided that this would involve substantial logistical and ethical hurdles, and as such that it is was impractical within the budget and timeframe allocated to this project. However, with further planning it would be possible to overcome these issues and include interviews with students and/or parents in future evaluations.

6   REFERENCES

NSW Commission for Children and Young People (2005) *Participation: Count me in! Involving children and young people in research*, State of New South Wales and Social Change Research Centre, University of Western Sydney.

Save the Children, UK (2000) *Children and Participation: Research, monitoring and evaluation with children and young people*, Save the Children, London.

APPENDIX A: TEACHER SURVEY

1. Wakakirri Teacher Evaluation 2010 - Your details

Your feedback, comments, thoughts and suggestions are important contributors to the growth and development of Wakakirri. Please take the time to complete this short online survey.

* 1. Please complete the following details about your 2010 entry:

School (Compulsory) [   ]

Venue (If applicable) [   ]

2. Have you been involved in Wakakirri before?

○ Yes

○ No

3. Which category(ies) did you enter in 2010?

☐ Story-Dance   ☐ Story-Film

☐ Story-Telling   ☐ Story-Arts

☐ Story-Singing   ☐ Story-Writing

4. Please classify your Wakakirri entry/entries using the following categories (select all that apply):

☐ Environmental   ☐ Social

☐ Cultural   ☐ Other

5. How many times outside of Wakakirri have you performed/shown/displayed your Wakakirri item(s) to an audience?

○ 0   ○ 3+

○ 1-3

* 6. Rate your interest in the following Wakakirri categories:

	Not interested	Moderately interested	Very interested
Story-Dance	○	○	○
Story-Telling	○	○	○
Story-Singing	○	○	○
Story-Writing	○	○	○
Story-Film	○	○	○
Story-Arts	○	○	○

Is there any specific reason for your school not entering any of the above categories?

[   ]

7. Who instigated your Wakakirri entry?

☐ Teacher   ☐ Student(s)

☐ Principal   ☐ Parent(s)

8. What inspired you to do Wakakirri?

☐ Recommendation   ☐ Wakakirri marketing

☐ Involved before   ☐ Workshop

☐ Other (please specify)

[   ]

9. How do you prefer to receive information about Wakakirri?

○ Email

○ Fax

○ Hardcopy (post)

10. Please rate your awareness of:

	No awareness	Some awareness	Very aware	N/A
Online Showcase	○	○	○	○
Signature item (DUCK)	○	○	○	○
The Wakakirri Prize	○	○	○	○
Story-Dance Workshops	○	○	○	○

Please include any additional comments here

[   ]

11. What did you use the Wakakirri website for? (select all that apply)

☐ General information

☐ Download forms

☐ View results

☐ View school profiles

☐ View Rules

☐ Download Resources- eg Curriculum Link Documents

☐ Did not use website

Please include any additonal comments here

[   ]

12. Rank how beneficial the following teacher resources were to you:

	Didn't use	Not useful	Useful	Very useful
How-to guides	○	○	○	○
State Coordinator	○	○	○	○
Information Session	○	○	○	○
Beginner's Story-Dance Workshop	○	○	○	○
Advanced Story-Dance Workshop	○	○	○	○
Website	○	○	○	○
Teacher Newsletter	○	○	○	○

Please include any additonal comments here

[   ]

13. For schools that didn't nominate themselves for The Wakakirri Prize, please select the reasons why from the list below:

☐ Weren't eligible   ☐ Too much work

☐ Not enough time   ☐ N/A (did nominate)

☐ Didn't know about it

☐ Other (please specify)

[   ]

3. Wakakirri Teacher Evaluation - Feedback

14. Please rate the following Wakakirri components out of five (1=poor 5=excellent)

	Poor		Average		Excellent	N/A
Amount and quality of paperwork	○	○	○	○	○	○
Newsletters	○	○	○	○	○	○
Head office customer service	○	○	○	○	○	○
State Coordinator customer service	○	○	○	○	○	○
Venue Security	○	○	○	○	○	○
Overall Running of the day	○	○	○	○	○	○
Website content	○	○	○	○	○	○
Online showcase	○	○	○	○	○	○

Comments

[   ]

15. Please rate the following statements:

Wakakirri is ...

	Not at all				Very
Affordable	○	○	○	○	○
Accessible	○	○	○	○	○
Satisfying	○	○	○	○	○
Fun	○	○	○	○	○
Achievable	○	○	○	○	○
A lot of effort	○	○	○	○	○
Educationally valuable	○	○	○	○	○

Please include any additonal comments here

* 16. In relation to the judging of your Wakakirri item(s), please rate the following:

	Poor				Excellent
Written feedback	○	○	○	○	○
Certificates	○	○	○	○	○
Judging criteria	○	○	○	○	○
Results	○	○	○	○	○

Any comments about the judging process:

17. Please rate your overall satisfaction with the DVD ordering process.

○ N/A

○ Very Poor

○ Poor

○ Average

○ Good

○ Excellent

Additonal Comments

18. Please rate your overall satisfaction with the 2010 Wakakirri DVD.

○ N/A

○ Very poor

○ Poor

○ Average

○ Good

○ Excellent

Please include any additonal comments here

19. If you were dissatisfied with the Wakakirri DVD, please indicate below as to why. Tick as many boxes as applicable.

- ☐ Too many close ups, not enough footage of the entire stage
- ☐ Story was missed
- ☐ Quality of footage. ie grainy/pixelated
- ☐ Quality of DVD packaging
- ☐ Faulty ie kept skipping
- ☐ Blank
- ☐ Footage too dark ie. Lighting was poor
- ☐ N/A

Other (please specify)

[   ]

20. Please rate your overall satisfaction with 2010 delivery process for Wakakirri Merchandise(T Shirts, Caps, Pens etc)

- ○ N/A
- ○ Very Poor
- ○ Poor
- ○ Average
- ○ Good
- ○ Excellent

Other (please specify)Please include any additonal comments here

[   ]

21. Please rate your satisfaction with the style and quality of 2010 merchandise.

- ○ N/A
- ○ Very Poor
- ○ Poor
- ○ Average
- ○ Good
- ○ Excellent

Additional Comments

[   ]

4. Wakakirri Teacher Evaluation 2010- Outcomes

22. Which of the following student outcomes can you directly link to your Wakakirri entry? (select as many as apply)

☐ Teamwork   ☐ New skills

☐ Self-confidence   ☐ Physical development

☐ Environmental awareness   ☐ Self expression

☐ Understanding/respect & inclusion   ☐ Artistic appreciation

☐ Open mindedness

Please include any additonal comments here

[   ]

23. Which of the following sustainable practices did you partake in throughout the creation of your Wakakirri item?

☐ Reusing Existing Items

☐ Using minimal sets, props and costumes

☐ Using eco-friendly transport

☐ Constructing sets and props with resused materials

☐ Recycling materials after

☐ Using eco-friendly paint, glue etc

☐ None of the above

Please include any additonal comments here

[   ]

24. Of the practices selected above, how many eventuated as a direct result of your involvement in Wakakirri?

ie. would you have ordinarily embraced these sustainable practices or do you only do so when entered in Wakakirri?

○ 1 out of 6

○ 2 out of 6

○ 3 out of 6

○ 4 out of 6

○ 5 out of 6

○ 6 out of 6

Please include any additonal comments here

[   ]

25. In relation to sustainability, please rate awareness levels for the following groups BEFORE your Wakakirri involvement:

	Not aware	Aware	Very aware	Not sure
Students	○	○	○	○
Teachers	○	○	○	○
School Community	○	○	○	○

Please include any additonal comments here

[   ]

26. In relation to sustainability, please rate the awareness levels of the following groups AFTER your Wakakirri involvement:

	Not aware	Aware	Very Aware	Not sure
Students	○	○	○	○
Teachers	○	○	○	○
School community	○	○	○	○

Please include any additonal comments here

[   ]

27. To what extent did your involvement in Wakakirri raise the awareness of a particular message within:

	Not at all	Slightly	Greatly	Unsure
The students involved	○	○	○	○
The school community	○	○	○	○

Please include any additonal comments here

[   ]

28. Please rate the relevance of your story/stories to:

	Not relevant	Relevant	Highly relevant	Unsure
Your school community	○	○	○	○
The wider community	○	○	○	○

Please include any additonal comments here

[   ]

* 29. Any other comments (you can also email wakakirri@wakakirri.com):

[   ]

APPENDIX B: STUDENT SURVEY

Tell us what you think and you could win a prize!

Wakakirri is run for students, so we want to know what YOU think of it!

Please complete this short survey. (It doesn't matter if you took part or not).

Your answers and ideas will help us improve Wakakirri for next year and beyond.

Win a prize!
At the end of the survey you will have the option to enter a prize draw - winners will be chosen at random and will win a Wakakirri prize pack featuring a hat, bag, pen, lanyard & more.

Thank you.

You and your school

* 1. What is the name of your school?

* 2. Your State

* 3. What year are you in at school?

- ○ Kindergarten
- ○ Year 1
- ○ Year 2
- ○ Year 3
- ○ Year 4
- ○ Year 5
- ○ Year 6
- ○ Year 7

* 4. Are you:

- ○ Female
- ○ Male

* 5. Did your school take part in Wakakirri this year?

- ○ Yes
- ○ No

✱ 6. Did you take part in Wakakirri yourself this year?

○ Yes

○ No

7. What was the reason you did not take part in Wakakirri this year?

8. Have you taken part in Wakakirri in other years?

○ No

○ Yes, once before

○ Yes, more than once before

✱ 9. Would you like to take part in Wakakirri in the future?

○ Yes

○ No

○ Don't know

If no, please explain why not

10. Which category or categories did your school enter this year?

☐ Story-Dance   ☐ Story-Arts

☐ Story-Telling   ☐ Story-Writing

☐ Story-Singing   ☐ Don't know

☐ Story-Film

11. What was the reason you decided to take part in Wakakirri? (Tick as many as you like)

☐ My friends were doing it

☐ It looked fun

☐ It looked like a good opportunity

☐ I wanted to develop my skills

☐ I wanted a challenge

☐ I've been involved before and enjoyed it

☐ My teachers encouraged me

☐ My parents encouraged me

☐ I had no choice!

☐ Other (please write your reason)

12. What was the best thing about taking part in Wakakirri?

13. Was there anything you didn't like about taking part in Wakakirri?

14. Which of the following describes Wakakirri to you?
(Tick as many as you like)

- ○ Hard work
- ○ Fun
- ○ Boring
- ○ Educational
- ○ Satisfying
- ○ Achievable
- ○ Interesting
- ○ Takes too much time
- ○ Challenging

Other (please write your own description)

15. How well do you think Wakakirri helped you develop these skills?
(Click on your chosen tick box for each skill)

	Not at all	A little bit	A lot	Don't know
Teamwork	○	○	○	○
Understanding and respect for different cultures	○	○	○	○
Open mindedness	○	○	○	○
Physical development	○	○	○	○
Artistic or performing skills	○	○	○	○
Respect and inclusion of other people	○	○	○	○
Understanding environmental issues	○	○	○	○
Self-confidence	○	○	○	○
How to express myself	○	○	○	○

If you have any other comments, please add here:

16. As you know, each school chooses an issue, message or theme for their entry. What did you think about the message or issue in your item?

☐ Important

☐ Interesting

☐ Boring

☐ Confusing

Other (write your own description if you like)

Ideas for the future of Wakakirri

17. If there was one thing we could do to make Wakakirri better next year, what would it be?

18. Would you recommend Wakakirri to your friends?

○ Yes

○ No

○ Maybe

19. That's the end of our questions! Anything else you would like to say?

20. If you would like to enter the prize draw for a chance to win a Wakakirri Prize Pack (featuring a hat, bag, pen, lanyard & more) please enter your name and class below. (Wakakirri will not use your details for any reason except to send you the prize if you are a winner).

Thanks for completing our survey.

APPENDIX C: INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

Teacher interview schedule

Introduction

Hi I'm Emma Partridge, from the Institute for Sustainable Futures, at the University of Technology, Sydney. The Institute is undertaking this research on behalf of Wakakirri.

The purpose of the project is to evaluate how well Wakakirri is meeting its objectives. We have already conducted large surveys with teachers and students, and we are now conducting a small number of follow-up interviews with teachers, to explore some of the questions in more detail. I'll be recording the interviews and analysing the findings, to provide a more in-depth analysis that will complement the survey findings.

So thank you for agreeing to participate in this interview.

Preliminary checks

Did you receive the information and consent form can I sent?

[If no email reply:] Can you please send a reply to my email to say that you consent to the interview?

Before we start, I am aiming to take about 45 minutes, so can I just check, is that OK or do you need to be finished by a certain time? *[NOTE]*

Do you have any questions before we start?

Now, the format of this interview is semi-structured. So I have a series of questions here that we'll try to cover, but please feel free to make other comments as you see fit.

>>TURN RECORDER ON<<

Introductory questions

- As you know, the report will not actually name you, but just for the purposes of this recording, could you please state your name and school?
- Firstly can you tell me about your own experience with Wakakirri – including how often you have been involved and in what capacity?

Questions based on Wakakirri's objectives and values

- One of Wakakirri's objectives is to promote important community messages and enable students to explore important issues. So there is an intended focus on 'stories with a message'. How well do you think it achieves this objective?
- Another of the organisation's objectives is to promote sustainability. How well do you think it achieves this?
- Wakakirri promotes story telling as a way of bridging cultural divides, and promoting understanding, respect and inclusion. How well do you think it achieves this objective?
- Wakakirri aims to provide a unique teaching tool – a means of engaging students in education. How well do you think it does this?
- *(Follow-up)* What kinds of things do you think students learn from their participation in Wakakirri?

Possible prompts for follow up question if needed:

- o Teamwork
- o Self-confidence
- o Environmental awareness
- o Understanding, respect and inclusion
- o Open mindedness
- o New skills
- o Physical development
- o Self expression
- o Artistic appreciation
- o Bridge cultural divides

- The organisation makes extra effort to promote participation by Indigenous communities. Are you aware of these strategies, or do you have any comment on that aspect of the organisation's work?
- Wakakirri recognises the important role that teachers play, and aims to provide appropriate support, training and resources for teachers. So I'm particularly interested in what your experience of Wakakirri has been like as a teacher. For example, what did you think of the communication, support and resources provided? What could be improved?
- Prompts if necessary: communication (e.g. via newsletters, website, Facebook); and support and resources (e.g. How-to guides, templates, customer service etc)

Questions based on issues emerging from the survey

- Wakakirri is a story sharing arts festival, and it is also a competition, with judging and results. What do you think about the status of Wakakirri as a *competition*? Do you think the competitive nature of the event is positive or negative? Or a mix?
- Do you have any comment on the fairness of the competition's structure? (Whether in regard to the rules, judging process or any other aspect)
- How well do you think the organisation's values and objectives are reflected in the judging, the results and the feedback to schools?
- Wakakirri aims to be accessible and affordable for every school and student in Australia. Do you have any comments on the accessibility and affordability of Wakakirri for different kinds of students and schools?

General questions and other comments

- What kinds of things do you think Wakakirri could do to be a more effective organisation in the future? What advice would you give?
- Do you think Wakakirri has appropriate aims and objectives? Are there any you would add or change?

Prompts if necessary:

- o promote important community messages
- o promote sustainability
- o bridge cultural divides
- o provide a unique teaching tool to enhance students' learning
- o Finally, do you have any other comments that you think would be relevant to this evaluation?

Thank you for your time.