

# QIECC

Queensland Indigenous Education  
Consultative Committee

## **Bundaberg Community Forum Focus on Genuine Family Engagement**

**Thursday 6 March 2008**

The QIECC, first and foremost, has to

*“Consult with Indigenous people to hear the range of views on  
education”,*

and then,

*“provide expert advice to Education Ministers”, “promote  
constructive dialogue and engagement”, and “promote public  
awareness”*

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#### **Caution:**

**These materials could contain references to deceased Indigenous people from diverse cultural backgrounds and communities. This could be upsetting to some people.**

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## ***Acknowledgements***

Ms Selina Hill for providing connections to local community contacts and her promotion of the forum.

Ms Rhonda Chapman for connecting to local parents and community and for promoting the forum.

Uncle Colin Johnson, Gooreng Gooreng traditional owner for his Welcome to Country.

Mr Rob Messenger, MP, local State member for Bundaberg, for taking the time to attend the forum.

QIECC members and Secretariat staff for their facilitation of the break out groups.

The QIECC Membership for their time and expertise.

All the community members who attended and actively participated in the day's proceedings.

The staff of Tropical Gardens Motor Inn for their service and goodwill.



## AGENDA

- 10.00am Community Forum open  
Arrivals, refreshments, social introductions
- 10.30am Welcome to Country  
Mr Colin Johnson
- 11.00am QIECC Membership introductions  
Commenced by Ms Gina Archer, Chair
- 11.05am Introduction and presentation of committee members  
Ned David  
Des Crump  
Tracey Harbour  
Uncle Albert Holt  
Beresford Domic  
Jane Ceolin  
Joann Schmider  
Penny Tripcony  
Ron Weatherall  
Absent: Darran Kennedy
- 11.10am Introduction of forum theme, breakout group facilitators and  
breakout questions.
- 11.15am Breakout Discussion begins  
Facilitated by QIECC members and Secretariat staff
- 12.30pm Breakout Groups Feedback
- 1.00pm Lunch
- 2.00pm Close of Forum



## *Participant List*

Lisa McGrady	Central QLD Indigenous Development
Nina Walker	Central QLD Indigenous Development
Ara Harathunian	Indigenous Wellbeing Centre & BBRCDAC
Lurlene Henderson	Burnett Mary Regional Group - Traditional Owner working Group, Kabi Kabi
Tom Henderson	Burnett Mary Regional Group - Traditional Owner working Group, Kabi Kabi
Cindy Singho	Indigenous Studies Wide Bay TAFE
Colleen Johnson	Parent and community member
Cheri Yavu-Kama-Harathunian	Central QLD University
Ken Collier	Executive Director, Wide Bay North District Office
Nicholas Bigg	Goori Jets
Jade Sutton	Goori Jets
Justin Johnson	Goori Jets
Roslyn Long	Keppnock High School
Tim Johnston	Bundaberg Murri Youth Centre
Lotoya Long	Bundaberg Murri Youth Centre
Kelly Wallace	Bundaberg Murri Youth Centre
Lola Fletcher	Bundaberg Murri Youth Centre
Rona Thomas	Indigenous Well Being Centre
Brad Young	Principal Thabeban Primary School
Rhonda Chapman	Bundaberg State High School
Carole Coville	Communications Consultant
Graylene Taylor	Gin Gin State High School
John Giarola	Gin Gin State High School
Selina Hill	Burnett Mary Regional Group for NRM
Matt Nagas	Department of Employment and Industrial Relations
Michelle Creamer,	Gladstone South State School
Phillis Rutherford.	Gladstone South State School
Rob Messenger	MP - Local State Member for Bundaberg
Anita Summers	Bundaberg Community
Shelter Butler	Isis District High School
Debbie Bailey	Childers State School
Nancy Cook	Childers State School
Susan Chippendale	Rosedale State School
Shelly Howden	Department of Communities, Office of Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Partnerships
Vicki Thompson	Bundaberg North Primary School
Sylvia McNamara	Bundaberg Women's Group
Lester Barnard	Bundaberg Women's Group
Dave Batt	Bundaberg PCYC
Dave Facer	Community Solutions
Lee-Anne Jones	Community Solutions
Craig Currie	Keppnock State High School
Maggie Robson	Bridges Aligned Services
Suzanne Essex	Parent and community member
Julie Learoyd	Bundaberg State High School
Brandon Thompson	TAFE, Bundaberg
Lynn Farlow	Bundaberg & Keppnock High Schools
Diana Healey	Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations (DEEWR). Greater Brisbane
Gail Stephenson	DEEWR, Greater Brisbane
Terry Farrell	Education Queensland
Patricia Thompson	Glendyne Education & Training
Maggie Robson	Bridges Aligned Services
Richard Anau	Youth Services – Bundaberg
John Andrians	Parent and community member
Luzviminda Andrians	Parent and community member
Glenda Nigalis	Wongarra State School

## ***Statement of Facilitation***

After morning tea and Welcome to Country, the introduction of the QIECC membership, and the formal introduction of the forum theme participants formed into 4 separate groups to begin discussions.

The forum theme genuine family engagement is consistent with the general theme of the QIECC Annual Forum which is due to take place in October 2008.

The forum was facilitated by QIECC members and Secretariat staff, working in pairs with each of the four breakout groups. Similar questions were considered by each breakout group :-

For the purposes of the breakout groups, three questions were posed:-

1. Why is Engagement important?
2. What initiatives/programs work well?
3. What Issues Should Education Systems Address

Whilst the focus was on the theme and the three questions posed, community members had the opportunity to voice general issues or concerns relating to Indigenous education in their region.

All contributions were scribed for collation into a report. For the purposes of this report, a summary of similar issues is provided against each of the three questions. Please note that the common themes and suggested solutions are summaries of the information provided by participants at the Community Forum.

Note that the views expressed in this report, do not necessarily reflect the views of the QIECC.



## ***Common Themes:***

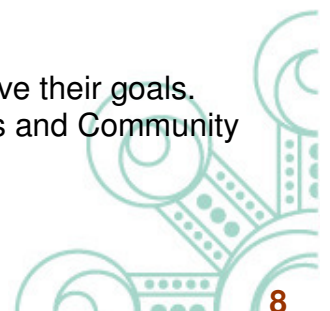
### Genuine Engagement

#### 1. Why is Engagement Important?

- Link families and schools
- Parents and community can provide support in schools
- Valuing of indigenous cultures
- Parents want their children to go to school because there want to be there and parent programs and including parents is a way of achieving this.
- It will assist in rebuilding family relationships.
- Strength of Cultures.
- Children grow up to be strong leaders.
- Families are responsible for and accountable to their ? children.
- Changes the family dynamics – lasts for generations.
- Traditional kinships and ways in current education.
- Breaks down barrier.
- Changes attitudes
- Pride in Culture
- Improve communication between school and home
- Eliminate assumptions about Indigenous Students and their families.
- Expectations ?
- Positive attitudes
- Help eliminate tall poppy syndrome

#### 2 What Initiatives/Programs work well?

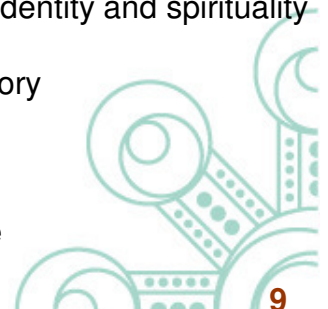
- Simple solutions
  - Principals and parents develop a relationship (break down ‘fear Factor’ of school).
  - Social events
  - Flexible times for P&C meetings.
  - Parent group meetings
  - IEW’s connecting families and schools.
  - Indigenous studies in schools
  - Cultural studies in schools
  - Mentoring and role model programs (Big sister – little sister/Big brother – little brother program)
  - Projects e.g. (a) CD produced – Elder’s Interviews (Bundaberg SHS)
    - (b) Newsletter/Newspaper
  - Acknowledge and Celebrate significant Indigenous events e.g. NAIDOC, Reconciliation Week etc.
  - Involvement in sport and physical activity.
  - Information and support to help youth achieve their goals.
  - Contact List/Booklet with Human Resources and Community Organisations etc
  - “Make that teacher your challenge”
  - Funding submissions



- Use of Elders and grandparents in schools.
  - Traditional Gardens (“Caring for Country”)
- School based Apprenticeships and Traineeships.
- Rules in the home – set boundaries.
- Aspirations of the children.
- Inspiration from Elders and Grandparents.
- Schools for Education and Life Skills – preparation for the world of work.
- “Hands work with the brain”
- Goorie Jets – Successful alternative education program for at risk young people.
  - Use of an interagency approach
- Parent/School Meetings
  - Neutral Environment/ room in school
  - Vary times
  - Food
  - Praise – students and parents (Promote successes)
  - Honour families
  - Awards – students and parents
- PCYC holds joint parent/young people social events (gets trust of young people first and then parents invited).
- Recognition of high achieving and successful students
- Success story – Gin Gin SHS and Glendyne – Programs for youth at risk.

### 3 What Issues Should Education Systems Address

- Resourcing for Alternative Education/Employment Centres
  - Goorie Jets is a successful program but not adequately resourced.
  - Christian Brothers – youth services and out of school care – need support (lack of services and gaps in services (Yammad Youth Services)).
- Indigenous Human Resources Issues.
- Indigenous students funding to take into account mobility (if a student moves, the dollars should move).
- Start support while children are young – primary school (focus on younger years).
- Check therapy and health services through education system.
- Assumptions for and about Indigenous children re: funding, aspirations and goals and abilities.
- Cultural learning of differences (Cultural Perspectives).
- Resourcing (and funding) – courses, transport.
- Provide flexible options to increase retention.
- Transparency (of system and schools) around funding and communication (IEWS and community should be kept informed)
- Resourcing – parent/community engagement programs.
- Provide opportunities for students to connect with identity and spirituality
- Curriculum
  - true and complete Australian History
  - Indigenous languages
- Capacity of teachers and education workforce
  - Honour children’s contributions
  - Culture recognised as first culture



- Day-to-day sensitivities
  - Teacher connection to family
  - Know local cultural knowledge
- Schools
  - User friendly infrastructure
- Interagency and whole of community approach.
- Disparity of resourcing and availability of programs.
- Dollars not being used the right way – need more accountability. Funding is not long term.
- All stages of *Crossing Cultures* needs to be mandatory (stage 2 is not compulsory)
- Need mentoring and role model programs
- Need stronger links between certificate level IV and employment outcomes
- High expectations of students particularly in relation to Higher Education (Welfare mentality related to short courses with no outcomes)
- Need for meaningful and culturally appropriate career counselling
- Greater engagement and communication with TAFEs
- Adequate system of reporting to parents
- Transitions issues need to be addressed (particularly year 7 to 8 in Bundaberg area)
- Community capacity
  - Upskilling
  - Education
  - Computer skills
- Natural resource management bodies - environment and culture programs in schools including teacher programs/education. This partnership is an untapped area for education systems. Caring for Country as part of curriculum
- Incorporating traditional local and environment knowledge in schools – important particularly in rural areas. Cultural connectedness is a key issue for smaller towns in the region.
- School/community partnership Agreements need to be fostered and supported.
- Evaluation of community engagement processes and programs is very important
  - Ownership of progress and programs
  - Data collection
  - Positive change
- Dare to Lead, What Works and Reconciliation Australia (Reconciliation Action Plans in schools) are national projects that should be fostered in schools.
- Listen to and be sensitive of Parents and Community.

#### 4. Other Comment/Ideas

- Linking families and schools project (Bundaberg East SS Kepnock SHS)
- Lifelong learning and education is so important.

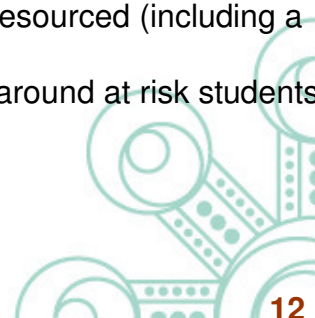


- Parents and community are responsible as well for the education of their children. It is important to ‘keep your fingers on the pulse’ and be informed.
- The registrars are often the first point of contact in schools. It is very important that Registrars are welcoming and personable.
- The Principal’s role is critical especially relating to bullying and anti-racism policies.
- The Principals and teachers need to get out into the community especially in smaller areas.
- School “Social justice Buckets” are very useful for families to use when they can’t afford books or resources.
- Graham Tanner – consultant (Bundaberg) provided information prior to the forum on a project entitled, “Empowering Indigenous Parents”.
- Resourcing Community Organisations to deliver programs and services is a powerful self management process.
- At risk students in Bundaberg area was discussed quite often:
  - Success stories
  - Addressing literacy and numeracy outcomes.
  - Addressing disengagement of young people.
  - Lack of resourcing.
  - Good parental engagement
  - Good interagency partnerships
  - High expectation
  - Good links with TAFEs and employment
  - Cultural and social isolation
- Holistic approach to education and students is very important.
- Need for community unity – starting point.
- Need leaders to maintain momentum and sustainability of programs.
- Need for guidelines for Principals and school administration
  - Guide for payment of Elders and cultural speakers
  - Sustainable programs for cultural speakers and community engagement
  - Pathway of contact
  - Who to contact
  - Protocols
  - Knowledge of culture and who can be taught
  - Knowledge of community organisations
  - Practical advice
- Schools/communities need to know that Commonwealth funding is supplementary. Having no or limited Commonwealth funding doesn’t mean that things can’t be achieved.
- Schools and communities can work together on short term projects that achieve outcomes.
- One Stop Shop for Indigenous Education
  - Support for schools and IEWS
- Mindsets and attitudes need to change



A number of Human Resource (HR) issues were tabled and discussed throughout the forum. This has been a common underlying theme throughout all forums conducted by QIECC during 2006 and 2007. These HR issues are provided as a summary.

- IEW's make community engagement easier for schools.
- IEW's provide effective liaison between schools and parents (they also have an intervention role).
- Not enough IEW's employed in schools.
- IEW's are depended on to
  - Organise celebration/functions
  - Provide staff professional development
  - Handle behaviour management
  - Liaise with families and community even if it is outside their job description.
- CDEP finished has caused funding issues for employment (CDEP) Teacher Aides (TAs) need to be translated into real jobs
- Lack of permanency
- IEW's employed only part-time
- IEW's need training and professional development and need to be supported to do this.
- IEW's need support from schools for networks.
- IEW's need to have a clear understanding of sources of funding and how they can be used effectively.
- IEW's need to be accessible and therefore need barriers removed.
- IEW's need to understand their work descriptions.
- If TA's are being used as liaison officers in schools then pay them accordingly, but not to be used as truancy officers.
- Schools need to show that IEWs are valued members of staff and therefore are great role models.
- IEW's are expected to work too much eg .CEC at a school with 130 Indigenous students.
- IEW's should be supported to become teachers if they so wish.
- System for employment of TA's should be looked at closely.
- Long term employed IEWs having hours reduced.
- Some IEW's in Education Queensland schools in the area have tried to meet with the Regional Executive Director (RED) or Executive Directors (ED) to have their issues listened to but have been unsuccessful. There is shared frustration.
- HR issues can be resolved at the regional level
- Networks are necessary for professional and personal support, sharing good practice and successes, shared professional development and discussing issues and solutions.
- It is important to have supportive Principals who are responsive to creative initiatives.
- IEW's (particularly CEC's) need to be adequately resourced (including a budget).
- IEW's need professional development particularly around at risk students and parent/community engagement.
- TAs feel isolated and this leads to frustration.



## STATEMENT OF OUTCOMES

As a consequence of the Community Forum in Bundaberg, it is anticipated that it will have a number of positive impacts to influence the work of the QIECC and its feedback to government to have a level of influence on policy and also for the engagement of Community.

As part of its Terms of Reference, the Committee is to obtain views from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Queenslanders in relation of Indigenous education matters, in order to represent community views at a Ministerial level. Outcomes of the Forum will be relayed to both the State and Commonwealth Ministers responsible for Education. The report will also be posted on the QIECC website.

Additionally, QIECC will report outcomes back to the Bundaberg parents, workers and community who participated at the Forum.

