

## Telstra Foundation supports Indigenous leadership programs

Funding of \$1.2 million for the Stronger Smarter Institute was announced on Tuesday 27 July by Telstra Foundation Chairman, Herb Elliott AC MBE, and Telstra CEO, David Thodey, at QUT's Kelvin Grove campus.

'Three years ago the Telstra Foundation supported Dr Chris Sarra at the Stronger Smarter Institute QUT to help overcome the low educational expectations of Indigenous students. We are proud that this program has tipped the educational balance to a point where school and communities work together, where despair has changed to hope and there are no more excuses for under-performance,' Mr Elliott said.

This latest grant brings to \$2.4 million the Telstra Foundation's total commitment to the Institute, which is co-funded with the Sidney Myer Fund. It forms part of \$3.5 million in Telstra support of five projects driven by Indigenous leaders to improve education, create leadership opportunities and promote cultural pride among young Indigenous Australians.

Dr Chris Sarra joined other grant recipients Catherine Freeman (Catherine Freeman Foundation), Michael Long (The Long Walk), Jason Glanville (Australian Indigenous Leadership Centre) and

Carrine Liddell (La Perouse Youth Haven) in a forum during which they were asked the 'hard' questions by students from Tullawong and Loganlea State High Schools – and shared their thoughts on leadership and the importance of education.

Not to be outdone, students of Cabbage Tree Island Public School charmed guests with a performance of their own original songs and a deadly dance routine.

Artist in residence, Goma Conlon, wrapped up the day by creating his beautiful artwork "Aspirations", with a little help from students, dignitaries and grant recipients.

It was a day of celebration and inspiration. "We at the Institute were proud to share the stage with these Indigenous leaders, and thank the Telstra Foundation for joining us on our journey as we continue to 'change the tide' of Indigenous education in Australia" said Dr Sarra.

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## Telstra Social Innovation Grants – Calling for Expressions of Interest

Further support of up to \$3.4 million over three years will be made available in new grants for organisations that support isolated children and young people across Australia.

The grants aim to help socially and geographically isolated children to build social connections and support networks, and improving access to services in education, health and wellbeing.

The Telstra Foundation is looking for projects that use information and communication technologies to

improve education, health and wellbeing outcomes of children and young people, and encourages community-based organisations with dynamic ideas to apply for funding.

Further information and details of eligibility for the Telstra Foundation's Social Innovation Grants is available at [www.telstrafoundation.com](http://www.telstrafoundation.com). Expressions of interest opened via the website on Monday August 2 and close on Friday September 3, 2010. Successful grant applicants will be announced in December 2010.

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## Stronger Smarter NAIDOC Poster Competition

Thank you to all of the students who entered the 2010 Stronger Smarter NAIDOC Poster Competition. We received many entries from all over the country and it certainly was a challenge for the judges to decide on a winner for each category.

Students had the opportunity to put their artistic skills to the test as they brought to life their own interpretations on the theme *'Unsung Heroes: Closing the Gap by leading their way'*. It was clear that even our youngest entrants put quite a lot of thought and feeling into who their unsung heroes were and how they wanted to depict the impacts those people had made in their lives.

The artworks, submitted by students from as young as 8 years of age, featured vibrant and sometimes abstract representations of family, teachers, community coming together, and even a deadly portrait of former Senator and 1979 Australian of the Year, Neville Bonner AO.

Now for the winners...

### **Primary School category**

Cameron Rogers from Orange Public School, NSW. Ten-year-old Cameron's poster was about his Dad and the bright, bold colours in his artwork represented the hope he gives to people. Cameron receives a digital camera for himself and a digital SLR camera for his school. Well done, Cameron!

### **Secondary School category**

Shared by 4 very talented students from Bundamba State Secondary College. Lachlan Green, Luke Parker, Dakota Blake and Kahna-Leah Webb created a stunning acrylic painting on 4 separate canvases which join together to show the story of their unsung heroes.

*'This painting represents the pathways we follow throughout the journey of our lives, such as school, career pathways, family, etc. The circle in the middle represents school and community, the tracks flowing from the circle represent the different pathways we follow. The black footprints represent our unsung heroes such as our elders, family and local community members leading their way and followed by the red footprints which represent the youth of our community'.*

Executive Director, Chris Sarra made the trip to Bundamba to have a chat with the students about their poster and to present them and the school with their prizes. Congratulations Lachlan, Luke, Dakota and Kahna-Leah!

Be sure to keep an eye on our [website](#) to see all of the poster entries for 2010, and congratulations to everyone who participated. For students who missed out on entering the competition, we'd love to keep hearing from you all throughout the country - tell us about how you are being stronger and smarter in

your school and community.

**Toby Adams**

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## Reflections on 'Unsung Heroes'... an extract from Chris Sarra's blog site

*This past NAIDOC Week celebrations, we had the opportunity to acknowledge and celebrate the unsung heroes in our communities. These people don't get the recognition they deserve, but are the ones who are always the first to lend a helping hand. We want to ensure that our unsung heroes are recognised and appreciated beyond NAIDOC Week.*

*For those who have heard me speak about my time as Principal at Cherbourg School you will recall that I mention people like Mum Rae, Martina, Pop John, Mrs Langton, Fred Cobbo, Frank Malone, Mrs Gambrell, Aunty Ada and my old friend Hooper. There are so many others who were with me at Cherbourg and I'm sorry that I can't name them all here. These people were highly regarded and influential in the community and were integral to the success we had at Cherbourg School...*

To read more about what local community heroes like these bring into the lives of Indigenous children, and even to post a response, visit the blog site at <http://chrissarra.wordpress.com/>.

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## A community participant in the Leadership Program - Kurt's story

One of the observations Kurt Beahan makes about himself during our interview is that he 'was never much of a talker'. "I find that hard to believe!" I say, laughing.

Kurt is a 21 year old Narromine man working as an Aboriginal Learning Support Officer in Glenroi Heights Public School, Orange NSW. He is also in his second year of part time study under the Aboriginal Rural Education Program (AREP) at the University of Western Sydney, to pursue his dream of becoming a teacher.

Three or four years ago Kurt had never even thought of studying at university. So what changed his mind? A supportive principal, Jane Cameron, who encouraged him, and Kurt's experience of the Stronger Smarter Leadership Program.

Kurt came on board as a community participant in the program with the support of a scholarship provided by the Jobs Australia Foundation. His hope was to become part of helping to build a 'new culture' of strengthened community-teacher relationships for Glenroi Heights.

"I was thrown in the deep end with the leadership program. I felt a little bit small amongst all the school principals and teachers... reckon I didn't say a word for the first two days. But by the end, I felt equal... they couldn't shut me up! And I was inspired to stretch myself towards more of a leadership role."

When Kurt arrived in Orange, he quickly recognised that community members held strong beliefs about who they trusted, and that he would have to earn their respect. He took on a coaching role in junior

rugby league which helped him to build a rapport with local families, and has been involved in community outreach activities to encourage parents to engage with the school through a parent tutor classroom program.

“A lot of staff in our school have participated in the Stronger Smarter Leadership Program, and Jane is committed to that kind of approach. I think this really helps to strengthen the community relationships. For me personally, the program gave me so much more self-confidence... I speak up in class at uni and have formed strong friendships with some really good people there.”

Building relationships is one of the focuses of the Institute’s Senior Community Relations Officer, Michal Purcell, who visits communities well in advance of launching a program. “It is so important that community members understand and value the program’s purpose, so that they feel connected and supportive” says Michal. Some will even become participants – some like Kurt Beahan.

To learn more about the Stronger Smarter Leadership Program, visit our [website](#).

**Charly Keith**

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## Education in the 21st Century

In many developed countries, there is an education debate raging and in some countries, education financial wars as states compete for funding. The 21st century has proven more difficult for governments and education policy makers to navigate. The changes in communications and technology alone have been phenomenal, yet most education systems have not kept up with the times. The brick and mortar classroom is still overwhelmingly seen as the dominant place of learning.

Australia, (like other developed countries) is struggling to find ways to address the disparities between the haves and have nots, between high performers and underachievers and struggling to address the cultural/ethnic/racial disparities in education with varying crudeness. For instance, most standardised tests still tend to be culturally biased no matter how multicultural the country might claim to be.

These disparities are often intergenerational, creating cycles of underachievement in poor communities and in some racialised groups, like Native Americans, African-Americans and Hispanics in the US, First Nations communities in Canada, and Indigenous Australians. With these cycles of disadvantage and inequality, education is seen by all as the real engine for social mobility, but we are all struggling with how best to overcome those disadvantages through systems that are dependent more on the mood swings of politicians and less on what is really needed in the classroom for sustained, effective, creative teaching and learning beyond standardised testing.

Our preoccupation with “teaching to test” has left many countries worse off in terms of critical thinking skills, creative problem solving, and engendering social responsibility. As a result the deficit in education remains, as politicians make policies about education without input from educators. Australia is not alone in this, but Australian parents, teachers and school leaders will have to decide what they really want from their education system and demand it from the politicians who are no strangers to holding progress hostage.

**Dr. Stacey-Ann Wilson**

## Senior Research Fellow

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## New Community Development Module available soon

SSI will be offering a new Community Development Module through the *Centre for Professional Learning and Development* at QUT. The course is fully accredited and equates to a 12 credit point unit that could be incorporated into a Masters program (full Masters program is 96 credit points).

It will be delivered primarily online with a 3-day residential component. The module is a 10 week course running Oct 6 - Dec 8, with registration to open soon. Details will be circulated. For additional information please email: [staceyann.wilson@qut.edu.au](mailto:staceyann.wilson@qut.edu.au).

This module examines community development in a holistic way by looking through the frames of planning, public policy and management, social work, (i.e. local capacity building), life-long learning and rural and remote sociology. It would be beneficial to anyone working with or thinking about how to work with diverse communities in building their capacity to take charge of their own futures.

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## 'Guest' Book Reviews

**Title:** *Real Leaders Real schools: Stories of success against enormous odds*

**Author:** **Gerald C. Leader**

I have found these stories an invaluable reflection on the journey of improved educational outcomes for Indigenous students at Bairnsdale Secondary College. Some of the lessons of the journey are encapsulated within these stories – different contexts but the messages are the same.

At the same time, the experiences of these leaders challenges me to re-think and re-focus on the change agenda.

A common thread among the stories is the commitment to instructional leadership to drive change and maintain high expectations for improved student outcomes. These leaders all showed a commitment to beliefs that:

- All students can achieve
- Student data must be used to inform teaching
- The use of testing to focus student efforts as well as the teacher
- Creating a sense of urgency for standards-based reform leverages change
- The selective selection of staff can break old ways of working
- A focus on professional learning is essential

**Graham Blackley, Principal**  
**Bairnsdale Secondary College**  
**Gippsland, VIC**

To read more of Graham Blackley's descriptions of and responses to the in-depth case studies detailed in this insightful book – exploring concepts of the 'model' student; overcoming demographics; cultural change; creative approaches to staffing; focus on learning and collaboration – visit [Book Reviews](#) in the Resources page on our website.

**Title:** *Transforming Public Education*

**Editor:** **Stacey M. Childress**

This collection of case studies provides some excellent examples of leadership resulting in significant positive change in school jurisdictions with disparity in student performance. In each case the process used is outlined and not surprisingly there is a degree of commonality.

The key role of the principal is examined with the notion of "best fit". "If principals are to succeed, we need to locate them in schools where they have a chance to succeed" (p 146). The need for planned professional learning for principals, aligned with professional dialogue with principal colleagues is seen as a must if success is to be achieved.

Much of what is in the collection will not be new to experienced school operatives but is a useful reminder of what is possible and how it can be achieved.

**Paul Tracey, Principal**  
**Callaghan College, Wallsend Campus**  
**Hunter Central Coast, NSW**

These resources should be available through academic book suppliers and relevant libraries.

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## Stronger Smarter Learning Communities (SSLC) Briefing & Training Sessions

On 19 July a briefing session was conducted for Leaders of the successful Regional Partner Research Teams (RPRTs), focussed on contract expectations and deliverables and on answering individual contract concerns. Successful RPRT tenders were accepted from:

- James Cook University for Central-North Qld
- Australian Catholic University for Brisbane-South East Qld
- University of Newcastle for both Hunter-Central Coast and North-Western regions of NSW
- Edith Cowan and Charles Darwin Universities for Northern Australia (Kimberley WA & NT)

The briefing was followed by a 2-day training program conducted for members of each of the RPRTs. Training sessions were provided on a diverse set of topics, in particular:

- Overview of SSLC Project & Research Questions
- Case Studies within the Project Research Design
- Organising for Contract Deliverables via School and Community Access for Research
- Quality Assurance workshop using Engoorie
- Stronger Smarter 'Meta-Strategies'
- Alternative Models & Methodologies for Case Studies
- Institute-Sponsored initial meetings of hubs & affiliate school communities

- Role of RPRTs in supporting hub & affiliate communication
- Capacity-building through community development

To learn more about the Stronger Smarter Learning Communities project, visit our [website](#).

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## Philanthropy and Indigenous People: Enhancing Indigenous Education Outcomes

The Centre for Aboriginal Economic Policy Research (CAEPR), located at the Australian National University, has advised availability of an Australian Postgraduate Award (Industry) scholarship leading to the degree of Doctor of Philosophy (PhD). The scholarship is funded via the Australian Research Council.

A demonstrated knowledge of and interest in Indigenous Australian communities and people is required. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are particularly encouraged to apply. More information is available from:

Dr Jerry Schwab, CAEPR, Email: [Jerry.Schwab@anu.edu.au](mailto:Jerry.Schwab@anu.edu.au) or  
Dr Janet Hunt, CAEPR, Email: [Janet.Hunt@anu.edu.au](mailto:Janet.Hunt@anu.edu.au).

The Centre for Aboriginal Economic Policy Research (CAEPR) is available online at:  
<http://caepr.anu.edu.au/>

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## Northern Territory Stepping Up program

The second of the Stepping Up programs commenced on 4th August with 12 participants taking part in the opening session. Over the next 12 weeks the participants will receive career planning and coaching in this NT Department of Education and Training sponsored program.

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