

## A message from Chris Sarra

Hi Everyone. It's amazing to me that we're already heading into the home straight of the year 2010. In many ways it feels like the year has only just begun - while in other ways I look back and reflect on the massive amounts of work done, both personally and in the Institute as a whole.

I'm happy to say that increasingly the Institute's work is having impacts in schools right across the country where the Stronger Smarter message is resonating loud and proud. We can see this in the data that is coming back to us – data that reflect on attendance, improved literacy and numeracy and greater community engagement in school activity.



*Dr Chris Sarra, Executive Director of the Stronger Smarter Institute*

But we also know we are on the right track because we hear and see the stories of hard work, of dedication and of achievement. These are stories about the children in the classrooms, about the staff in our schools, about the communities in which we work. As importantly, these are stories about YOU – about the members of the Stronger Smarter family, school and community leaders who have taken up the challenges in Indigenous Education, who have shown the commitment to make a difference.

The graduates of our Stronger Smarter Leadership Program are a large and ever growing group since our first program over 4 years ago. Many of you have raised the bar in your school, many have moved on to challenges in other schools, some have joined us in the Stronger Smarter Learning Communities. You all have a story to tell and we're keen to hear from you.

If you are a Stronger Smarter graduate, you recently received an email asking for your reflections on the program and your stories, which we would like to publish in our next and final 2010 edition of Changing the Tide. If that email didn't find you, please contact Darren Brady at [darren.brady@qut.edu.au](mailto:darren.brady@qut.edu.au).

We're keen to hear from you – whether you're a newcomer to Stronger Smarter or if you participated in one of the first programs-please respond and send us a few lines, a paragraph, a page, a picture, a greeting and we'll publish as many as we can in the next newsletter as a way of rounding-off an amazing year and reconnecting to the Stronger Smarter family around the country.

I look forward to hearing from you all.

Until then, best regards

Chris

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## The Cherbourg Ration Shed hosts the Stronger Smarter Leadership Program

The Stronger Smarter Institute, led by Dr Chris Sarra, became the first organisation to take advantage of the new Ration Shed Museum's conference facilities at the Cherbourg Historical Precinct in the South East Queensland community in October.

The facilities include a small conference area in the historic Boys' Dormitory, presentations by community Elders and video projection in the Ration Shed itself and the surrounding Precinct, including a sculpture garden and a corroboree area where the Wakka Wakka Juniors dancers from the Cherbourg State School performed.

The Institute has gathered 29 principals and leaders from all over the country to begin their Stronger Smarter Leadership Program. Locating the program on an Indigenous community, particularly in Cherbourg where the Strong and Smart story had its beginnings, evoked emotional responses from the group.

Petah Hegarty, Community Education Counsellor at the Loganlea State High School grew up in Cherbourg – so it is not surprising that she is deeply moved to be participating in the Cherbourg Program.

She said: "Coming home is not just a journey for my brain, it is a spiritual journey. I love that it's here in Cherbourg and that it's generating funds back to the community"



*Aunty Ada Simpson with Chris Sarra outside the Ration Shed Museum in Cherbourg*



*Aunty Ada Simpson yarning with SSLP participants about the history of Cherbourg*



*Petah Hegarty, Community Education Counsellor, Loganlea State High School, QLD visiting the Cherbourg State School*



*Warry John Stanley, community Elder and groundsman at the Cherbourg State School with John Murray, Koori Engagement Officer, DEECD, Victoria*



*Scott Gorringe leading SSLP participants in an activity outside the Boys' Dormitory, Cherbourg*

Participants who have travelled a long way for the Program feel there is something special in Cherbourg. Jade Kennedy, originally from Perth, now working at Bairnsdale Secondary College in Gippsland, Victoria says: "I feel safe here, somehow. It's a place that allows me to reflect on where I come from, my own culture".

Chris Sarra said: "I am just blown away by what has been achieved here at the Ration Shed. Cherbourg is, of course, a special place for me and for the Stronger Smarter Institute, but I reckon anyone coming here will be enriched and moved by the place. And to have a conference here – in the presence of Cherbourg Elders, among all the historical photos and the artworks – is just great."



*The Stronger Smarter Leadership Program participants, Cherbourg, 2010*

The Ration Shed Museum has catering facilities and a shop selling local artists' works, books and videos and clothing. For more information visit: [www.rationshed.com.au](http://www.rationshed.com.au) or our website [www.strongersmarter.qut.edu.au](http://www.strongersmarter.qut.edu.au)

## Stronger Smarter at the ACEL Conference

The Stronger Smarter Institute had a significant presence at the Australian Council For Educational Leaders (ACEL) "Hosting and Harvesting" conference held in Sydney in late September/early October. Over 1000 participants discussed the themes:

- The art of hosting: conversations that matter
- Deep learning, rich understandings
- Learning across boundaries: building bridges
- Leadership and, for, through, with, by, from learning

Chris Sarra presented a lead paper, highlighting the Institute's five meta-strategies.

To enable conference participants to locate and conceptualise stronger smarter ideas in the workplace, a number of Stronger Smarter school leaders presented workshops about their experiences.

Jane Cameron showcased Glenroi Heights Public School in Orange. She discussed how reinvigorating the school by creating a culture founded on the values of high expectations and community collaboration enabled the



*Tim Fairfax AM, Bryan Hughes, Shepherdson College,*

development of a positive identity for every student.

*Elcho Island, NT, with Dr Chris Sarra at the ACEL Conference*

As part of their leadership challenges Bob Hoye and Duncan Peade, from Orange Public School made a commitment to address deficit discourse. In their workshop they explored the concepts of deficit thinking and collusion and the impact on the achievement of high expectations in their workplace.



*David Spillman, from the Stronger Smarter Institute with Deb Merson, Swan View High School, WA at the ACEL Conference*

Wendy Mason and Wendy Elsworth from the Hunter Central Coast region in NSW prepared an interactive workshop to reflect on their research with Stronger Smarter school leaders. Wendy Mason led structured conversations and activities relating to the importance of cultural competence.

Paul Bridge from Derby District High School in the West Kimberley Region focused on changing school culture to meet the needs of students from a diverse community.



*Paul Bridge, Derby District High School, WA and Donna Bridge, East Kalgoorlie Primary School, WA at the ACEL Conference*

Inspired by Chris Sarra's work at Cherbourg, Graham Blakely, principal at Bairnsdale Secondary College shared how he has shifted the focus in the school and the effect that is having on student outcomes. Jade Kennedy a young community member and staff member shared his story of engagement and passion for improving student outcomes at Bairnsdale.

Donna Bridge from East Kalgoorlie Primary School discussed the positive story of change after challenging negative mindsets and ways of being, to develop a strong belief that a positive sense of Aboriginal identity is something to celebrate.

Thank you to the Australian Council For Educational Leaders for hosting Stronger Smarter at the conference; presenting these stories highlights the breadth, depth and impact of the Stronger Smarter philosophy in many regions across the country.

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## Tullawong State High School wins Schools' First Impact Award

The Tullawong State High School in Caboolture, Queensland, has won a Schools' First Impact Award of

\$50000 for its outstanding work in the area of Indigenous Education.

The school, in conjunction with the Stronger Smarter Institute, researched strategies to improve school and life outcomes for Indigenous students. Specific challenges and needs were identified in the school. These were poor attendance, low Year 12 retention, disconnectedness and disengagement. The research also identified a lack of understanding of Indigenous culture in the school and that the school's engagement with the Indigenous community was limited.



*Students from Tullawong SHS participating in their High Expectations High Outcomes Leadership Program - with Moreton Shire Indigenous Community Leaders*

Tullawong SHS and the Stronger Smarter Institute partnered with Indigenous Schooling Support Unit (ISSU-CSQ) and linked with affiliate schools to develop a comprehensive plan to target the following areas:

1. Student Leadership
2. Embedding Indigenous Perspectives in the curriculum
3. Collaborative Indigenous Sports days
4. Individual Learning Plans for all Indigenous students

As the project has progressed over the last year, major changes have been seen in many of these key areas. Some of the highlights of the project include:

- Indigenous community people are now involved as part of the selection panel for staff working in the area of Indigenous education.
- Community collaboratively planned and constructed a 'Yarning Circle' that is a visible and respected Indigenous space in the school.
- Community has liaised with the school to initiate an Adopt an Elder program
- School and community have negotiated a dedicated space for Indigenous students and families – 'Wandi Room' meaning 'Gathering place' in the local 'Gubbi Gubbi' language.
- 100% participation of Indigenous students in school health nurse program
- 100% of Indigenous girls in the Middle School have participated in Nungeena Womens' activities with their families.
- 90% of Indigenous students have completed programs in protective behaviours
- Students are visibly involved in school leadership and at the Sunshine Coast Youth Leadership Summit 25% of participants were Indigenous when Indigenous students only represented 3.5% of the total school enrolment of participating schools. All the Indigenous participants were from the ISSU-CSQ Indigenous Student Leadership Program.

- > NAPLAN data shows that the Indigenous cohort in Year 9 is out-performing the Non-Indigenous cohort in 3 out of the 5 domains – Writing, Spelling and Grammar.
- > Attendance data for Indigenous students (83%) has improved to the extent that the Indigenous cohort has better attendance than Non-Indigenous students (80%)
- > Retention data also shows that more Indigenous students (87%) continue across the year 10 to 12 juncture than Non-Indigenous students (75%).
- > Indigenous student and community leaders are involved in a mentor system that is led by a community elder. This program involves approximately 20 year 7 students and 10 senior Indigenous student leaders.

Congratulations to Tullawong State High School for these great outcomes and for being deservedly recognised for their fantastic work.

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## Transition from school to employment

Paul Tracey is the Principal of Callaghan College, Wallsend Campus in Newcastle, NSW. Paul was a participant in the first Stronger Smarter Leadership Program in 2006 and has remained an engaged advocate for improved outcomes for Indigenous students ever since.

This is an excerpt from a speech that Paul delivered recently at a Learn, Earn, Legend dinner. He was asked to speak about the role that all sectors of the community can play in the preparation of Indigenous kids for work and/or tertiary study. Over 300 people - from all sectors of government, Aboriginal elders, business leaders and prominent league identities attended



*Paul Tracey, Principal,  
Callaghan College,  
Wallsend Campus,  
Newcastle, NSW*

The full speech can be downloaded here  
[www.strongersmarter.qut.edu.au/docs/newsletters/Paul\\_Tracey\\_speech.pdf](http://www.strongersmarter.qut.edu.au/docs/newsletters/Paul_Tracey_speech.pdf)

### **Paul Tracey's speech**

It is with great pleasure that I acknowledge the traditional owners of the land where we meet tonight, pay my respect to elders past and present and look forward to being apart of working with the magnificent elders of the future.

I would also like to acknowledge the distinguished guests and reinforce to them that they are in Newcastle, the jewel in the crown of New South Wales.

For those who don't know me my name is Paul Tracey and I am currently Principal of Callaghan College, Wallsend Campus and have a long history in promoting the strengths of my students to improve community outcomes.

I am going to talk about the transition from school to employment and how we can make it better... but in the process I intend to challenge all sectors represented here to re-think their ideas and reinvigorate programs to get the best out of kids.

I guess my basic leadership priority has always been to create conditions for students to reach their full potential and to transition successfully from school. This involves a whole range of intertwining stakeholders... from community members, to teachers, to employers, to the outside agencies involved in all aspects of welfare and enrichment and, of course, the students themselves - their goals and

motivations... So, clearly, student success and preparedness for work is dependant on the learning communities surrounding students working effectively together.

There also has to be a clearly articulated school focus to which all staff and students are accountable – directly aligned to the pursuit of excellence. We must relentlessly challenge students' perceptions about themselves and their capacity to learn.

[www.strongersmarter.qut.edu.au/docs/newsletters/Paul\\_Tracey\\_speech.pdf](http://www.strongersmarter.qut.edu.au/docs/newsletters/Paul_Tracey_speech.pdf)

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## Welcome to Dyonne Anderson

It is our pleasure to welcome Dyonne Anderson to the Stronger Smarter Institute.

Many newsletter readers will know Dyonne as the principal at Cabbage Tree Island School and leader of the Stronger Smarter Learning Communities hub on the North Coast of NSW.

Dyonne has accepted a one year secondment to the Institute from the NSW Department of Education and Training to work with the leadership team as well as support the learning communities project and the Institute more broadly.

Dyonne was recently awarded the NSW Premier's Country Energy Indigenous Education Scholarship which will focus on improving student learning outcomes through culturally competent leadership. This award and Dyonne's extensive experience as principal, SSLP participant, co-facilitator for the regional Stronger Smarter Leadership Program and hub principal will be a powerful and valued asset for the Institute.



*Dyonne Anderson, joining the Stronger Smarter Institute*

Dyonne will be based at the Kelvin Grove office in Brisbane and she is looking forward to engaging with the Stronger Smarter family in schools and communities across the country.

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## Indigenous students leading the way

Last week students from six schools in Logan, Queensland, demonstrated the capacity of young Indigenous students to deliver high quality outcomes. In an event at the Yugembah Dreaming Community Centre, the students were delivering public presentations of their designs and plans for 2011.

They form part of an innovative project led by the Central Southern Queensland Indigenous Schooling Support Unit - with the support of the Stronger Smarter Institute - to create Student Leadership





Teams in the region.

The schools involved are Loganlea State High School (an SSLC 'hub' school), with its affiliates - Beenleigh SHS, Harris Fields SS, Waterford West SS, Woodridge SHS and Woodridge North SS. They are connected through what is termed 'Durithunga' – a space created for Indigenous people to 'feel at home', to talk and discuss issues.

The students have devised four inter-school project teams that are working on the following areas:

1. Affirmation and retention of culture
2. Indigenous attendance and retention
3. Youth Safety
4. Community connections

The students worked on these with the support of Indigenous Education Workers, school staff and the Indigenous Schooling Support Unit Project Officer, Ivana Waddington.

The inspiring and heart-warming evening launch was attended by students, families, school leaders, district office representatives and regional offices representatives. It was evidence of real community engagement and another reminder of what is possible when we all work together with a belief in the capacity of young Indigenous students and high expectations of the outcomes.

We will hear a lot more from these young Indigenous leaders in the future and it is inspiring to see how they are showing the adults how to plan for the future.



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## Announcing an SSLC blog

The Stronger Smarter Learning Communities have begun a new blog. While it is intended primarily for Learning Communities we welcome your interaction through comments and questions.

The address is: <http://strongersmarterlearningcommunities.blogspot.com>



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## Finally...

Don't forget Chris Sarra's request:

"Please send us a few lines, a paragraph, a page, a picture, a greeting – and we'll try to publish as many as we can in the next newsletter"

Visit us at our website for upcoming new videos and stories: [www.strongersmarter.qut.edu.au](http://www.strongersmarter.qut.edu.au)

and also visit the Stronger Smarter Institute on [Facebook](#).



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