

Changing the Tide - October issue

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Next Steps Forum, SSLC in 2012, NSW North Coast Stronger Smarter Summit, Welcome to new staff, Movember, Stronger Smarter in Geneva

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Welcome

Hi everyone and welcome to the October edition of *Changing the Tide*.

I'm Kelly Randall. I've just joined the Stronger Smarter team as Project Administration Assistant for the Stronger Smarter Learning Communities Project - taking over from Elise Mueller who departed Australia last month to undertake volunteer aid work in Southeast Asia.



Kelly Randall, Project Administration Assistant

I am from coastal NSW, a little town called Kempsey, which is best known as the birthplace of Slim Dusty and his pub with no beer, which is close by.

I've travelled around Australia and love getting off the beaten track - visiting amazing places and meeting amazing people. I've lived in Sydney, Melbourne, Adelaide and Brisbane with my husband who was my childhood sweetheart. We've settled in the glorious and culturally rich Glass House Mountains area of Queensland with our children - two rascally little boys who are larger than life and keep me on my toes!

I will be working directly with Iqbal Singh, Stronger Smarter Learning Communities Project Manager, and I am very excited about my new role. I look forward to working with the schools and communities involved in this important initiative.

Next Steps Forum a huge success



Dr Chris Sarra delivering the Keynote Address

The Stronger Smarter Institute hosted the Focus School Next Steps Initiative Principal and Community Forum at the Gold Coast on 27-28 October 2011.

With the initiative formally launched by Minister Garrett on 8 September 2011, an intensive planning phase beckoned for the 102 participating schools in order to commence action by Term 1 of 2012.

The Stronger Smarter Institute struck its first success with over 180 delegates, representing around 80 schools and their local Indigenous communities, as well as education jurisdictions and Indigenous Education Consultative

Bodies attending the Forum.

The Forum was designed to facilitate school planning. The active participation and enthusiasm of Indigenous community representatives and school leaders attending the conference highlighted the commitment of all involved for high expectations outcomes in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander education.

Aunty Robyn Williams opened the forum by providing a Welcome to Country.

The Honourable Peter Garrett, Minister for Education, outlined the Government's high expectations of the Initiative and provided the delegates with encouragement and support in a video presentation.

Dr Chris Sarra drove home the high expectations agenda in his keynote address, and discussed the strategies underpinning the Stronger Smarter philosophy ? embracing and celebrating cultural identity; promoting Indigenous leadership in schools; and high expectations teacher-student relationships.



Panel discussions. Left to right: Donita Button, Nicole Dwan and Lurlene Button from Kulkarriya Community School, WA

A key message in Dr Sarra's address was accountability. "No longer can we play the blame game in regards to Indigenous education funding, everyone in the room were now the masters of their schools' destinies."

A strength the Stronger Smarter Institute brings to this Initiative is the knowledge and experience of high expectations school and community leaders involved in the Stronger Smarter Learning Communities project.

This was demonstrated when Learning Communities project participants shared their wisdom with the delegates during panel sessions and table discussions. The panel included Jenni Greenham (retired Principal), Neil Gibson (Principal, Minyerri School NT), Michael Hansen (Principal, Cairns West Primary School QLD), Dyonne Anderson (Principal, Cabbage Tree Island Public School NSW) and John Vallely (retired Principal).

In addition to contributing to panel discussions, Michael Hansen also took the time to present on his data and target setting strategy.



180 delegates attended the forum

A key to the success of the forum were the invaluable contributions made by Indigenous community representatives who were keen to share their stories and ideas about school-community connectedness.

Other highlights included presentations from Ian Mackie, Dr Gary MacLennan and Ric Dutton from Education Queensland on community connectedness; and Richard Batty (Principal, John Warby Public School) and Tammy Anderson (Deputy Principal, AIRDS Community Schools) who shared the strategies that have led to their success

in implementing strength-based Personalised Learning Plans.

Interactive sessions on data and target setting were led by Suzanne Falls from Aligned Solutions who also presented a session on engagement strategies.

The Stronger Smarter Institute and participating schools and communities have entered into a high expectations relationship and just as importantly, positive and supportive relationships between the participants have been formed. This solid foundation will serve the Initiative well as we head into the next two years of action.

The Focus School Next Steps Initiative is a \$30 million Australian Government funded initiative designed to improve educational outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students in the areas of attendance, engagement, literacy and numeracy. The Stronger Smarter Institute has been engaged by the Australian Government to facilitate the Initiative. The Institute's high expectations approach to Indigenous education will effect positive change for almost 8,000 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students in 102 schools across Australia.

[View the Forum Photo Gallery](#)

This initiative was funded by the Australian Government Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations.

Stronger Smarter Learning Communities Project gears up for 2012

The Stronger Smarter Learning Communities (SSLC) Project team welcomes two new staff members this month. Kelly Randall has been appointed as the new Project Assistant - taking over from Elise Mueller who departed Australia last month to undertake voluntary aid work in Southeast Asia; and Will Davis has been appointed to the new role of Professional Learning Support Teams Coordinator. This role will enable us to provide targeted support to hub and affiliate schools in 2012.

Applications for new hub schools will close on November 15 and we are excited about some of the schools that have expressed interest in joining the SSLC network. This year we have an expanded Advisory Committee to assist us to review the applications and this group will meet in Sydney on November the 18th to make their recommendations to the Project Board. The new Advisory Committee has members from Indigenous Education Consultative Boards from around the country and having them

working with us and the jurisdiction representatives will enhance our capacity to support, develop and challenge schools around the country.

Our most recent teleconference, which focused on Models of Pedagogy and Instructional Design, generated much discussion across the network. School leaders recognise that this is where the 'high expectations' agenda must deliver to sustainable improvements in student outcomes. Professor Allan Luke and Tullawong State High School Deputy Principal Peter Hoehn, provided some valuable thinking and research for future school planning.

Finally, we congratulate one of our SSLC members, Graham Blackley who is Principal of the Junior Campus of Bairnsdale Secondary College, one of the largest providers of education for Indigenous youth in Victoria. Graham Blackley is the winner of the AITSL 2011 Australian Government Minister's Award for Excellence in Teaching or Leadership in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education.



Minister for Education Peter Garrett presents Graham Blackley with the AITSL award

Graham provided leadership in the development of an overall 'Koorie Education Plan' to address the challenge of lifting the educational outcomes of Indigenous students to a level comparable to other College students. The Plan requires all staff to take responsibility for Indigenous student outcomes and has been developed with the assistance of the Stronger Smarter Institute, Dare to Lead and the local community.

As a result of Graham's leadership, Indigenous students in the school have a more positive sense of their identity, few students are disengaged from the school, there are numerous future leaders and the school has its first Indigenous School Captain.

Is your school a Rights-based school?

Hi, Everyone! My name is Jim Jolley. I became part of the Stronger Smarter network back in 2008-09 when I worked for the Catholic Education Office in Darwin. My current job took me away from all that. I now work in Geneva, Switzerland, for an organization called FMSI (Marist International Solidarity Foundation). I have just had the pleasure of hosting Chris Sarra and Sharon Grose in this beautiful city for a few days. Let me tell you briefly about my work because it connects the local and international scenes with the thing you are most passionate about - educating young Aboriginal children to become stronger and smarter!

FMSI is a Non-Government Organization (NGO) which focuses on the protection of children and the promotion of their rights. You may or may not know that the Human Rights Council (HRC) of the United Nations has its base in Geneva - that's why we're here. The Human Rights Council monitors human rights, including children's rights, around the world. We use the UN HRC to advocate for children's rights wherever we can and last year we put in a report on Australia about Indigenous Education: the right of all Aboriginal children to the same sort of education every other Australian child receives. We based our advocacy on the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC - 1989). Australia signed up to this Convention in December 1990.

Articles 28 and 29 of the CRC give every child the right to education and to develop their personality and

talents to the full, without discrimination (article 2), and other articles of the Convention give children the right to have a say in what they should be taught (article 12), the right to learn and use the language and customs of their families (article 30), noting that any decision made about children should always have their best interests in mind (article 3).

Recently I gave a workshop for school leaders in Papua New Guinea on promoting a 'Rights-based' approach to education. A Rights-based school is guided by the four general principles of the CRC: the right to non-discrimination (article 2), the right to full development (article 6), the right to have the best interests of children being taken into account (article 3) and their right to express their own views on all matters affecting them, due weight being given in accordance with their age and maturity (article 12). A school that uses these principles allows children to be full participants in their own education - thus encourages them to become stronger and smarter in their own growth and development.

Can you say "yes" to the question: "Is your school a Rights-based school?"

How well do you know the Convention on the Rights of the Child?

You can find the Convention on the Rights of the Child (full version and child-friendly version) at <http://www.crin.org/> and then follow the links.

We will do our best here in Geneva to advocate for children at the international level, especially those who suffer disadvantage in their own country. I encourage you in your endeavours at the local level to promote the best opportunities for the children in your care.



Sharon Grose (left) and Chris Sarra (right) with Jim Jolley at the UN Human Rights Council, Geneva.

NSW North Coast Stronger Smarter Summit

A highly successful Stronger Smarter Summit was held at Yarrawarra Aboriginal Cultural Centre on Friday 21st October. Eighteen North Coast Region schools were represented at the summit and all indicated great appreciation of the presentations by seven schools. Congratulations to the principals and presenting staff from Kempsey East PS, Manning Gardens PS, Bowraville CS, Casino PS, Casino West PS, Casino HS and Kempsey HS for the quality and impact of their presentations. All schools shared great insight and honesty into their personal and professional journeys over the last twelve months.

There were significant gains from all presenting schools from strengthening relationships through deep listening to a commitment from leaders inspiring teams of teachers and Aboriginal community members to contribute to new ways of working and being together. The North Coast Leadership Team and members from the Upper North Coast and Lower North Coast Aboriginal Education Consultative Group (AECG) contributed to the success of the day. It was a truly inspiring day with even greater expectations for the future for the schools located on the North Coast of NSW.



Welcome to Mitul Shah



Mitul Shah, Budget and Resources Coordinator

Mitul joined the Stronger Smarter team this month as the Budget and Resource Coordinator.

Mitul completed his Professional qualifications (CPA) and Masters in Australia and has been working as a Qualified Accountant for the past eight years.

Mitul is passionate and proactive about his work and he loves number crunching - which makes him a perfect candidate for providing Stronger Smarter with budgetary, resource, and financial planning support and assistance.

Movember - Stronger Smarter 'staches...

During November each year, Movember is responsible for the sprouting of moustaches on thousands of men's faces in Australia and around the world. The aim is to raise vital funds and awareness for men's health, specifically prostate cancer and depression in men.



This year the male staff at the Stronger Smarter Institute will be joining in on the fun by producing some very interesting facial hair to help raise awareness and money for this charity.

We'd love you to be a part of the action too, so we're inviting you to join the Stronger Smarter team or make a donation by visiting <http://mobro.co/strongersmarter>.

We'll be posting progress updates with photos and stories of the guys so keep an eye on our page.

Let the growing begin!



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