Stronger Smarter Summit

Educators and community leaders from every state and territory gathered in Brisbane last month for the second Stronger Smarter Summit.

At the inaugural Summit in 2009, Dr Chris Sarra declared "the tide of low expectations in Indigenous education had changed". At this year's Summit, themed 'From Rhetoric to Reality', Dr Sarra invited educators and community leaders to share their own stories of transformation.

"Let's not underestimate the power and importance of the stories that we have to tell at the Summit. Take a quiet moment to reflect on where you've come from, and the children in your schools, and the people in your communities. And as you tell your stories, let's honour them," said Dr Sarra in his opening address.

More than 70 educators and community leaders from a wide range of school contexts took up Dr Sarra's challenge and presented a diverse range of stories that not only honoured the people and places from where they had come, but the Stronger Smarter Philosophy as well.

The opportunity to hear inspirational success stories was a highlight for many.

"Usually we have the opportunity to listen to stories at conferences, I don't think so often we have the opportunity to really grapple with them and let them challenge us and interrogate our own practices," said Dr Wendy Miller from the University of Newcastle.

The Summit also inspired and challenged delegates with outstanding keynote addresses presented by Professor Russel Bishop and Dr Chris Sarra around the key themes of embracing positive identity, embracing positive community leadership, high expectations relationships, as well as exploring...
innovative practices.

Other highlights included panel discussions facilitated by Dr Jeff McMullen; performances by Stronger Smarter Ambassador Sean Choolburra, Muddy Flats and The Gowrie Boys; and of course the surprise flash mob that interrupted the proceedings on day one!

In his closing keynote, Chris Sarra acknowledged the hard work of educators and community members who had embarked on the Stronger Smarter journey.

"Nobody said this would be easy. We just know it would be worth it. It's an honourable journey, one in which we honour the places that we've come from, one in which we stick up for Aboriginal children and for Torres Strait Islander children and for all children. This is about saving lives in some places. And it's one in which we stick up for our profession."

The Stronger Smarter Summit was made possible by the generous support of our Summit partners the National Australia Bank and Origin Foundation.

Stronger Smarter Resources

Keynotes, panel discussions, and a number of concurrent session presentations are now available from our website.
ISAN students attend Stronger Smarter Summit

The Indigenous Student Ambassador Network (ISAN) was invited to take part and participate in this year’s Stronger Smarter Summit in Brisbane. Students attended from across Queensland, some from as far north as Bamaga and Weipa.

Over three days, students were coached by mentors and supported in three main areas - culture and identity, leadership and technology. The culture and identity workshops aimed to provide students with a framework on which to build their own personal identity, while helping them connect with their community, culture and identity in a positive and deeper level.

As leaders, students were also encouraged to identify the key leadership qualities of an Indigenous student ambassador, along with priority action areas and leadership action plans they wanted to take back and implement in their schools. During the technology workshops, students were given the chance to develop their ICT skills by learning how to use their iPad's to share their journey’s thus far through the creation of digital stories, as well as learning how to download and use educational apps.

On day two, ISAN students shared with Summit attendees what they had learnt and experienced during their workshops and how the ISAN experience has impacted them personally through a panel Q&A. That evening, a BBQ dinner was held at ‘Kuril Dhagun’ at the Queensland State Library, where students were presented with certificates of participation by Queensland Minister for Aboriginal, Torres Strait Islander and Multicultural Affairs, Mr Glen Elmes.

Minister Elmes also shared with the students how he had recently been inspired by the Indigenous students at Western Cape College in North Queensland at how they can positively impact on their school and community. He encouraged students to go back to their local communities with a vision where they can influence change and demonstrate leadership.

Celebrating 50 Stronger Smarter Leadership Programs

The Stronger Smarter Institute celebrated 50 Leadership Programs last month. This marked an important milestone for the Institute and it was significant the 50th Program took place in Cherbourg where the Stronger Smarter philosophy and journey began.

The first Program was delivered in August 2006 with the aim of challenging and supporting school and community leaders in their pursuit of educational excellence for all students.
Two programs were delivered in the first year however the number quickly grew as demand for the program increased. In 2012, the Leadership Program team facilitated 14 national and regional programs.

Since 2006, the program has supported more than 1000 school and community leaders across Australia by enhancing their leadership capacity to achieve school transformation.

Thank you to all the participants who have been a part of our journey in changing the tide in low expectations for Indigenous children.

**Introduction to Stronger Smarter Online**

At Casino Public School, Stronger Smarter has become contagious! Staff want to know what the Stronger Smarter 'buzz' is all about. So Principal, Garry Carter, and the Casino team of Stronger Smarter co-facilitators have been seeking ways to disseminate Stronger Smarter more widely in their schools and community.

One answer is a program based around the new Introduction to Stronger Smarter online module. Participants in the program read and watch film material in the module, and get together once a week to discuss content and share thoughts in sessions facilitated by Assistant Principal, Wendy King.

Following a successful trial last term, Wendy is now facilitating a second program. Each program runs for 6 teachers over an 8-10 week period. The small group size allows participants to open up and really share experiences. "They become extremely supportive of one another and you could see the relationships building over the term, not just in our group sessions but in the school environment," Wendy says.

Participants also appreciated the weekly get togethers, with one participant saying the sessions provided "a safe place to discuss confronting issues from a personal perspective with each other which gave me clarity as to my personal journey throughout the course." In fact, Wendy has found the groups are so successful that staff are continuing regular 'get togethers' to discuss their complex challenges.

Wendy's collaboration with the Stronger Smarter Institute to put together a program based around the Introduction to Stronger Smarter online module has provided her staff, in the words of one of the...
participants, with "a priceless experience that I may have not been able to be a part of if this approach was not available".

Wendy recommends the format to others. "The teachers at our school who did the online facilitated module program, are the ones who are making the biggest positive impact on our school", Wendy says.

And to those interested in undertaking the Introduction to Stronger Smarter online module, the advice from one participant is 'to have an open heart, an open mind and enjoy the journey you are about to go on'.

**The Introduction to Stronger Smarter online module** is free to all participants. A certificate of completion is available on submission of the online journal as evidence of engagement with the module.

See the [Stronger Smarter website](http://www.strongersmarter.qut.edu.au) for details.

For any Stronger Smarter trained facilitators who are interested in using the online Module with staff, we will have a Facilitator's handbook available in late November. Contact ssi_plm@qut.edu.au for more information.

*We would like to thank the Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership (AITSL) who provided funding and support for the Module.*

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**Next Steps Initiative Update**

Wow, it's a busy time of year! Next Steps Consultants are out busily completing the 102 site visits happening across the country. As the reports roll in, great progress and development in schools is becoming apparent. Thanks to all the Principals and communities for welcoming us into your schools! Amazing stuff!!

November is also full of activity, with reporting and case studies becoming the main focus for the Next Steps Team. We'd like to welcome Dr. Norm Sheehan, our Principal Research Fellow, to the team and look forward to the outcomes and learning of his work!

The end of year is not so far away and there's still plenty to do... keep in touch via our online community ? the Stronger Smarter Network. Check out the Next Steps Group or join in on the Next Steps Forum. If you're not already a member of the Network, email admin@strongersmarter.net to receive an invitation.

We're also inviting comments and feedback from communities or schools. Please email your impressions of the project, and any suggestions you may have, to reporting.nsi.ssi@qut.edu.au

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**Professional Learning Packages for South Australia**
The Stronger Smarter Learning Communities, in conjunction with The University of Adelaide, are completing the pre-planning for the Professional Learning Packages for South Australia. To lead this important work in South Australia, we have engaged Michael Colbung from The University of Adelaide. This is exciting work and we look forward to meeting up with all the Hub Schools in South Australia at our Regional Forum early November to finalise what these learning packages will look and feel like for the state. Michael has kindly given us a small biography to introduce himself to the wider network.

Hi, I’m Michael Colbung, a lecturer at the University of Adelaide. I lecture to fourth year teachers in a subject called Education, Culture and Diversity. In brief, the subject teaches to teach to culture. Included in our course of lectures and tutorials, we get our student to unpack hegemony, Whiteness, power, Faith systems, gender and equity, and homophobia. I teach the Indigenous component of this course where we tackle issues like Indigenous histories and educational systems (past and present); race, racism and racial theory; relationship teaching; implication for the classroom; flexible and alternative learning styles; and, programs for Aboriginal students. I’ve just finished marking assignments based around teaching an Aboriginal student and I’m very pleased and slightly assured that our pre-service teachers are in a good place and space when working with Aboriginal students, their families and the wider Indigenous community.

A bit of background about myself: I was born in Kalgoorlie, WA and am of Wongatha and Nyoongah heritage. We are strongly aligned to the Pila people (or Spinifex people) of the Western Desert. When my mother remarried we shifted to Ceduna in SA, and I spent the rest of my life in that town until recently relocating to Adelaide. I am a trained teacher, graduating in 1988 with a Diploma of Teaching - Early Childhood. My first teaching appointment was in a childcare centre, this lasted for one year before being recruited to the Ceduna Area School. I taught there for the next 12 years in a range of teaching positions including numeracy and literacy intervention, Aboriginal education, and supporting non-Indigenous teachers teaching Aboriginal students. Towards the end of my school teaching career, I was one of only a few (if not the only) Indigenous teachers teaching an Aboriginal language in a South Australian school. I also taught a year 10-12 VET music subject which looked at rock music performance and theory, as well as a year 12 subject called Music in Society.

Book Launch: Good Morning, Mr Sarra

Chris Sarra will be discussing his new book Good Morning, Mr Sarra with the ABC’s Paul Barclay in Brisbane on Tuesday 27 November from 6pm to 8pm.

This is an 'In Store Event' at Avid Reader Bookshop and Café, 193 Boundary St, West End.

All are welcome but bookings are essential. Tickets are $5.00 and can be purchased from the Avid Reader website.
This special 'Summit' edition of Changing the Tide has been sent to our newsletter subscribers and all Summit delegates. Summit delegates who did not subscribe to Changing the Tide during registration will not receive future editions. If you would like to subscribe, email ssi_enquiries@qut.edu.au.