

A Stronger Smarter Journey on Wiradjuri Country

Location: Glenroi Heights Public School, Orange, New South Wales

Story shared in 2025.



The Stronger Smarter Philosophy is a key part of our school culture. It focuses on building strong, inclusive relationships with both students and the community, fostering a sense of belonging, and developing confident leaders. This program paves the way for positive Reconciliation and strengthens the bonds of 'how we are together.'

Kylie Greatbatch, Teacher

Kylie Greatbatch is currently working for the Stronger Smarter Institute as a mentor in the Teachers of STEM Initiative, while also teaching part-time. She tells the story of her journey since undertaking the Stronger Smarter Leadership Program.

I attended the Stronger Smarter Leadership Program in 2010 as a first-year teacher at Glenroi Heights Public School (GHPS). Each step of the program took me on a unique journey, challenging my assumptions and helping me build strong, trusting relationships with students, the community, and my colleagues. The tools I gained in my *Dilly Bag* helped me create a Culturally Responsive classroom that strengthened students' identities, built high-expectations relationships, and fostered a sense of

belonging where everyone's voice could be heard and valued.

My Stronger Smarter Leadership Journey

Personally, I was challenged, as a quiet person when I first started teaching. However, taking time to reflect on myself, my thoughts, skills, and knowledge helped me gain clarity on the path I wanted to take. I made a promise to myself, I would show up every day so my students could feel a



sense of belonging, be culturally safe, and grow confident in who they are, Strong, Smart and Proud.

As a young mum I wanted to show my own children... with vision and drive you can achieve anything you set your mind on.

My Stronger Smarter personal leadership challenge was gaining the confidence to speak in front of others. Over the years, my confidence has grown, and now, I believe that when you're passionate about a topic, you can authentically share it with others.

At work, my Stronger Smarter challenge was to build stronger community engagement within my school. I started by creating the NAIDOC Committee, which later became our Cultural Team. This group carefully planned events to celebrate significant cultural moments, such as the Reconciliation Community March, Harmony Day Street Markets, Cultural Days, Indigenous Games, NAIDOC Fete, Community Yarn-ups, Indigenous Literacy Day, and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children's Day. These events became important rituals for community engagement each year.

Mrs Jane Cameron, the Principal of GHPS at that time, was instrumental in supporting

my leadership and ensuring our school embarked on an authentic cultural journey through the Stronger Smarter processes.

*I am grateful to my Principal, Jane Cameron, for giving me the opportunity to embrace this philosophy at the beginning of my teaching career. The Stronger Smarter approach has helped me become a confident Aboriginal woman who shows up every day
PROUD.*

This support helped grow the program within the school, and many colleagues from GHPS have participated in the Stronger Smarter Leadership Program, Specialist Program, and Masterclass. This consistency has been vital in shaping our school's culture, fostering High Expectations Relationships, and using shared language like "Strong, Smart and Proud".

Our School and Community Programs and Connection

I was the 'Cultural Education Coordinator' and 'Classroom Teacher' at Glenroi Heights Public School for 14 years. Over the years, I implemented many programs at the school. During this deadly time at GHPS, I



witnessed culturally responsive approaches and culturally safe environments embedded to strengthen our student identities. The leadership team at the school were supportive of the Stronger Smarter Approach which saw many teachers and Student Learning Support Officers (SLSOs) trained through the Leadership Program. This enriched a strong culture across the school, as we were all talking the same language and high expectations learning was evident across the school in every classroom.

Stronger Smarter Learning Program

In 2015, I created and implemented the Stronger Smarter Learning Program for all K-6 students at GHPS. The program was delivered during Relief from Face to Face (RFF) sessions, focusing on the NSW DoE K-6 PDHPE Teaching units.

It enhances students' physical, social, and emotional wellbeing, helping them develop resilience, feel safe, show empathy, be respectful, and build positive relationships. The core purpose of the program is reflected in its title, "*Stronger Smarter Learning Program: Building strength-based relationships with students, community and colleagues, which in turn will strengthen student identities. Leading to classrooms that are culturally safe for all our students*".

The program focuses on key units such as Connection to Country, where students

engage in caring for environments like waterways and totem animals. It also emphasises respecting the Dreamtime through storytelling, honouring our Elders by listening, exploring student identities, and fostering a sense of belonging through art and cultural inclusion, learning "*how we are together*". In the Stronger Smarter Circle, the processes are respected, including Acknowledgement of Country, Setting the Circle, and Check-ins and Check-outs. Each lesson incorporates a key element of connecting to Country to honour and learn from.

The Yindyamarra Program (Respect in Wiradjuri)

In 2020, we made a video about the Yindyamarra Program for the Metro Regional Youth Summit.

View the video at

[Glenroi Heights Proposal.](#)

The Yindyamarra Program is a strength-based approach which encourages students to draw on their strengths and the strengths of others. This supports students in developing the knowledge, understanding, skills, values, and positive attitudes required to make healthy and safe choices. This, in turn, promotes individual



students' well-being. For example, the Yindyamarra Program supports students in developing leadership skills, encourages sportsmanship and strengthens students' identities.

Each week, 10 Stage 3 students are selected to attend the Yindyamarra Program based on criteria such as regular attendance, wearing full school uniform, and being Strong, Smart and Proud learners. The program includes a variety of community activities, such as Age Care visits to read to Elders, gymnastics, basketball, soccer, tenpin bowling, and connections to Country at Mount Canobolas (**Gaanha bula**) and Gosling Creek to spot the platypus (**biladurang**). Students also participate in other activities, such as scavenger hunts around Lake Canobolas. Each student proudly wears the Yindyamarra Shirt, designed through an Art Competition.

In 2023, I took a group of 5 boys and 5 girls to Brewarrina, where I have family

connections. We visited the museum, and Uncle Bradley shared his knowledge about the fish traps. All the students were deeply engaged in what Uncle had to share. We then visited the Central School, where students played games together, followed by a swim in the river between the fish traps. This trip was a highlight of many years of the Yindyamarra Program, bringing two school communities together to create beautiful memories.

Garru Girls Dance Group (Magpie) and Gugga Boys Dance Group (Goanna)

The girls' and boys' dance groups are inclusive to students who are passionate about Contemporary Traditional Dance. The storytelling process takes students on Country to honour animal totems, ancestral spirits, gathering, hunting, cleansing and releasing bad energy through movements. The students work hard during the year to perform at the NAIDOC Community School Concert, Reconciliation Assembly,

Harmony Day Assembly, Presentation Day, Community Events and to perform at the Age Care Facility. The dance groups inspire younger students to join when they move into the older years.



Community Engagement and Connections

Having lived in Orange for the past 50 years has helped me build strong connections with my Elders and the local community, including our AECG. As an Aboriginal person with ties to Wiradjuri Country, this connection has guided me in creating cultural programs that connect students to

Country and foster trust within the community. Listening to the community's voice and providing opportunities for them to share their cultural knowledge with students is a valuable resource that enriches our school.

Community Yarn-ups have grown stronger each year, with our community gaining confidence to share their voices and challenge assumptions respectfully in a safe circle. The Yarn-ups are increasing in numbers, thanks to authentic leadership, clear circle expectations and consistent processes, all focused on achieving positive outcomes for our students.





In 2012, the Stronger Smarter Institute joined Glenroi Heights Public School for our NAIDOC celebrations and opening of our yarning circle. View the video at [Glenroi Heights Public School's NAIDOC celebrations](#)

NAIDOC Week each year gets stronger and stronger with increased community engagement. At our annual NAIDOC Fete, community set up stores to raise money for our school, so Cultural activities can be implemented throughout the whole year.

Community expertise is deeply valued and appreciated, as a rich Cultural resource within the school. Greeting families of a morning and afternoon at the gate has been an effective way to build emotional bank accounts with community. Having a yarn and building a strong relationship

builds trust and safety to come into the school. We have had many community members over the years come into the school, and share art lessons, dance, singing, cooking (Johnny Cakes), inspirational talks and Indigenous Games.

Authentic Connections with Local Community of Schools

Implementation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives within our NSW DoE K-6 PDHPE Teaching units. This includes building teacher capacity to connect students to their culture and



community, leading to improved student learning and attendance and enhanced connections to the local community. This focus was established by collating contextualised knowledge from various sources including my experiences on Country, building relational trust with teachers, utilising my instructional leadership capabilities and networking with local schools and communities. This led to re-invigorating cultural connections and strong cultural identity for students K-6.

Over time I have worked with my local community of schools to support them in promoting whole school practices to support the cognitive, emotional, social, physical, and spiritual wellbeing of our Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander students. These programs and practices included sharing my Yindymarra, Connections and Dance Program. Each of these programs is directly related to the NSW DoE K-6 PDHPE Curriculum outcomes. This also included organising authentic Cultural celebrations and enhancing community engagement through Yarn-ups. This support further involved building teacher capacity by modelling setting yarning circles, Acknowledging Country and leading targeted Professional Learning for teachers.

A gift to pass on

Growing up in the Glenroi community and attending GHPS from Kindergarten to Year 6 has been a unique experience that allows me, as an Aboriginal teacher, to share my culture authentically with all my students. I see this as a special gift I can pass on. The Stronger Smarter Learning Program, Yindymarra Program, and Dance Program all promote inclusion, this is the *Glenroi Way*. Teachers across the school often notice the sparkles in students' eyes after Stronger Smarter lessons, when they proudly showcase their artwork, attend Yindymarra with ice cream on their faces, or perform with pride on stage for our community.

It is the 21st century and it is our job as educators to support the overall development of our students by building strength-based relationships, creating culturally safe learning environments, and respecting and appreciating their unique identities.

My journey from the Stronger Smarter Leadership Program, completing the Stronger Smarter Specialist Program and the Stronger Smarter Masterclass, has inspired and allowed me to proudly deliver



the Stronger Smarter approach to students, families, and the broader community.

Ensuring high-expectation relationships are built on trust, as educators we engage in

strength-based conversations, and our students succeed. But perhaps most importantly, all our students feel a sense of belonging in their classrooms and schools.