



Stronger Smarter Institute

National leadership in education, relationships and policy

About the Stronger Smarter Institute

For more than two decades, the Stronger Smarter Institute (SSI) has been a national leader in transforming educational outcomes for First Nations children by elevating expectations, celebrating and nurturing identity, and strengthening relationships across Australian schools. The Institute has led the way in educational reform that honours culture, promotes excellence, and inspires hope.

History

The Institute's origins trace back to the groundbreaking leadership of Dr Chris Sarra during his tenure as Principal of Cherbourg State School. His work showed that when schools genuinely embrace Indigenous leadership, foster respectful relationships and value the cultural identities of their students, improved academic success naturally follows.

This philosophy of high expectations and strong cultural identity became the foundation for the Stronger Smarter Approach. In 2005, the Stronger Smarter Institute was established to share these insights more widely, providing a platform for systemic, lasting change in schools and a strengthened voice for First Nations perspectives in education.

Programs and Services

The Institute delivers a suite of programs that build high-expectations leadership and relational capability. The flagship Stronger Smarter Leadership Program (SSLP) is a transformative professional learning experience supporting educators to cultivate culturally informed classrooms and lead with authenticity.

Complementary programs, research initiatives, consultancy services and digital learning opportunities extend the Institute's reach to schools and organisations working in complex social and cultural contexts. All the Institute's work is grounded in collaboration with communities and First Nations leaders.

Future direction

The Stronger Smarter Institute is entering its next phase of national leadership. Building on more than two decades of evidence-based impact, the Institute is expanding more deliberately into the policy space — bringing a proven, relationship-led approach to the centre of Australia's most consequential decisions.

The **Stronger Smarter Together Summit** marks this shift. It will serve as the platform where the Institute positions itself as a trusted touchstone between government and Aboriginal Australia, translating lived experience, leadership practice and community knowledge into credible national policy conversations.

This work is grounded in the principles articulated by Dr Chris Sarra in his Senate address: acknowledging the humanity of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples; advancing policy approaches that build hope rather than despair; and doing things *with* Aboriginal communities, not *to* them.

Through this next chapter, the Institute will continue to shape leadership, inform policy and strengthen the relationships Australia needs to move forward with integrity.