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“Connecting Cultures”

Thamarrurr Education Workshops

*OLSH Thamarrurr
Catholic School, Wadeye*

Interim Report – Workshop 1

8-9-September 2005



Back Row - L-R:- Gerry McCormack, Jo Filsell, Leon White, Joan Lancaster, Justin Crawley, Patrick Freeman;

3rd Row – L-R:- Sr. Emmanuel, Sue Paulka, Sr. Elizabeth Little, Francella Bunduck, Miriam Bunduck, Brian Graham, Jan Pilcher-Juniper (Co-Principal), Tobias Nganbe (Co-Principal), Roger Sparvell, Gerrard Doyle, Ferdi Klesch, Greg Moore, Rosemary Hogan, Alan Karlake;

2nd Row (seated) – L-R:- Rosaria Tipiloura, Sr. Teresa Ward, Xaverine Bunduck, Dominica Lantjin, Bev Quinn, Helen McCormack, Michelle Rowe, Maree Klesch;

Front Row – L-R:- Lisa Bell, Dominic McCormack, Claude Kintharri.

(Absent: Damien Tunmuck, Thaddeus Dartinga, Kevin Bunduck, Gemma Nganbe, Ursula Kintharri, Scholastica Kintharri, Fr. John Leary, Br. Vince Roche, Peter Juniper and Emma Connellan).

“I had come to give so much,
but education means to draw out,
not impose upon”.

Fr. John Leary, Education Workshop, Wadeye, 8 September 2005

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Thamarrurr Education Workshops

1) Background Brief

In the early stages of 2005, various discussions were held between members of the Office of Indigenous Policy Co-Ordination (“OIPC”), the Department of Education, Science and Training (Cth) (“DEST”), Thamarrurr Regional Council (“TRC”) and OLSH Thamarrurr Catholic School (“the School”) with respect to the conduct of workshops which were to focus on the future of education in Wadeye.

It was intended that from the planned series of workshops would come information regarding:-

- a) the type of education desired by the people of the area;
- b) an appropriate model for the delivery of that education; and
- c) a governance model for the School which allowed for increased involvement by local people with respect to the direction of education.

A Shared Responsibility Agreement (“the SRA”) was signed with respect to Education Governance, noting that the ‘Community Priority’ was:-

“Establishment of School Board / Council to guide community planning for the future of education in the community”.

MARLUK Link-Up (“MARLUK”) was engaged to assist with the planning, organization and facilitation of the intended workshops.

On finalisation of the brief and various administrative matters, work began in June 2005.

On behalf of MARLUK, I commenced detailed discussions with Tobias Nganbe, Co-Principal of the School, regarding the workshops, the aim for each, the manner in which they were to be conducted and how the information sought could be best gained.

It was decided that the series of workshops would be utilized in the following manner, although the direction and intention of later workshops could always be changed depending on what had occurred in the previous:-

- A) Workshop 1 – looking to the past and learning from the area’s education history in order to gain an understanding of what worked well and what did not. From this, decisions could be made as to what form education in the future should take;

- B) Workshop 2 – having regard to the history of education and its message for the future, discuss with the School Leadership Team (being those charged with looking after education in the area):-
- a. an appropriate model for the delivery of that education; and
 - b. a governance model for the School which allows for increased involvement by local people in the direction of education.

(It is fully expected that these discussions will take more than one sitting).

- C) Workshop 3 – take the message from Workshops 1 & 2 to the TRC for consideration and discussion by all members. From this a decision would be made regarding:-
- a. a model for the delivery of education; and
 - b. a governance model for the School;
- D) Finally, a presentation of the results would be given to the most appropriate senior Government bureaucrats concerned with Education.

It is intended that the above be completed prior to the end of 2005.

What follows in this Interim Report (“the Report”) is a summary of the organization required for, the methodology utilized within and the materials received from, Workshop 1 (“the Workshop”). The comments, suggestions and assumptions made regarding the materials are my own, based on a review of those materials only.

2) Organization of Workshop 1, 8-9 September 2005

Work commenced during June 2005 with respect to the assembling of appropriate persons for this initial Workshop. Given that its purpose was to examine the history of education, a range of people, both from *within* and *outside of* the area, who had previously taught or otherwise been involved with education at Wadeye / Port Keats were contacted and invited to attend.

In total, 35 outside-based persons were contacted, with 17 finally attending. These included two (2) former Principals with some twenty-seven (27) years of experience between them, a community Priest, many teachers and Literature Production Centre staff. These people attended from a variety of locations, including: Darwin, Nhulunbuy, Sydney, Forbes, Melbourne, Killarney, Warrnambool and Perth. We are very grateful to them for their time, which they gave willingly, and also to their various employers who kindly released them due to the significance of the purpose for which they attended.

During the workshop proper, a total of 39 persons attended and took part in the discussions. These persons were grouped into differing eras, depending on the time they were in fact at Wadeye.

The initial figure for potential attendees was in fact 73, however the week of the workshop saw the commencement of Men's Ceremony. This had a clear impact, particularly with respect to the older men and women of the area, with those not immediately engaged in work required to participate and assist in ceremony. Tobias Nganbe liaised with the senior men responsible for the ceremony to ensure that conduct of the workshop was permissible, and also to confirm who was able to participate.

The most significant impact was that the numbers for the first group noted below, ERA 1, were cut significantly. Initially, the first group was to be from 1945 – 1967, but after commencement of ceremony this group would have been left with only two non-local persons – Fr. John Leary and Sr. Emmanuel. It was decided to join the initial ERAs 1 and 2 to form a group which spanned a longer term, as seen below.

A secondary impact was that fewer local people overall attended. Those who did were either part of the School Leadership Team, current staff or had had significant involvement in the past. Interpreting services were, therefore, not needed in the manner in which it had first been envisaged.

The participants, their eras and occupations were/are as follows:-

ERA 1 – 1945-1990:-

Name	Past / Current Position at the School
Damien Tunmuck	Literature Production Centre (C)
Thaddeus Dartinga	Literature Production Centre (C)
Ursula Kintharri	Teacher and School Leadership Team (C)
Scholastica Kintharri	Teacher and School Leadership Team (C)
Miriam Nemarluk	Teacher and School Leadership Team (C)
Fr. Leary	Community Priest (P)
Sr. Emmanuel	Teacher (P) and Volunteer Tutor (C)
Leon White	Teacher (P)
Br. Vince Roche	Teacher (P)
Sue Paulka	Teacher (P)
Bev Quinn	Teacher (P)
Alan Karlake	Literature Production Centre (P)
Lisa Bell	Teacher (P)
Gerry McCormack	Teacher and Principal (P)
Helen McCormack	Teacher and Office Assistant (P)
Rosemary Hogan	Teacher (P)
Sr. Teresa Ward	Literature Production Centre (P)
Ferdi Klesch	Teacher (P)

ERA 2 – 1991-1998:-

Name	Past / Current Position at the School
Rosaria Kungul	Teacher and School Leadership Team (C)
Dominica Lantjin	Teacher and School Leadership Team (C)
Kevin Bunduck	Assistant Teacher (C)
Sr. Elizabeth Little	Principal (P)
Roger Sparvell	Teacher (P)
Gerrard Doyle	Teacher (P)
Brian Graham	Teacher (P)

ERA 3 – 1999-2005:-

Name	Past / Current Position at the School
Tobias Nganbe	Teacher, School Leadership Team and Co-Principal (C)
Jan Pilcher-Juniper	School Leadership Team and Co-Principal (C)
Gemma Nganbe	Teacher and School Leadership Team (C)
Francella Bunduck	Teacher and School Leadership Team (C)
Xaverine Bunduck	Teacher and School Leadership Team (C)
Maree Klesch	Literature Production Centre (P)
Justin Crawley	Physical Education Co-Ordinator (P)
Michelle Rowe	Literature Production Centre (C)
Jo Filsell	Teacher (C)
Joan Lancaster	Teacher (C)
Greg Moore	Teacher (C)
Peter Juniper	Teacher (P) and Religious Education Co-Ordinator (P)
Patrick Freeman	Teacher (C)
Emma Connellan	Teacher (C)

3) Discussion Points – Presentation of Summaries

Having gathered together at the School on Day 1, 8 September 2005, participants divided into their allocated groups and moved to separate rooms to begin their discussions in accordance with the agreed Agenda (See **Annexures A & B**, pp. 31 & 33).

Each person had, when invited, been advised of the purpose for the gathering and the issues which they were required to contribute toward (See **Annexure C**, p. 37). Now, simple, but broad, propositions were put to each group to consider with respect to their particular time at Wadeye:-

With respect to Education at Wadeye / Port Keats:-

- a) *What was good;*
- b) *What was bad;*
- c) *What worked well; and*
- d) *What did not work.*

These propositions were discussed over some four (4) hours on the first day.

On completion of the formalities, participants were taken to their accommodation and then, after settling in, were able to walk down to the ceremony grounds. This was extremely positive for a variety of reasons:-

- The participants from outside Wadeye were able to attend and be a part of a very important element of spiritual and ceremonial life in the region;
- Other people in the community who were not involved in the workshop were able to reacquaint themselves with familiar faces from the past e.g. former teachers, work mates, etc;
- Knowledgeable friends from both cultures were able to discuss issues which had either been raised in the workshop or now confronted the recently returned in a more relaxed and social setting, allowing in-depth consideration and private reflection.

On returning to the School for Day 2, 9 September 2005, participants were asked to spend the initial half-hour summarising the discussions from the previous day – that is, what were the most important issues with respect to the questions posed?

For a complete record of the notes taken by each era, please see **Annexures D, E and F** (at pp. 39, 48 & 53, respectively).

The summaries from each era are presented below.

ERA 1: 1945-1990

This group was fortunate enough to have within it the experience of a number of people, including:-

- a) Sr. Emmanuel – Sister was at Port Keats from 1945 through to 1950, and has returned to spend lengthy periods of time on a number of occasions. Now in her eighties, she is presently based at the re-named Wadeye again and spends time working at the School as a volunteer tutor;
- b) Fr. John Leary – Father was at Port Keats in 1958, which was the last year of its founder, Fr. Richard Docherty. He also had the privilege of being with Dr. Stanner who returned to the Mission to complete earlier work. He recalls a time when the people of the area were much involved in the running of the place and there was a mere handful of non-local staff;
- c) Sr. Teresa Ward – the role engaged in by Sr. Ward was that of Teacher/Linguist. She learned how to speak Murrinh-patha, taught in both languages (i.e. English and Murrinh-patha) and was a driving force behind the progress of bi-lingual education. She also contributed by collating and publishing various materials with respect to the culture and land of the people; and
- d) Ursula Kintharri – having lived here all of her life, Ursula has grown up with the dormitory system, been educated at Port Keats/Wadeye, attended further education through Batchelor Institute of Indigenous Tertiary Education (“BIITE”) and successfully taught at the School. She is part of the School Leadership Team.

Their major discussion yielded the following:-

The Bad:-

Sheet A –

- Break-ins – late 1990’s, cages on the buildings – terrible;
- Frustrations – time spent with teacher assistant feeling that teacher assistant had understood, but perhaps in interpretation the message was perceived differently, and perhaps the teacher assistant didn’t feel confident in saying, “You are on the wrong track”;
- Planned, then the teacher assistant was not at school for a day, week etc. Made it hard to operate on your own;
- Assistants essential to education, but perhaps we did not acknowledge and articulate that to them;

- No skills audit – local people are bypassed, especially with change of non-Aboriginal staff;
- No succession planning or orientation;
- Bilingual accreditation – funding fell off;

Sheet B –

- Bilingual program – emphasis on local language when it was time to learn English. The children were not interested (per **Sister Emmanuel**), therefore didn't believe it worked the way it was intended. As a result the children, in contrast with Daly River and Palumpa children, are not able to converse to the same extent in English;
- Outside Port Keats you also need to be able to communicate;
- Being a teacher assistant and doing busy work for a time was very frustrating;
- Attendance – needs to be better;
- Continuing to operate in a structure that is imposed;
- Getting a balance between what do the local people want from a Western education system, and what they want to discard;
- What is the future? Growing population at Port Keats;
- Local people need to perhaps be more proactive in an economic sense: “Get with it” (per **Father Leary**);
- Curriculum imbalance – no-one doing the same thing – following it through – a coordinator.

The Good:-

Sheet 1 –

- Remote Areas Teacher Education (“RATE”) program – teacher assistants actually wanted to talk and plan at the weekends – self esteem really lifted in the girls;
- Club – a social event / place for men and women to meet and discuss;
- Social events need to occur;
- Opportunity for integrating out of work;
- Continuity is vital – handover, orientation;
- Team approach, contingencies in place to be prepared for a crisis;
- School community often held events that were the centre of the overall community – e.g. swimming, sports;
- Professional development – key to education process, the interaction and dialogue, key to knowledge and power.

Sheet 2 –

- Bilingual Program – because literate in first language, then move to second;
- Batchelor helped a lot, **Br. Vince, Ursula**, others in program; really beneficial;
- Becoming classroom teachers – Stage 1, 2, 3 and 4 not much communication with other white staff, Batchelor training gave us the skills to teach our own kids and gave us lots of confidence;
- **Tobias** – formed leadership group – get on well with white staff – they work as a team, share ideas, plan;
- It is important for local people to make their own decisions now. Each has own classroom, much more confident. Great to see a lot of us working in the classroom and PROUD OF IT!!
- Having a teaching qualification is very important – use of different teaching aids;
- Teaching languages in classroom, but also other subjects. They teach culture using people in the camps;
- Kids go looking for bush tucker etc;
- English as a foreign language is the focus. However, a local belief expressed is that, “We don’t all need English, if some learn, that’s OK”;

Sheet 3 –

- But, need to because we must be literate in the language we speak;
- What do you want?
- How do you get it?
- Importance of having a voice;
- Relationships are vital (not friendships);
- Lyn and Chester Street’s work (Note:- This work consisted of the production of a Murrinh-patha/English, English/Murrinh patha dictionary, among other projects).

ERA 2: 1991-1998

As with ERA 1, this group also possessed persons of great experience at the School. In particular were:-

- a) Sr. Elizabeth Little – Came to Wadeye, Port Keats, in January 1984 until December 1986. During that time she was studying by correspondence so only did relief teaching in the School. In 1987 she was the first principal of Sacred Heart School when it was at Berrimah. Sister then returned to Wadeye as Principal in 1988 until December 2000;
- b) Rosaria Tipiloura – has grown up at Wadeye, attended the School, spent time in other communities, trained through BIITE and has been a teacher at the School for over a decade; and
- c) Dominica Lantjin – as with Rosaria, Dominica grew up at Wadeye and attended the School. She was successful in gaining her teacher qualifications through BIITE, and has also been an active teacher at the School for more than a decade.

Their summary notes the following points:-

The Bad:-

- School attendance;
- Break-ins/vandalism;
- Bad nights after the Club closed – children’s attitude at the school reflected community problems;
- Poor literacy levels, especially the older boys;
- Some families were better than others at encouraging attendance;
- It was a status symbol to have been in Berrimah;
- Lack of respect for elders from the younger ones;
- Pressure from white families (regarding school policies).

What did not work:-

1. Getting students to come to school – maintaining enrollment;
2. Turning around lack of respect for property;
3. Changing school community and valuing of a formal type of education (culture of education had to start with parents attitude);

The Good:-

Sheet 1 –

- Parents reading with the students;
- Parents involvement in Pre-School classes;
- Parents in health and AA programs, and sex education;
- Walking – talking texts:-
 - o Good structure;
 - o Good for literacy development
- School a welcoming community;
- School vision: policy developed and articulated through staff sharing and community consultation;
- Loyal and supportive staff;
- Aboriginal staff the backbone of the structure;
- Stable new staff;
- Flexibility according to community needs;

Sheet 2 –

- Computer program for the students;
- Manual arts was good, especially with Andrew and Ron;
- Secondary correspondence course;
- Visiting science demonstration;
- Cooking program;
- Army cadets;
- Literacy production of materials, Murrinh-patha, health;
- Computer catalogue for library;
- Visiting sports coaches;
- ‘Skool’ sports program;
- Various sports programs;
- Interstate trips;

Sheet 3 –

- Work experience in Darwin;
- Nose/ear health;
- Christmas shows;
- Christmas parties;
- Morning tea programs;
- Community morning tea;
- Culture program weekly;
- Blending of both cultures through religious education program – first communion, reconciliation and confirmation – and involving parents in these;
- School mass;
- St John's College enrollment;

Sheet 4 –

- Mentoring programs;
- Bilingual program;
- Empowerment of Aboriginal teachers through development of teaching skills;
- Floodwalk:-
 - o Showcase;
 - o Share ideas;
 - o Pride in work;
- Aboriginal staff did religious education course at Notre Dame University;
- School assemblies – awards and affirmations;
- Literacy / numeracy testing;
- Learning and planning together in core groups;
- Time of growth in confidence, assumption of responsibility for classes, school and own self-development;

Sheet 5 –

- Attractive grounds;
- Beginning of formation of leadership teams;
- Pride of ownership;
- Celebration of achievements in the wider community;
- Sports days:-
 - o Here (at Wadeye);
 - o Daly Region;
 - o Palmerston;
- Athletics, football, netball, gymnastics, softball and soccer;
- Footballers in development squad;
- Open day and fete;
- Movie night;
- Adventure playground;

Sheet 6 –

- Displays in the store;
- Staff development opportunities;
- Ice-cups;
- Teacher-librarian;
- Personal first aid;
- Meetings in camps.

Current wider issues:-

- Young people not respecting elders;
- Young boys following example set by older people;
- Not enough chairs/space;
- Need for meetings to talk about attendance;
- Men see school is women's business up to Year 6/7;
- Uncles tell them what to do after Year 6/7;
- Identification of specific school needs;
- Skills audit of community/local people;
- Succession Planning;

ERA 3: 1999-2005

ERA 3, being the most recent of the groups, was formed particularly by the Co-Principals of the School, current members of the Leadership Team and current/former teachers and other employees.

ERA 3 highlighted the following:-

The Bad / Didn't Work Well & Could Do Better:-

(Note: Due to time restrictions, the group was unable to summarise their materials with respect to this heading. The notes below are my summary of their actual notes, which are found at **Annexure F**, p. 53).

Sheet 1 –

- Problems in community → impact on students;
- Gangs, lack of activities / recreation for young people;
- Lack of vision – school → job → life/goals/achievements;
- Lack of jobs in community → something real to aim for;

- Vandalism & graffiti, neglect of buildings (funding etc.);
- Lack of care and maintenance of resources e.g. vehicles, audio visual etc;
- Loss of resources;
- Lack of vehicles;

Sheet 2 –

- Attendance and parental support;
- Fighting between students → parent interference;
- Better communication between parents and school;
- “Babies having babies” → not developing school-going culture;
- Need for improved women’s & men’s health education;
- Confusion → “doesn’t make sense”, so why come to school?
- Very few positive role models for kids → don’t see importance of school;
- Need for clear markers of achievements for students;
- Behaviour management → clear consequence etc;

Sheet 3 –

- CEO and DEET too slow!
- Clearer definition of CEO roles → who do you go to for what help?
- “Buck passing” between bureaucrats – don’t promise what you ain’t got!

Sheet 4 –

- Going away for training/workshops especially for local teachers;
- “Carrying on” cross-cultural learning → began well, then dies out/fell away;
- More awareness/understanding of bilingual program;
- Learning how to teach together → stronger pairing / partnerships;
- Stronger links/partnerships across the years/classes;
- More whole staff activities → good for morale;
- More encouragement and recognition for all staff from all quarters;
- Leadership → family obligations make it difficult;
- No pastoral support for staff → no specific person in CEO;
- Exhaustion/burnout → especially for local teachers. No/little chance for a good break/rest;
- High turnover of non-Indigenous staff → due to lots of different reasons;
- No teacher assistants in all classes;
- Inaccessibility to relief teachers;
- Need more teacher / general staff training – e.g. pool, office;
- Understaffing, lack of space / resources at beginning of each year and at times across the year;
- Teacher housing;

Sheet 5 –

- Literacy and numeracy levels;
- VET programs – lack of support and funding;
- School and language centre → improve links and share community resources;
- Timetabling → huge demands fitting everything in (bilingual, religious education, culture);
- Other homeland schools, not just Kuy, plus more resources for them;

The Good:-

Sheet 1 –

- Re-emergence of Thamarrurr has meant closer links with community;
- School structure:-
 - o Indigenous leadership;
 - o Area co-ordinator;
 - o Business manager;
 - o Co-principals;

- School programs:-
 - o Culture;
 - o Secondary;
 - o Stage 1 & 2;
 - o Homelands school (e.g. Kuy);
 - o VET;
 - o Bilingual;
 - o Arts, sport (especially pool), multimedia, religious education;

- IT:-
 - o Resources – computers, cameras, video etc;
 - o Skill, ;
 - o Student interest;

- COAG:-
 - o DEET and CEO working together, plus others.

Sheet 2 –

- Working together:-
 - o Planning, learning together;
 - o With others from community e.g. elders, other groups;
 - o Local and non-indigenous staff;

- Regular attendees – core committed group;

- Confidence of local staff:-
 - o Leadership;
 - o Teaching and assistant staff;
 - o Role models (commitment, hard working etc)

- Working conditions:-
 - o Crèche;
 - o IT;
 - o Resources/buildings/facilities.

4) Moving Forward

Following presentation of the various summaries, discussion was then to be held as to “The Future” – what should it look like, and what does it need?

However, prior to this discussion taking place, participants who had not been at Wadeye for some time requested they be given a summary by Tobias Nganbe and I as to the current situation.

It is important to highlight that for those who had returned, many after quite some years away, Wadeye was now a very different place to be – so much so that some couldn’t find their way around! Noticeable changes commented upon by participants included:-

- The increase in size of the township;
- Wire mesh around the School;
- The poor state of the School surrounds;
- The higher number of non-local staff at the School;
- A great number of non-local employees now working in jobs throughout the township which had previously been held by local employees;
- Creation of a whole non-local ‘suburb’;
- The high fences around all non-local houses within their particular ‘suburb’; and
- Number of large dogs owned by non-locals.

Given some of the changes and lack of knowledge with respect to current affairs, it was thought to be a most sensible request that the participants be given an update as to what was happening throughout the region. With that knowledge, real discussion could be entered into as to how to progress education into the future.

Together, Tobias and I gave a summary with respect to the following matters:-

- a) The collapse of Kardu Numida Incorporated;
- b) The re-emergence of Thamarrurr, and how it is providing a clear path;
- c) OLSH Thamarrurr Catholic School and the new structure, particularly the Co-Principalship and the Leadership Group;
- d) Plans for a dedicated secondary school;
- e) The COAG Process;
- f) The John Taylor Report and the Opportunity Costs Study;
- g) People want to go back to their land – look after country; control family; conduct business;
- h) Enterprise Development;
- i) The Prime Minister’s visit; and
- j) Cross-cultural course.

One of the comments made following this presentation was:-

“You ask where the future goes [but] we often forget that the basis of our understanding of what education is, is from our [non-Aboriginal] perspective. The only way this community is ever going to take a hold of education is by doing exactly what you are doing.

What you just said [during the summary presentation] made me almost feel like I was surplus baggage on this trip because I look at the past and ... you’ve already taken a hold of the future. The very things that you are doing would be the very things that I say are just so essential; you are doing them so well. All the questions that were raised in my mind last night about the area down the back here where all the whitefellas were, how it all inter-links, where the interaction points are, you answered very succinctly.

[I]n the end, the more Aboriginal people who are trained to educate other Aboriginal people, they will answer all future education needs.

[I]t will necessarily be that they do go out to outstations. History shows that that has happened everywhere else. I can’t see why Port Keats is going to be vastly different in terms of Aboriginal aspirations. They are going to want to go to their homelands, therefore the more Aboriginal people that you get trained who are training themselves ... I think the answer ... you have almost done it ... I really do commend you ... I think that what you are doing is excellent ...”.

Alan Karlake, 9 September 2005

Clearly, at least some saw that the steps which have been taken and are continuing to be taken in the region are very positive, with specific themes being referred to such as:-

- Education must be from the local (Aboriginal) perspective to be successful;
- Aboriginal people being trained to educate other Aboriginal people will answer future education needs;
- The traditional way of life is an essentially important base;
- Cross-cultural training is a part of inter-cultural education; and
- Enterprise development is essential to viability.

Discussion then centred on the requirements for “The Future”, the actual summary for which is found at **Annexure G** (see p. 60).

The most important themes I have identified from this 'Future Summary' are:-

- Direct/guide action through ACTIVE LEADERSHIP;
- Develop a STRATEGIC PLAN – identify priority areas and begin work on them;
- Produce a clear VISION of the School, a learning and teaching statement, owned by all people. This should be written in the languages of the region;
- Both local and non-local people must provide to, and seek to receive from each other, TRUE & DIRECT INFORMATION. This will lead to INDEPENDENCE and CONTROL;
- Student's education must be a PRIORITY in the region – they are bright and want to learn, but need SUPPORT and ADEQUATE RESOURCES to do so;
- Direct energy at outcomes – SCHOOL to WORK;
- Employ the BEST PEOPLE – learners, not those who come with 'the answer';
- Build local and non-local TEAMS – great relationships work;
- Learn and support TWO-WAYS;
- Stress the importance of LANGUAGE;
- Allocate TIME for PLANNING and other important matters;
- Ensure local teachers are EMPOWERED;
- All teachers need ONGOING TRAINING and SUPPORT;
- Plan for SUCCESSION;
- Identify the CORRECT STARTING POINT when teaching;
- Encourage MEN to have a positive role with BOYS / YOUNG MEN;
- Play a role in ADULT EDUCATION to build understanding of the wider world;
- Assist mothers and fathers to gain and improve PARENTING SKILLS;
- Recognise weaknesses, but acknowledge STRENGTHS;
- Celebrate ACHIEVEMENT.

5) Observations on Common Themes

Across the sixty (60) year period of 1945 through to 2005 as represented by the participants at this Workshop, there have been a number of key themes and other important aspects arise through the discussion.

As I did above, I outline these below utilising as headings the base propositions via which the discussions were initially commenced:-

A) What was Bad / DID NOT Work Well

- i) Attendance – gaining and then maintaining enrolment through consistent attendance is a major issue and one which persists today. All acknowledged that it needs to be better. In order to achieve this however, a culture of education has to be a part of the parent’s and family’s attitude, with positive role models being available for the students. It is also recognised that the student’s attitude at School reflected wider community problems;
- ii) Break-ins, vandalism and graffiti etc – these caused a great deal of damage to the School. They seemed to reflect a lack of positive activities for young people, in particular the young boys / men. Again, there is a need for positive role models (particularly male), but also behaviour management guidelines with clear consequences for breaching them. Young people are seen not to respect their elders, however young boys are following the example set by older people. Such behaviour has led to cages on the buildings which is considered a terrible step;
- iii) Treatment of Assistant Teachers / Local Staff – concerns were voiced that at times such persons had been treated poorly and provided with “busy work”, rather than real tasks within the classroom. It was thought that perhaps the non-local teachers / staff did not acknowledge and articulate the importance of the Assistant Teachers directly to them;
- iv) Interaction & Encouragement – more whole staff activities were required as these are very good for morale. This includes activities between School staff only and also with the wider community. There must be more encouragement and recognition of the efforts of all staff from all quarters, and recognition of the need to provide pastoral care support for staff;
- v) Skills audit – it seems no record is kept of the training undertaken, skills and qualifications gained of people in the region. As a result, local people are bypassed upon changes occurring within the ranks of non-local staff i.e. the “corporate knowledge” is not retained for the benefit of new non-local staff at the community;

- vi) Training & Staff Development – all staff i.e. teachers, pool, office etc, require ongoing training on a regular basis;
- vii) Succession planning – continuity is vital, yet this does not occur in an organized manner with respect to either local or non-local personnel;
- viii) No or inadequate cross-cultural training and orientation – this has either not occurred in the past or not carried on, making initial interaction with people in the region difficult;
- ix) Bilingual program / literacy & numeracy – inadequate resources had been provided, however the focus on the English aspect was also seen to be lacking. As a result, the students here, in contrast with Daly River and Palumpa, are not able to converse in English to the same extent. With respect to literacy and numeracy, levels were generally poor. A specific note was made that a local belief is expressed that, “We don’t all need English; if some learn, that is OK”. It was also considered that there was still the need to have more awareness and understanding of the bilingual program among new staff of the School;
- x) Lack of employment – while this had not been an issue some decades ago, it is seen as a major difference in the way that the community functions now in comparison to the way it used to. Further, it coincides with a lack of vision by many – i.e. no sense of a school to work transition, no goals and no reason to achieve;
- xi) Adult Education – there is a need for improved men’s and women’s health education. “Babies are having babies”, therefore people are not developing a school-going culture.

B) What was Good / DID Work Well

- i) Attendance – Over the years, there has always been a core group of attendees. They are able to be identified, as are their families. They clearly have the support and encouragement of family, who understand the value of and have a culture of education;
- ii) Consideration of Assistant Teachers / Local Staff – relationships with the local staff members, who were very loyal and supportive, was / is vital. They are the backbone of the School structure and it would not function without them – they are essential to education. They are part of a welcoming School community that is growing in confidence, particularly with the establishment of the Leadership Group, and provided good role models (Note: However, with the exception of one, all are female);
- iii) Cross-cultural training and orientation – while this has been an area in which the community has struggled in the past, the introduction of the new Cross-cultural Awareness Course has been very positive;
- iv) Bilingual program / literacy & numeracy – seen as a positive because once literate in one's first language, then can move to the second. Need to do this because it is important to have a voice;
- v) Interaction & Encouragement – one of the positive aspects of the Social Club had been that it provided a social event. It was a place for men and women from across the community to meet and discuss matters. These social events need to keep occurring as they are an opportunity for integrating out of work;
- vi) Training & Staff Development – The RATE program was an excellent source of training and lifted confidence and self-esteem. Gaining qualifications through professional development was very important and was seen as a key to the education process as it meant knowledge and power, interaction and dialogue. A team approach and/or learning and planning together in core groups was best, with sharing ideas between staff (e.g. Floodwalk) an essential. The Leadership Team is a very positive development at the School;
- vii) Sport and School Events – these were often considered as the centre of the overall community and included various sports programs, open days, concerts, pageants etc. Outside coaches have come to assist, while there has also been the 'Skool' Sports Program. Interstate trips have provided an incentive to come to school;
- viii) Adult Education – parents have participated in health, Alcohol Awareness and sex education programs.

6) Suggested Priorities for a Strategic Plan

From the common themes which have been identified, I suggest below a list of priorities which may be considered when drafting a Strategic Plan for Education in the Region:-

- VISION – **review and build upon** the current vision for the School, taking into account (on a regional level):-
 - its role; and
 - the various clan groups and languages;
- ATTENDANCE – with reference to the experience of the 2005 School year in particular, **plan for increasing and retaining** student attendances at the School. Adequate support must also be provided by relevant Government and non-Government agencies, with parental/family attitude to education a key to success;
- LOCAL and NON LOCAL TEACHING STAFF – ensure that there is **acknowledgement** / continued acknowledgement of the backbone of the School structure – its loyal and supportive local staff. (Note: Areas which may need to be considered here include housing, remuneration and other benefits).

Adequately train, resource and support all staff, particularly with regard to the culturally different and challenging environment within which they work. Such training, resources and support measures should include:-

- Cross-cultural training and orientation;
 - Appropriate on-going professional development;
 - Updating and recording of skills, particularly with respect to all local staff;
 - Organised social interaction and encouragement;
 - Pastoral care;
 - Succession planning;
- MALE ROLE MODELS – address the need for and **encourage employment or participation** of males within the School, particularly with respect to young boys / men after Year 6 / 7;
 - BILINGUAL PROGRAM / LITERACY & NUMERACY – **continue positively** with this program, acknowledging that **English must receive adequate focus**. Ensure that all staff are encouraged to be more aware and understanding of the program and the way it works;

- SPORT and SCHOOL EVENTS – if not already in existence, consider a School ‘Calendar of Events’ which has a definite (although flexible!) list of activities which are to occur on an annual basis and will involve the whole community. By way of suggestion only, the list may include:-
 - Open Day(s);
 - Swimming carnival – Junior and Senior School (if appropriate);
 - Athletics carnival – Junior and Senior School (if appropriate);
 - Various sporting events;
 - Concert(s); and
 - Interstate trips for Senior School students only.

- ADULT EDUCATION – as appropriate, participate in the School and wider community in an effort to improve men’s and women’s health and sex education.

7) Conclusion

The Workshop provided a wonderful opportunity for local and non-local people formerly and currently associated with the School to come together with a focus on the history of education at Wadeye, Port Keats, and its surrounds. Due to Men's Ceremony, the participation hoped for from senior local members was not possible. However, once gathered together, the Workshop had attracted 17 outside attendees and 22 local and non-local teaching and School staff.

In session, they were asked to consider simple but important propositions:-

- a) *What was good;*
- b) *What was bad;*
- c) *What worked well; and*
- d) *What did not work.*

In considering these propositions, the following factor cannot be understated:-

The attendees represented sixty (60) years of education from 1945 through to the present day. A small part of their immense knowledge and experience gained throughout this time, a time of great discovery and new challenges, has been captured. This sends strong messages that are not to be ignored.

These messages centre on key common themes found throughout the eras:-

- Attendance;
- Treatment of staff;
- Training and development of staff;
- Cross-cultural training and orientation for new staff;
- Interaction between and encouragement of staff;
- The importance of the bilingual program, literacy and numeracy; and
- Involvement in adult education, particularly in health matters, in the wider area.

A Strategic Plan generated from the key common themes may wish to consider the following priorities:-

- Review and build upon the current vision;
- Plan for increasing and retaining student attendances at the School, with adequate support and parental/family attitude to education keys to success;
- Adequately train, resource, support and acknowledge all staff, particularly with regard to the culturally challenging environment within which they work;
- Address the need for and encourage employment or participation of males;

- Continue positively with the bilingual program & literacy and numeracy, acknowledging that English must receive adequate focus;
- Provide regular School and sporting events which occur annually and involve the whole community; and
- Be involved in the improvement of men's and women's health and sex education.

By looking to the past and learning from the area's education history, the opportunity has been given to gain an understanding of what was good, what was bad; what worked well and what did not. From this, if attention is paid to the common themes and key elements of each era, it is possible to identify priorities that will form the basis upon which education may be directed into the future.

That opportunity must be taken.

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