

# ***ANNEXURES***

**A) Two (2) day Workshop Agenda**

<b>DAY/TIME</b>	<b>CONTENT</b>
<b>DAY ONE</b>	Thursday, 8 September 2005
<b>9:00-10:00</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Murin plane arrives, bring people over to the School Library;</li></ul>
<b>10:00-10:30</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Opening;</li><li>• Morning Tea for everyone;</li></ul>
<b>10:30-12noon</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Break into different Eras:-<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>○ 1945 – 1990 (Library (1));</li><li>○ 1991 – 1998 (Classroom (2));</li><li>○ 1999 – NOW (New Classroom – ex-Breezeway (3)).</li></ul></li><li>• Talk about key questions – THE PAST – have someone in each group to take notes, also paper/pens/markers to draw pictures etc.</li></ul>
<b>12noon</b>	<b>LUNCH BREAK</b>
<b>1:00-3:00</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Talk about THE PAST continued;</li><li>• Return to accommodation/ceremony area;</li><li>• Stay inside after 6pm.</li></ul>

<b>DAY/TIME</b>	<b>CONTENT</b>
<b>DAY TWO</b>	Friday, 9 September 2005
<b>9:00-9:30</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• SUMMARISE discussions in own groups – main points from good &amp; bad;</li> </ul>
<b>9:30-10:30</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• BRING OWN CHAIR TO Breezeway Room;</li> <li>• Present summary;</li> </ul>
<b>10:30-11:00</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Morning tea;</li> </ul>
<b>11:00-12:30</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All meet again in Breezeway Room;</li> <li>• Talk about THE FUTURE of education:- <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ What should it look like?</li> <li>○ What does it need?</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<b>12:30-1:30</b>	<b>LUNCH BREAK</b>
<b>1:30-3:00</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Talk continued;</li> <li>• Closing;</li> </ul>
<b>3:00-3:45</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tour of township;</li> </ul>
<b>3:45-4:00</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Take people over to the airport and see them off.</li> </ul>

**B) Workshop Attendees**

ERA & LOCATION	ATTENDEES
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>1945 – 1990</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>(Library (1))</b></p>	<p><u>Team Leaders:-</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ursula Kintharri;</li> <li>• Fr. Leary;</li> <li>• Sr. Emmanuel;</li> </ul> <p style="text-align: center;">Damien Tunmuck Thaddeus Dartinga Scholastica Kintharri Miriam Nemarluk</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Leon White Br. Vince Roche Sue Paulka Bev Quinn Alan Karlake Lisa Bell Gerry McCormack Helen McCormack Rosemary Hogan Sr. Teresa Ward Ferdinand Klesch</p>
<p><b>TOTAL NUMBER:</b></p>	<p style="text-align: center;">18</p>



**Figure 1 – Back Row:** L-R:- Leon White, Br. Vince Roche, Fr. John Leary, Sr. Emmanuel, Helen McCormack, Sr. Teresa Ward, Alan Karlake, Gerry McCormack and Ferdi Klesch;

**Front Row:** L-R:- Rosemary Hogan, Bev Quinn, Sue Paulka, Miriam Nemarkuk and Lisa Bell;

**(Absent:-** Damien Tunmuck, Thaddeus Dartinga, Ursula Kintharri and Scholastica Kintharri).

ERA & LOCATION	ATTENDEES
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>1991 – 1998</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>(Classroom (2) )</b></p>	<p><u>Team Leaders:-</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Rosaria Kungul;</li> <li>• Sr. Elizabeth Little;</li> </ul> <p style="text-align: center;">Dominica Lantjin Kevin Bunduck</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Roger Sparvell Gerrard Doyle Brian Graham</p>
<p><b>TOTAL NUMBER:</b></p>	<p style="text-align: center;">7</p>



**Figure 2 - L-R:-** Roger Sparvell, Rosaria Kunggul, Sr. Elizabeth Little, Dominica Lantjin, Brian Graham and Gerrard Doyle

**(Absent:-** Kevin Bunduck)

ERA & LOCATION	ATTENDEES
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>1999 – NOW</b></p> <p><b>(New Classroom – ex-Breezeway (3) )</b></p>	<p><u>Team Leaders:-</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tobias Nganbe;</li> <li>• Gemma Nganbe;</li> <li>• Jan Pilcher-Juniper;</li> </ul> <p style="text-align: center;">Francella Bunduck Xaverine Bunduck</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Maree Klesch Justin Crawley Michelle Rowe Jo Filsell Joan Lancaster Greg Moore Peter Juniper Patrick Freeman Emma Connellan</p>
<p><b>TOTAL NUMBER:</b></p>	<p style="text-align: center;">14</p>



**Figure 3 - Back Row: L-R:-** Jan Pilcher-Juniper (Co-Principal), Francella Bunduck, Jo Filsell, Justin Crawley and Patrick Freeman;  
**Front Row: L-R:-** Xaverine Bunduck, Michelle Rowe, Tobias Nganbe (Co-Principal) and Maree Klesch.  
**(Absent:** Gemma Nganbe, Joan Lancaster, Greg Moore, Peter Juniper and Emma Connellan)

### **C) Letter of Invitation, 28 June 2005**

Dear Invitee(s),

#### **RE: Education Workshop, Wadeye (Port Keats)**

In the community of Wadeye and its associated homelands, the issue of education is seen as vital to the future success of Aboriginal people throughout the Thamarrurr Region.

Currently, the operation of the OLSH Thamarrurr School (“the School”), the number of students attending it and associated funding by Governments and other agencies are major topics. Due to this focus, the Thamarrurr Regional Council and the School have decided to hold a series of workshops, with your invitation related to the first of these.

For this initial workshop, the broad aim is to explore where possible the following areas:-

#### A) The Facts:-

- What happened in the past (pre- and post-contact);
- What is happening now; and
- What is needed in the future to succeed.

#### B) Questions:-

- 1) How were the Aboriginal people of the area educated in pre-contact times?
- 2) When non-Aboriginal people came, how was education then carried out?
- 3) What worked well?
- 4) What did not work?
- 5) Why do some people here speak English well and others do not?
- 6) Why do some families keep sending their children to school and others do not?
- 7) What is happening with education in Wadeye today?
- 8) What should education look like in the future?

The initial workshop will be held at an appropriate venue in/near the community of Wadeye over a period of two (2) days (e.g. flying in on a Tuesday morning, departing on a Wednesday afternoon). The timing of it will depend on your availability and the



availability of all other invitees. It is our hope that it can be held as early as possible in Term 3 of Second Semester, 2005.

It is intended that the costs of your travel to and accommodation at the community will be met by current funding. However, the limits to this will restrict the number of persons able to be brought to the community. This will not be known until all responses have been received.

Should you be unable to attend (or funding be insufficient) but be willing to provide your thoughts, we will then discuss with you ways by which this can be achieved to benefit the participants as much as possible.

The people of the Thamarrurr Region are looking forward to discussing the many issues surrounding education and they would very much like to do it with your assistance. You are recognized as having played an important part in a particular period, so therefore your thoughts are valued and will add much to the shape of education in the future.

We look forward to a reply at your earliest convenience indicating your availability or otherwise. Should you be available, please advise a range of dates when you would be able to attend at the community for the period of two (2) days.

Please do not hesitate to contact the undersigned by way of the following:-

- telephone ((08) 8978 2050);
- e-mail ([dominic@marluk.com.au](mailto:dominic@marluk.com.au)); or
- post (see address above).

Again, we look forward to hearing from you very much.

Yours sincerely,

Dominic McCormack  
*Interpreter & Trainer*

## **D) Actual Notes from ERA 1: 1945 - 1990**

### *Sheet 1 –*

1946 – 1950: **Sister Emmanuel**

School operating, but no actual building – makeshift buildings.

Times: 9-12:30;

Subjects taught – Religion; Literacy; Numeracy; Oral English.

1:00 – Siren – everyone stopped (downed tools);

2:00 – Siren – everyone became active again;

P M Session:-

If the tide was right collected seafood;

If low tide, would go out to get thithimampe (fan palm fronds) plus dye for dilly bags;

The girls learned embroidery and machine sewing. Ursula's (Kintharri) mother was the machinist;

The girls were given flour, they made fires and cooked damper, then collected tea and golden syrup;

30 girls taught in the dormitory.

### Curriculum content:-

- Non-official syllabus;
- Some used South Australia for literacy and Victoria for numeracy;
- Oral English used in Papua New Guinea.

There were two girls who could communicate in English. Sister was very keen to learn Murrinh-patha. She relied on the two girls to interpret. Father Docherty was insistent that the girls were exposed to good models of English – he didn't want Creole. Father Flynn was also very useful in assisting to learn Murrinh-patha and very encouraging.

### *Sheet 2 –*

1950's: **Father Leary**

He recognised that the students were very skillful in:-

- i) hunting, tracking and food gathering;

ii) languages.

Felt he learned a great deal, more so than what he taught. Became convinced that the whole education process was upside down – “empty vessels” mentality.

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

In reflecting, realized what he had to learn:-

- respect for culture and not being the “dominant culture” i.e. imposing;
- acknowledging country – backs children’s faith to each other - all on Murrinh-patha land.

1968: **Gerry McCormack**

Primary Teacher.

There were two campuses – one near the cemetery, one near to the (current) CDEP/Municipal services complex. Taught a mixed class – about 14-16 students. One of the rules that applied – only one language was to be spoken while at school – English. He taught literacy, numeracy, religious education and oral English.

First task of the day was to change into uniform. Dormitories were still going at this stage, however the girls were under the thumb far more than the boys. The boys could go to the camp, but not the girls.

*Sheet 3 –*

PM – sport, games, general physical education.  
All meals were eaten in the dormitories then.

**Helen McCormack**

She taught typing and coordinated a basketball competition and different activities involving other people in the community.

Recall that Father Sims started taking classes for the learning of language. This reflected the fact that a great deal of importance was placed on learning the language.

Lots of dancing every night in different camps. Ceremonies were also conducted.

There was no money coming in at all and the kitchens provided three meals a day. At that time, no shops were in existence and there was only one vehicle available.

About 1971, first training allowance money came in - \$8.00/week.

Helen and Gerry McCormack came back in 1974. The reason they left was because married couples were not permitted to live on communities/missions at that time.

1970: **Leon White**

Specifically trained on a Commonwealth Scholarship to work in the Northern Territory (was advised not to go).

Plane used to land near the Old Church.

Was given no preparation at all, nothing in the way of orientation.

Staff consisted only of single males.

Boys dormitory – Leon was expected to run this but didn't take on the role.

In late 1970 to early 1971, the boys dormitory ceased to exist.

The school building itself was just a tin shed and had no louvres.

In the wet it was too dark to see, no lighting, no boys toilet.

The wall was used as a urinal – later a toilet was built.

Recall being young and have memories of getting to know the families.

Walked long distances during the bush holidays to places such as Yinthin Beach etc.

*Sheet 4 –*

You very quickly learnt that you didn't know very much.

The school was built – power, lights etc. There were regular working bees to plant lawn, grow Cyprus, digging out rocks etc.

Classroom – local teachers in some rooms on their own and had prime responsibility. In 1974 there was a great realization that trained local teachers were needed. Even so, in 1969 Boniface (Perdjert) went to Kormilda College for teacher training and was fluent in English.

The health workers trained through East Arm and a couple of people worked at Darwin Hospital.

Sport and recreation in the community was generally run by the teachers.

The community was self sufficient – meat, veges, chooks, bread.

Shop – served by locals.

Kids leaving school knew they had a job to go to.

Training allowance – women were paid a shilling, men 2 bob (shillings). In 1968-69 they were paid one dollar – clear that the money was recycled, that is, the same coin re-appearing!

One could hear clapsticks and didgeridoos every night, with families cooking wholesome meals.

Boat unloading – great community activity, people would boil the billy, very social.

*Sheet 5 –*

Storms, no flour or sugar – damper full of weevils (Led to the call of “see no weevils”!)

Single lay missionaries – meals provided, lived a relatively similar life to the local peoples.

**Thaddeus** (Dartinga), **Scholastica** (Kintharri), Timothy (Dumoo) etc. all went to Kormilda College. They were then later working back in the school.

**Tobias** (Nganbe) went to Monivae College. Tobias was well supported by his family, especially his father, in writing to him and encouraging him.

*Sheet 6 –*

What was good – 1950’s, 1960’s and 1970’s.

- The relationship between the local people and the non-Aboriginal people was strong – built on respect;
- Walking through the country with families to Palumpa in the holidays;
- Sister Emmanuel would take the girls to Old Mission camping. This was a great opportunity for the girls to experience bush life;

1978 - Murrinh-patha began to be used as the language program.

**Sister Teresa Ward** taught for 12 months before really commencing the language program. In the program, all different languages were represented, and children who were there every day learnt to read very quickly.

Syllables, with some left out, so could work in small groups (N.B. children from different language groups put in their own symbols).

Very significant time.

Things changed drastically.

Open days – Francella’s (Bunduck) father said: “My daughter writing a language we speak”. He was glowing, and ethically this was very important.

*Sheet 7 –*

Getting community support is very important.  
Social and cultural education is very important and there must be community input for this to occur.

Also, one must respect and honour the culture.

It was a joy to be educated by the local people, and a real privilege.

All language groups were acknowledged and represented in the school.

Other languages were written at the time.

Children at school regularly were often those whose parents valued education themselves. If there were attendance issues one would speak to the families, and usually this was enough.

Bi-lingual program:-

In 1974 there were moves to begin this.

**Gerry McCormack** – we went about choosing a language – had two major meetings – asked the question as to which language do you want? Murrinh-patha was chosen. Permission was then given to run the program by the Northern Territory Government’s Education Department.

Tie into Batchelor for training, however this didn’t work as would be away for 12 months.

RATE course – here one month here now at Port Keats.

*Sheet 8 –*

1981: **Alan Karlake**

The bi-lingual centre was set up already, and made it easier to get the stories. Got back more than he gave. Best three and a half years in the community in all communities he has worked in.

The bilingual program was very important:-

- Teaching assistants with **Sister Tess** – team teaching – in junior classes really relying on the teachers assistants;
- Bi-lingual – much more involved in teaching and opportunities;
- Staff development became very important;
- Literature Production Centre – positions were funded – however artists etc. went 32 weeks without pay – Mayirri (Damien Tumuck) waiting for funding;
- Tried to celebrate the skills that people had i.e. if someone had a skill and could use a particular tool/machine that then became their domain. A thing to be celebrated.

*Sheet 9 –*

**1981: Bev Quinn**

Girls not wanting to read in English, going to transition for books (because these were in Murrinh-patha).

Began to gain an understanding about some aboriginal groups.

**1982: Rosemary Hogan**

Student numbers began to fall:-

- More consistency in early 1980's, but less in late 1980's;
- Good teachers in the late 1980's;
- Fund raising – involvement in activities;
- We all agree that we got more out of the experience;
- Impact of changes in Government in the allocation of funding affected things;
- Money for nothing – i.e. no incentive to work;
- Maintenance is the key – politics; wealth; perceptions; staff changes.

**1984: Ferdie Klesch**

Life-changing experience and now view the world differently.

The teacher assistants were crucial and we couldn't manage without them.

*Sheet 10 –*

Manual training – declining numbers throughout the year, disheartening.  
One big excursion – Perth, Sydney (used like “no pool, no school”) – an incentive.

Boys were young men – after lunch, time in Berrimah – small class – after time at Berrimah, English was more proficient and boys more confident.

**Rosemary** – planning on a couple of afternoons while the kids stayed home after lunch. This time was well spent in planning and professional development.

Stages Aspect - comings and going dealing with these intermittent attendances.

After 1984:-

Core group – there every day and could see the progress.

1983-1984: Remote Areas Teacher Education (RATE) started with Brother Kevin Messer and Brother Vince Roche.

*Sheet 11* –

- Training scheme for 12 months, but no guarantee of funding for a job at the end;
- Efforts to be recognized as a bi-lingual school;
- RATE led to more professional dialogue between teachers and teacher assistants – support and discussion;

**Brother Vince** – RATE, Sister Tess and Alan Karlake, production of materials.

There was lots of sharing by the people in Wadeye community – school staff, bush trips, corrobories, we held a BBQ on the first night in town, Batchelor students.

In school white man in control – my world. However, out bush one must rely on other people. When this was brought into the school scene it was a godsend;

See-saw – now a dominance of white people. In the early 1980's people set about getting an education so they could get a job – this was the message. Aboriginal people were in many different jobs. There appears to be a complete reversal with a huge dominance of white people currently (2005).

*Sheet 12* –

Outstation movement:-

- Education at these places – this was an incentive, families went to outstations – this was seen as a holiday;
- Palumpa – school there – this affected attendance;
- Francella goes to Kuy now;
- Languages – Kardu Numida – one group;



- People from Daly River imposed on people what needed to be done – unity became disunity;
- Close school down – all children out bush then when people ready come back for school.

*Sheet 13 –*

Questions/Discussion:-

- What is the future of Port Keats?
- Giving PK people the voice to express the community they want it to become;
- Migration of non-Europeans moving in and out of the community, and its impact;
- Continuity is essential – having an agreed place / point of reference;
- You are in relationships with people who have a completely different world view;
- We must step back – some Aboriginal people must come forward. They are deferential, so it is very important that we are not out in front;
- Encourage people to articulate what they want;
- People need a purpose;
- People are being brought in to do the jobs that locals were doing 20 – 30 years ago;

*Sheet 14 –*

Questions/Discussion (cont'd):-

- Are the potential job seekers seen as job seekers? Here or elsewhere;
- What is the purpose of education at Port Keats?
- Work experience program in the 1980's was very successful;
- There has to be recognition and acknowledgement of the contribution that long-term staff have made.

*Sheet 15 –*

Bad

- Local staff called assistants, but really did the bulk of the teaching. We wouldn't cope without them. In 1974, teacher's assistants sharpened pencils, looked busy, white teacher did all the teaching;
- Lack of preparation.

*Sheet 16 –*

Good

- Very talented teacher assistants who are still at the school, gifted teachers with innate skills;
- Locals having a go without the training;
- Bi-lingual program – a big turnaround.

*Sheet 17 –*

**What was good? What worked well?**

- LPC functioning very well;
- Provision of materials in language;
- Strong involvement of local people;
- Assistants and co-teachers – absolutely essential and education of children very much depended on their input. Often very skilled, gifted teachers;
- Bilingual program, gave a purpose and a focus, kids really keen (example of older girls reading in transition);
- Importance of starting from where children are at.

Involvement of wider community – dependant on others in community for stories, cultural aspects, and the cultural program at the school.

Freedom of movement – for example visits to the crossing for swimming school swimming carnivals.

*Sheet 18 –*

Relationships – establishment of the relationships between Aboriginal people and non-Aboriginal peoples – still connections twenty years later;

Pre school – 8 girls there with 90 children. Very involved with running each group. Made visual cues/models;

Planning – release the teachers to plan together in the afternoon.

This increased professional dialogue;

Training of staff – RATE, Batchelor, Sister Elsey, learning together;

Staff balance – encouraging extra men to be part of the school (rather than a majority of females) was successful;

Sacramental programs – encouraging parents to support their children in preparing for the sacrament;

Wider community – involvement of different community members;

## **E) Actual Notes from ERA 2: 1991 – 1998**

What was good?

*Sheet 1 –*

- People come in and read with students – community reading program;
- Walking/talking texts – good to teach from a structured program; enhanced literacy development;
- School in a great community place;
- People were made very welcome and part of a great family group, whereas school/family important part of life;
- Aboriginal people/staff are excellent support/structure for school community;
- The staff prayer – community growth;
- Very loyal staff – supportive of each other;
- Flexibility was part of the practice according to community needs;
- Stable staff;
- Individual teacher mentoring;
- Learnt to teach Murrinh-patha – empowerment of teaching skills;
- Floodwalk –
  - o Seeing each others work to get ideas;
  - o Showcasing of work;
  - o Pride in work;
- School assemblies –
  - o Awards;
  - o Affirmation of students doing well;
- Learning together – early childhood/primary learning together;
  - o Planning together;
- Growth in responsibility of Aboriginal staff led to an increase in confidence and assumption of responsibility for own classes/school/ones own professional development;
- Beginning of formation of leadership team (about 1998);
- Indigenous staff proud to be there/sense of pride;
- Celebrating of achievements in the community;
- Sports days on oval – including athletics, inter town sport other matters including Palmerston region sports days, footy carnivals in Darwin, gymnastics championships;

*Sheet 2 –*

- Work experience program in Darwin;

- Health program was highly commended, including “nose blowing” program and the health clinic staff program;
- Christmas parties – presents from Santa Claus;
- Morning tea/lunch programs;
- Community morning tea;
- Culture program – once a week with the elders;
- Religious education programs were a blend of the two cultures:-
  - o Confirmation;
  - o First communion, reconciliation;
  - o Parent involvement;
  - o School mass;
- Computer room
- Manual arts worked well when teacher was available, eg Ron Basset/Andrew Sheridan;
- Secondary correspondence – a structured year 10 program;
- Visiting science demonstration;
- Cooking program with Margaret Rowe;
- Army cadets;
- Literacy Production Centre – resources for bilingual programs;
- Library well resourced and computer catalog;

*Sheet 3 –*

- AA program;
- Started o some of the other languages;
- Open day/fete;
- Movie nights to raise money;
- Playground in preschool/out the front;
- Undercover area in 1994;
- Biggest employer in the community;

*Sheet 4 –*

What was bad?

- School attendance inconsistent;
- Fear due to bad nights after club close;
- Break in to home economic building;
- Children’s attitude reflected that of the community at the time;
- Vandalism – due to being upset;
- Community perception of education/school attendance;
- Difficulty in engaging boys in education;
- Unemployment money and its affect on attendance;
- Young boys wanting to go to Berrimah goal;
- Lack of respect for the elders amongst the young;
- Sense of powerlessness by the adults in the control of children;

- Lack of relevance of education;
- Pressure from non-aboriginal families over school policies;
- Lack of support measures for families with respect to discipline;

*Sheet 5 –*

What worked

- Reading program
  - o Parents paid to come in to do it;
  - o Did improve student reading because it was a daily practice;
  - o Created a book culture for a part of the day;
  - o Gained a grant to buy books and take them home;
  - o This broke down when books were lost, destroyed etc;
  - o Children were reading to their grandparents etc;
- Parent involvement was more specific to the very young only and momentum would drop off;
- Health/AA/ education program – it needs to be driven by the people to be maintained. Good resources were developed and trained mothers/teachers n health care issues;
- Walking, talking texts worked well due to its structure;
- Good community relationships – warm and welcoming;
- School vision – this guides practice/ it was shared/ and it was lived. There was collaboration in its production and ownership. It needs to be taken to the wider community;
- Stable, loyal and supportive staff – these were the backbone of the school community;
- Flexible approach that acknowledges community needs;
- Computer room – practical, alternative approach that supports curriculum and student learning opportunities;
- Manual arts – this needs to be driven, and requires particular expertise;
- Year 10 secondary correspondence – national competency skills which are recognized. Involve literacy/numeracy and community maintenance courses;

*Sheet 6 –*

- Staff professional development:-
  - o Development of teachers skills in specific areas;
  - o Visiting education officer specialists to Wadeye eg science, music, health, sport, numeracy, IT;
  - o RATE teachers/Bachelor support;
  - o Notre Dame University for religion;
  - o Senior First Aid Courses;
- Ice-cup ice cream machine fund raising;

- Cooking program :-
  - o Mothers and students;
  - o Specific community needs;
  - o Health education message;
  - o AASPA funding;
- Morning tea program:-
  - o AASPA initially;
  - o \$20.00 deducted from parenting allowance which then went to morning tea and lunch AASPA supplemented it;
  - o Council collected it and gave the money to the school;
- Army cadets:-
  - o First aboriginal unit in Australia;
  - o Dependent on being driven by someone;
  - o Concept was a stepping stone to Norforce;
- Literature Production Centre:-
  - o Development of resources;
  - o Literacy/bilingual;
  - o Collection of stories, songs, cultural recordings of traditional or true stories;
- Computerisation of library resources – unfortunately, it is now not working due to a lack of staff expertise. Now it is written down on paper;

*Sheet 7 –*

- Sports Program:-
  - o Gave students opportunity for recognition of talent;
  - o Excellent results – increased confidence and self esteem;
  - o Trips to Darwin etc (funding dependent);
  - o DRRASS – transport/staff to drive it;
- Work experience in Darwin and communities;
- Community celebrations:-
  - o Open Day, fete, Christmas, movie nights (although funding dependant);
  - o Morning tea;
- Culture Program:-
  - o Timetabled part of school week;
  - o Worked when people were available. Disappointing when they didn't show;
- Religious education program:-
  - o School mass;
  - o Liturgy and sacraments;
- St John's boarding:-
  - o Didn't work – not sustained;
  - o Grade 4 language developments;
- Grounds attractive – relatively graffiti free;
- Mentoring program – pride, ownership etc;
- Assemblies worked – affirmation/celebration;

- Adventure playground;
- Bilingual program – hinges on attendance;
- Floodwalk – good for students/teachers;

*Sheet 8 –*

- MAP testing:
  - o Didn't work as based on criteria different to appropriate community expectations;
  - o Context and starting points were very different;
  - o Unfair comparisons
- Learning and planning in core groups;
- Displays in the store , general community and occasional school newsletter;
- Meetings in camps;
- The club – great connection;

## **F) Actual Notes from ERA 3: 1999 – 2005**

### *Sheet 1A-DIDN'T WORK WELL*

- Going away for training/workshops especially for local teachers;
- “Carrying on” cross-cultural learning → began well dies out/fell away;
- Lack of vehicles;

### *Sheet 1B – NOT SO GOOD! COULD DO BETTER!*

- Vandalism & graffiti;
- Neglect of buildings (funding etc.);
- Attendance → dropoff – lack of consistency;  
Difficulty with assessments;
- VET programs – lack of support;  
Access to funding;
- Literacy and numeracy levels → not as high as we would like;
- Good teachers leave!
- High turnover of non-indigenous staff → due to lots of different reasons;
- Inaccessibility to relief teachers;
- Interruptions to timetable;

### *Sheet 2 –*

- Fighting between students → parent interference;
- More teacher training → for assistant and classroom teachers, especially for young men, and in secondary schools;
- More support/lifesavers at pool;
- Lack of cultural awareness for new teachers (do's and don't's);
- Leadership → family obligations make it difficult;
- People being pulled in too many different directions by the whole community and beyond – not just school;
- Effect of assessment demands → time – consuming, don't measure all achievements;

### *Sheet 3 –*

- Understaffing at beginning of each year;
  - o Stressed staff;
  - o Not good for kids either!
- Lack of space and resources(beginning of each year);



- Lack of resources across the year;
- It frustrations –
  - o Lack of resources
  - o Lack of support/maintenance;
  - o Structure across the community creates problems;
- Problems in community → impact on students in community. Eg. Overcrowding, health, gunja, grog, not enough involvement of fathers, computer games, cards, baby sitting duties;
- Wandering the streets at night → tired etc.

*Sheet 4 –*

- Gangs → other loyalties, distraction;
- Lack of activities/recreation for young people;
- Lack of vision – school → job → life/goals/achievements;
- Lack of jobs in community → something to aim for (not cdep and top-up) – real jobs;
- Decrease in aboriginal staff around community. Why?
- Need for right people in management in community especially for work experience;
- Community programs for education?
- No teacher assistants in all classes;
- Not enough funding for what we need/want to do.

*Sheet 5 –*

- Not many parents come to open days;
- Gray areas – insurance issues (private vehicles);
- Lack of vehicles;
- School and language centre → improve links;
- Ceo to slow! Deet too;
- Toilets –
  - o Cleaning
  - o Maintenance
- Too much “buck passing” between bureaucrats;
- Don’t promise what you ain’t got!
- Training for non-teaching staff eg home economics, office staff;
- Need for improved women’s – mens education → support from northern territory health etc for programs;

*Sheet 6 –*

- Kids escaping to the takeaway;
- Clear responses to issues/broken rules;
- Behaviour management → – clear consequence etc;
- Different staff getting different messages regarding issues;

- Nutrition → further work needed;
- Lack of care and maintenance of resources eg vehicles, audio visual etc;
- Storage of resources → safe, secure;
- Loss of resources → taking etc;

*Sheet 7 –*

- More awareness/understanding of bilingual program especially for new staff → extra challenges;
- More whole staff activities → good for morale;
- Better communication between parents and school;
- More encouragement and recognition from ceo for all staff;
- Reputation as “bad news” place (media etc) → more positive stories needed;
- Council support too. Feedback and acknowledgement lacking;
- Teasing;
- Need for clear markers of achievements for students → progress , movement etc (but not threatening);

*Sheet 8 –*

- Recruitment and retention of staff;
- Teacher housing;
- Culture days/bush trips → relying on same men and women each time (pressure etc). Closer liaison with language centre:
- More sharing of community resources;
- More learning together → not teachers and teachers assistants workshops separate. Two-way;
- Learning how to teach together → stronger pairing/partnerships;
- Community education/understanding of active learning → progression of skills etc;

*Sheet 9 –*

- Pressures on communities;
- “babies having babies” → not developing school – going culture;
- Less jobs for local people (where to after school?);
- Confusion → “doesn’t make sense” so why come to school?
- Lack of community activity;
- More support programs for education/support/encouragement of parents/children → go to school;
- Crèche → extension “numbers/places, workers);
- Other homelands schools, not just kuy plus more resources for them;
- Lack of understanding/appreciation of roles/responsibilities and challenges for other staff -
  - o Leads to blame/negativity;
  - o Stronger links/partnerships across the years/classes;

*Sheet10 –*

- Very few positive role models for kids → don't see importance of school;
- Exhaustion/burnout → especially for local teachers. No/little chance for a good break/rest;
- Timetabling → huge demands fitting everything in (bilingual, religious education, culture);
- No pastoral support for staff → no specific person in ceo. Staff welfare;
- Clearer definition of ceo roles → who do you go to for what help?

*WHAT WAS /IS GOOD*

*Sheet 1 –*

- Indigenous leadership
  - o Acceptance
  - o Works well
- Year eleven and twelve classes – community studies → focuses learning in relevant areas eg art, health;
- Co-principal position;
- Swimming pool – swimming at waterholes (in the past);
- Sport –
  - o Mentoring eg. Justin and Leon – health, fitness, self esteems;
  - o Inter-school eg Palumpa – fun days/swimming days/sports days (however, must have access to a vehicle – for trips, getting away etc);
  - o Oz kick
- Culture program/days;
- Team teaching;
- Team planning;

*Sheet 2 –*

- Music – Roger and Skinnyfish;
- Using BRACS more – showing students work and videos, for information/communications;
- Non-indigenous students (KSA – Katherine School of the Air) → joining in classes;
- Home economics –
  - o Fruit
  - o Training for ladies
  - o More varieties
- Area co-ordinators;
- Clearly defined school structure;
- Laptops/IT for year 11 and 12 /training / link to LCP;

- Internet access;

*Sheet 3 –*

- Improving communication between school and families:-
  - o Parent meetings
  - o Newsletter and end of year magazine including a regular attenders list (encouraging, important);
  - o Whiteboards;
  - o Reports/electronic reports (to come);
- Use of technology → eg data projectors, laptops;
- History of work production → LPC (books, resources, etc);
- School being involved in and supporting culture eg mens ceremony. Acknowledgement of still working/educating the young in the community;
- Links with clinic → screening, visits to classes;
- Hearing program;

*Sheet 4 –*

- KLNCC –
  - o Extra support for teachers;
  - o Support for parents also;
  - o Working with two art teachers → lot being done in art area eg Christmas pageant;
- Support from Darwin – CEO visits DEET, NT Health;
- Structuring for secondary school;
- CEO/DEET/COAG → trying to support school more. Taking more notice now;
- Visits to other schools → to get ideas, learn more;
- Planning of secondary school – say in planning;

*Sheet 5 –*

- “ Learning together” and working with other teachers;
- Cultural awareness days;
- “Tobias and Dominic”;
- Attending workshops – here and other centres;
- Work experience;
- VET programs –
  - o Life skills eg cooking, automotive;
  - o Less academic, so more interest, especially from the boys. Keeps boys interested and increases attendance, particularly with outside experts coming in;
- Raising of school profile in – Darwin, Canberra etc;
- High attendance at beginning of 2005;
- Encouragement for regular attendance - awards, assemblies, breakfast etc;
- Links between school and council;

- Cadets → going into Darwin. Great experience!

*Sheet 6 –*

- School is looking better maintenance, grounds etc;
- COAG → DEET and CEO working together better;
- Library getting better;
- Indigenous staff and people → growing in confidence, strength, developing skills → role model for students;
- Building relationships → openness of other teachers to other staff coming in;
- More formal assessment and profiling → setting goals, moving forward, being tracked;
- Teacher linguist;
- Open days for parents to visit schools;

*Sheet 7 –*

- Business managers;
- Air conditioners in the classroom;
- More staff;
- Increased secondary students;
- Flood walks;
- Local teachers – commitment (and non-local teaching staff);
- School as community leader, support, encouragement, positive;
- Improved links between LPC and language centre;
- Excursions and bush trips –
  - o Cultural knowledge;
  - o Spirituality/religious education;
  - o Risk taking with English increasing outside classroom;
  - o Interstate and Darwin trips;
- Art –
  - o Exhibitions;
  - o Website;
  - o Marketing;
- Improved attitude towards school and policies (fighting) with parents;

*Sheet 8 –*

- KUY school up and running again. Two teachers going there two days a week;
- Skilled teachers, art, mechanical etc;
- Opportunities for leaders to take on more – eg Jan away, principals away → confidence, skills grow;
- School having positive effect on community → looking after culture and country. Leave school, take on responsibility;
- Commitment of regular attenders – keen to come and learn! Increased understanding of people of importance of coming regularly;

*Sheet 9A and 9B –*

- Formation of Thamarrurr → more interaction across the community. Better sense of community;
- School masses;
- Stations of the cross;
- Bilingual program → gathered strength last two years;
- Young men working in the school (both local and non-indigenous);
- Tutor funding – extra help – Sister Emmanuel;
- Crèche – supporting teachers (both local and non-indigenous). Great for parents and kids! Locality easy to access. Times are great too (8 to 4 pm);
- Digital cameras being used by all! Being used to write new books in Murrinh-patha;
- Video camera (talking);
- Photos (writing);
- Change in school name;
- Commitment of teachers – staying for several years, building relationships with staff and students.

## **G) Actual Notes of “The Future” Discussion**

### *Sheet 1 –*

- Vision of the school – revisit with help of more people;
- Learning and teaching statement – what are we teaching?
- Write it in various languages of the region;
- What sort of people do we want? We want people who “be, do, know” – people who wish to be here, are going to take action and do things and who know what they are doing – this applies to everybody;
- Training and educational opportunities, will also identify who has what jobs so that you don’t kill the local staff with overwork;
- Its up to us – build a strong team. Recognise weaknesses, but also STRENGTHS;
- Must look at who is going to take over from the current staff – experience outside the community is very good, but don’t leave it too late;
- Young mothers and fathers of the community – how do we help them cope better, and their children to behave better;

### *Sheet 2 –*

- Parenting skills are very important;
- Kids must learn how to behave outside school. Plan to help them do this;
- Have a Strategic Plan – identify different areas and work out how to deal with them;
- We want information given to us directly. We are moving forward. Be straight, want to know what is going on.

True Information leads to INDEPENDENCE and CONTROL.

- Collate all information into an action plan and begin working on priorities;
- Reading, writing, language are problems. Art, music, sport are not difficult areas for them. Use the things that they do well to teach those they do not;
- Aboriginal teachers must be more willing to speak up and say what they mean. Yes to mean yes. If somebody is doing the wrong thing, they must tell them;

### *Sheet 3 –*

- Must look at outstation development movement and see how school fits in with this;
- Cultural teaching comes through parents and other older people. If older people are confused, struggling with alcohol, then children are also confused. Must begin with adult education so they understand what is going on around them. Then they can fix their own problems;

- Fragmented services – people from clinic and school have to work together. School then with a strong role in adult education, also out of school time;
- Offer families good information so they can make the best decisions e.g. LITERACY. Must be able to speak it so they can write it. Not only Murrinh-patha but also Marri-ngarr, Magati-ge and others;
- Dying languages need to be recorded. Not just a dictionary, but language stories. How are five etc languages going to be taught? Teachers need further training and much more support. They must keep speaking languages at home to keep them strong;

*Sheet 4 –*

- Students need to know why they are here art school. Their education must be a priority;
- Cross cultural – very important to be running the courses;
- Aboriginal staff are asked to do a lot. Induction two-way learning. Aboriginal teachers seen as the experts. Empower them, give them strength;
- Students are very bright, want to learn. Need to get more support;
- Two-way support/learning very important. Teamwork, working together - much stronger. Must stick together;
- Work to outcomes, school to work. Communication must be across phases. Celebrate ACHIEVEMENT. Physically walk from class to class so that teachers and students can show what they are doing;

*Sheet 5 –*

- Must give time for planning and the important things for the school. Then give resources. Active leadership to make sure there is action;
- Some staff members should never have been here. Selection Process - must provide best information as to what is really happening here. Must choose best people possible. Better that they come, have a look, don't like it and leave before start. Be straight, say what expectations are. Not coming here to change things overnight. Must come as a LEARNER;
- CELEBRATE YOUR ACHIEVEMENTS;
- Ainslie mccall – built buildings at this school with a team of aboriginal workers – this highlights the team approach to all matters;
- Formation of a school council. This must be talked about;

*Sheet 6 –*

- Social and cultural education is very important. This must be taught through the people with knowledge from this area;
- Education and training board interaction with the school – there was much more in 2004 than in 2005 although a work experience program did take place in the second half of 2005;



- Role of men in the school and the wider community. Males are the community leaders. How can they be used more in the education process? Problems with boys must be dealt with through the men - there are strong men here who can help. This is a key area for the school council and also for the Strategic Plan;
- Serious funding must be in place to support programs. Not just top-up, but real money.

## **H) Additional Materials from Participants**

### **(1) Letter from Rosemary Hogan, 12 September 2005**

Dear Tobias, Jan, Dominic and members of the Leadership Team,

Firstly, congratulations on the recent Education Workshops. Being involved in devising, planning and implementing events such as this myself (although on a much smaller scale) I know it is no easy undertaking.

Since returning I have had opportunity to reflect on many discussions and would now like to share my thoughts. Please excuse any suggestions I make which may already be happening or have been suggested.

It has always been my thinking that until the whole community was able to work together for the common good anything done in the school would have little impact. Hearing about the work of the Thamarrurr Regional Council and the Cross-Cultural In-servicing was a most wonderful thing. That really made me think that life in Wadeye may be turning around for the better. My two thoughts for the improvement of education in Port Keats had already been implemented before I was able to voice them.

Whilst I would agree with Sr. Liz and Helen that parenting education is important in order that children have respect for those responsible for them (thereby indirectly improving school attendance), I believe the ground work for this must begin at school.

No doubt a considerable part of the Post Primary Girls curriculum deals with the physical well being through lessons on nutrition. Perhaps it is now time to deal with the emotional well being of future generations. It may also be important to place discussions about this in Post Primary Boys curriculum. I believe these discussions and guidance need to commence at school in order for the prospective parents to have some ideas in place about the expectations of and for their children before they have them. There are many people in Port Keats who would be able to contribute to this with the aid of a curriculum writer to formalize it. To me this encompasses aspects of social, cultural and religious education.

I have always been interested in the on-going teacher education of Aboriginal people, particularly having had many enthusiastic assistants during my time there. At one stage Xaverine, Rosaria and myself were lucky enough to attend a four day religious education in-service in Darwin. As this was held in the late afternoon and evening we took the opportunity to visit schools in the morning. I remember how interested Xaverine and Rosaria were in the different

expectations and abilities of the children, the range of teaching aids available and the skills and strategies employed by the teachers.

It has always been my thought that it would be good if opportunity were given to qualified Aboriginal teachers to experience education in other settings even for a short time. I know I find this very powerful professional development. Sometimes it confirms that I am doing a good job, sometimes it challenges me to improve what I am doing. I know that many members of my school community would love the opportunity to contribute towards professional development such as this.

A practical idea to aid in the implementation of this may be a teacher (or two) finishing a week or two earlier than others at the end of the year. This would enable them to attend a school either down south or in Darwin and combine it with a holiday. Call it a study tour if you will. I would be happy to put my hand up to help implement this type of program if it was thought useful.

The above are my initial thoughts one day after returning to Melbourne. As many of you know I am not one confident to speak in a large forum, particularly when in the company of such knowledgeable people as Sr. Elsie, Gerry, Leon and members of the indigenous community, but I am more than willing to help in any practical way. Although I am many miles away the people of Port Keats are in my thoughts daily. I would feel honoured to help in any way, no matter how small or seemingly insignificant.

Congratulations to those involved in the planning and implementation of this project. I think you have made a great start.

Rosemary Hogan

(2) Letter from Roger Sparvell, 13 September 2005

Dear Tobias and Dominic,

Wadeye Education Workshop

Thank you for coordinating a most enjoyable conference at Wadeye recently. It was a wonderful and moving experience for me to return to Wadeye and see old friends again.

I was impressed with the vision for the future of the region as underpinned and defined by Thamarrurr and got the sense that coordinated, considered efforts to towards that vision would make it a reality.

The process of looking back in order to move forwards very useful and one that I am familiar with. Often though, the review or evaluation of a process is overlooked in the context of busy professional lives and the challenge to get on with the next task. This is where we fall victim to transition: ideas and programmes are lost and the wheel needs to be reinvented again.

I hope the contributions of invited guests will help Wadeye move forward positively and I shall keenly follow the progress of the community my family called home in the mid 1990's.

Thanks again,

Roger Sparvell

### (3) E-mail of Gerry & Helen McCormack, 14 September 2005

Further to the meetings we attended at PK we would like to make the following comments. Some are community problems while the rest are school ones. We will leave it to you to place them in the correct part of the two-day programme.

According to research the basic needs of each individual person are food, shelter and clothing. I think one of the problems regarding the attendance of the children at school centres around food. I believe they like to stay close to the person/people who are receiving money and then going to the store to buy the food. I think they may feel they will miss out if they are not around at the appropriate time to partake of the food that is gathered and then shared.

Once there was money paid by each family to help with supplying food for the children. Most families then decided that they would keep the money and feed the children themselves. I am not sure what is happening at the moment. I have also been told that this is one of the reasons the young boys like to go to gaol so they will be well fed. The price of goods in the store makes it difficult for people to buy enough of the good food, especially when money is often wasted on junk food.

I realise that there may be quite a number of people living in one house but in my experience it seems to me that most people at Port Keats seem to like to have a family in each room – not a separate room for each person as has developed in our culture. Because of this I was wondering whether there should be a change in house design to incorporate a toilet /shower block on the verandah of the house.

The Club was mentioned a little, but more from the asset it provided to those who wanted to gather for a social occasion. Sr Emmanuel did tell us of the reasons for its closure.

While the club was opened it varied between being a great asset to being a real problem. Over time, conditions for having a liquor licence changed, and even with the change of Club Manager, conditions also changed. Many people would say that while Phil Siviour was in charge of the club there was a great deal of harmony and the club was an asset, in that those permitted to drink could, so it saved people wanting and actually going to Darwin etc to drink. If someone of Phil's stature in this area could be employed, an open Club might save a lot of the tripping in and out of Darwin etc, leading to many criminal offences in Darwin. I think the community has to face up to the question: is it right to impose these problems on people from other centres (such as Darwin, Kununurra etc) or try to solve the problem at home.

Life was a little more predictable (but still a nuisance at times) when the club was opened. One knew that most of the men would leave work about 4 o'clock even though the club might not open till 5. Things became even worse when the women were allowed to drink. The other result of the women drinking was that some men would then take some / all of the women's quota and drink too much, leading to the inevitable fights etc.

When the liquor licence was lost, the community changed again. The main problem changed from mainly being in PK, to being in some other community. Men and money left the community for varying lengths of time; later this became worse when the women joined the men to keep an eye on them – supposedly to check the male / female relationships, but this changed again when the women joined the men in the drinking bouts in Darwin etc. Sometimes children were with them but at other times they were left at PK for someone else to look after. As an employer, it was difficult to be sure of the Aboriginal staff members being at work. Once they went to Darwin it could be a long time before they returned.

Many people have died in and around Darwin as a result of coming to town to drink.

In the classroom, I reflect now that we were probably not innovative enough. We seem to have been too strict in following the curriculum outline from the Department.

Even though the school can't just do anything it likes, there seems to be more room to move now. Because of this, I think there need to be more teaching out of the formal situation so that there might be more learning from looking then doing.

Undoubtedly, some of these things have been tried and maybe are still being tried at the school.

At St John's, there are students (both boys and girls) involved in a sports programme (based a lot on Aussie Rules). It includes a trip to other communities at which the participants have to run sport clinics with the students in the particular school. The participants are judged by the participation in the whole programme, which does not just mean being able to kick a football. Dave Barnard is the contact person.

Some non-Aboriginal staff go to PK for the main purpose of going fishing. This sport is a great outlet for many people but it should not be the main reason for being there. Nevertheless, it could provide a great teaching outlet as it could involve several subject areas if organized properly: maths, SOSE, English, Murrinhpatha, RE etc.

Those areas of the school that need beautifying could be part of a gardening programme. A class or some groups of kids could be allocated sections around

the school to work on. Again this could be a chance for integrated studies to be used, including the selection process, the buying of seeds, the planning, the actual preparation etc. Years ago Leon Melpi and Maurice Rodericks were involved in this kind of work.

Most staff members (not necessarily restricted to school staff) have some special talent (eg chess, playing the guitar, singing, board games). The upper part of the school (at least) could be broken up into groups (ideally their own choice) and spend a term or more in that group. Every term / semester, students might be given the choice to move to a different activity. This gives students a look at different ways of using their free time, and it also gives staff a chance to meet and work with different students.

At long last the community has a swimming pool; it is a long time since it was first suggested; now is the time to suggest one or more activities which have the capacity to be used by a large number of people at the one time. A BMX track, or something similar, might encourage exercise as well as a good use and maybe a better use of bikes. Skate board parks would do something similar. Naturally, having a basketball (volleyball) etc competition of an evening for both young and old would be great.

In the end, decisions have to be made. Before the decisions are made, it is important to check out the consequences of the different possibilities. If one path is followed, then this might happen, this will follow and then something else. On the other hand, if we do this other thing, then these are the consequences.

Finally, whichever decisions are made, the consequences rest on the shoulders of the person / group that makes the decision – “blame” can’t be placed on other people either for its success or for its failure.

We have said enough.

Thanks for the opportunity to add more to what was said and discussed last Thursday and Friday.

Gerry & Helen

## **I) Materials from Persons Unable to Attend**

### **(1) Letter from Mary McGowan (Sister.), 20 July 2005**

Dear Dominic,

Thank you for asking me to contribute towards your forthcoming conference. Unfortunately, I shall not be able to attend, but have jotted down a few memories from the two periods I was at Wadeye for a period in the '60's and '70's:-

1. As far as I can ascertain, education in pre-contact times was carried out by watching their elders and then imitating. Their tradition was passed on orally, over and over again. Their stories, the same, except they could initiate poetic licence, as stories were often embellished. And the wonderful thing was, the children never became tired of the stories;
2. When Welfare Schools were established, education was very white-oriented and fixated. Only English was used in schools. There was little cultural awareness. The whole aim in that period was assimilation into mainstream education. The children understood spoken English, but very few, if any, could or wished to express themselves in the English language, as they resorted to their own language at every opportunity.

I don't know the educational scene in Wadeye today, so am unable to comment. But I would like to mention a couple of interesting facets when there in the '70's.

- a. We invited parents to the school to teach the children whatever cultural skills they felt they should know and learn. Everything took place outside and the children went into their own tribal groups. The adults were enthusiastic and had so much to offer – it was like a tidal wave and very exciting for all;
- b. Each year, Eisteddfods were held in Darwin and these included Aboriginal song and dance from all over the N.T. The children had witnessed this first hand, so we decided to hold our own, without real winners or losers. It was a very popular event and drew out great pride in each one's own traditional dance;
- c. One other exciting feature at that time and probably still continues, were the many excursions in the Dry, across country to the Daly, Batchelor, Darwin for sporting and musical ventures. Each child had their own sleeping bag (as we camped). They were events that were looked



forward to right throughout the 'Wet' and became a great incentive to 'toe the line' education-wise.

I hope the above is of some little help (from the dim, dark ages).  
Dominic, I am sure the Conference will be a great success.

With best wishes,

Mary McGowan (Sr.)

(2) Letter from Mary McCarthy, 7 August 2005

Dear Dominic

My apologies for not attending the workshop however I hope it goes well.

I must say I was disturbed to read recently that some members of the Wadeye community are pursuing an action relating to the provision of education for the students there.

It is extraordinary to blame someone else for a problem when the actual problem may lay with members of the community.

In the years I was at Wadeye parents brought their children to the school everyday as they valued this opportunity for their children.

I became aware that for many, many years some parents began to rely on others to get their children to school to be educated but you'd have to ask whose responsibility is it to take the children to the school and encourage them?

For the educators who were there to teach the children it must have been a difficult time to have the attendances so poor and irregular.

Everyone needs to be encouraged to face the truth. Many in the Wadeye community need to accept responsibility for any lack of education the children not received. How can teachers deliver education when the children are not there?

Funding is tied to attendance, I believe, so if the funding became scarce at times, the community needs to realise that the reason is probably because there were so few children actually at school.

Kind regards, Dominic. I would be happy to provide any info for the workshop should that be required.

Mary