

Indigenous Enterprise Partnerships Case Study

Every Child is Special



A 'no excuses!' approach to developing demand for better supply of education to Indigenous children in Cape York

Introduction

Every Child is Special (ECIS) is reforming Indigenous education by building student, family and community demand for high expectation, high quality education through family engagement and mutual accountability. The project was initiated by the indigenous people of Cape York to address the crisis in indigenous education.

"We are determined to ensure that our younger generations achieve their full potential, talent and creativity and have the confidence and capacity for hard work so that they can orbit between two worlds and enjoy the best of both" – Cape York Leaders.

In every year level, Indigenous students are between two and four years behind the non-Indigenous average. In some schools as few as 21% reach the minimum national literacy and numeracy benchmark. This project is one of a number of linked initiatives being undertaken in the Cape to address the critical needs and issues facing the Indigenous people of Cape York and is a key enabler for the effective implementation of Welfare Reform.

Project Objectives

The belief that Every Child is Special is fundamental to ensuring the needs of every child in every community are met – no matter how challenging their circumstances. That no child should be left behind underpins the project's approach and forms the basis of the vision for what parents and families want for their children.

Literacy is the most significant and urgent of the education problems facing Cape York's Indigenous communities. It is the foundation skill that underpins all others. Children who struggle to read will struggle in every other area of education. The project therefore aims to close the educational achievement gap between indigenous and non-indigenous students through three core initiatives which will:

- resolve attendance problems,
- improve literacy and
- increase parental commitment to education

for **all** children.



IEP involvement

Since the project's early days commencing the trial in Coen, the team has benefited from a wide variety of skills brought by secondees, sourced by IEP. These include technical support, financial analysis and reporting frameworks, communications, project management and contract negotiation. In addition the permanent ECIS team have benefitted from access to professional development opportunities. This brings a breadth and depth of skills that are otherwise inaccessible for indigenous organisations driving such change. They enable significant change to be delivered in an effective, sustainable way.

Achievements to date

Supported by these secondees the project trial in Coen has proved to be successful in addressing attendance, literacy (gains of up to 15 months in reading accuracy) and family commitment (90% of students have Student Education Trusts established to which their parents make financial contributions).

It is clear that successful education outcomes are crucial in allowing communities develop the capabilities which are essential for participation in the real economy'

IEP partner resources have played a valuable role in building a sound, well managed program that can be rolled out to new communities. It is widely acknowledged that the skills and experience brought by secondees sourced by IEP have made significant contributions to the project's progress.

The current focus for the ECIS team is expanding the program to another three communities trialing Welfare Reform. This presents many challenges in terms of scalability, logistics and managing a small team with broad responsibilities. IEP continues to source skills and expertise to assist as the project forward.

Recognition of value

Cape York Partnerships (CYP) who run ECIS is highly appreciative of the contributions of IEP resources from corporate partners. CYP consistently seek out additional secondees and new corporate partners to engage on the project in a variety of different ways. The CYP CEO comments '*Secondees have been fantastic. It is great that we get such quality people with a genuine interest in making a difference. They bring great skills and experience and make a real contribution to improving education outcomes for indigenous kids on the Cape. We will keep coming back for more!*'

