

QIECC

Queensland Indigenous Education
Consultative Committee

Mt Isa Community Forum Focus on Transitions

Thursday 24 May 2007

The QIECC, first and foremost, has to

“Consult with Indigenous people to hear the range of views on education”,

and then,

“provide expert advice to Education Ministers”, “promote constructive dialogue and engagement”, and “promote public awareness”

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Caution:

These materials could contain images and references to deceased Indigenous people from diverse cultural backgrounds and communities. This could be upsetting to some people.

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Acknowledgements

Good will of Kalkadoon Elder, Mrs Thelma Sullivan who was unavailable to perform a welcome to country.

Kalkadoon traditional custodian, Mr Lee Pang for his Welcome to Country.

Ms Kerry Major for her promotion of the Forum in the Mt Isa District.

Mr Noel Samardin for official introduction and closing of the forum.

QIECC members and Secretariat staff for their facilitation of the break out groups.

Mr Alvin Hava for assisting QIECC in their facilitation.

The QIECC Membership for their time and expertise.

All the community members who attended and actively participated in the day's proceedings.



AGENDA

- 12.00pm Community Forum open
Arrivals, refreshments, social introductions
- 1.00pm Welcome to Country / Acknowledgement of Country
By local traditional owner, Mr Lee Pang
- 1.10pm QIECC Membership introductions
Commenced by Ms Gina Archer, Chair
- 1.15pm Introduction and presentation of committee members
- Mr Albert Holt
 - Mr Beresford Domic
 - Ms Gina Archer
 - Mrs Tracey Harbour
 - Mr Adrian Miller
 - Ms Joann Schmider
 - Ms Jane Ceolin
 - Mr Ned David
- Absent: Ron Weatherall, Leann Wilson, Tiga Bayles, Jane Ceolin
& Darran Kennedy
- 1.30pm Introduction of transition areas, breakout group facilitators and
breakout questions.
Mr Noel Samardin
- 1.40pm Breakout Discussion begins
Facilitated by QIECC members and Secretariat staff
- 3.00pm Plenary



Participant List

Patrick McDonnell	Townview State School
Maiyar Devine	Centacare Communities for Children
Cynthia O'Loughlin	Parent
Jennifer Craigie	Parent/Teacher Aide SSS
Dixie Sarmardin	Townview State School
Julie Inskip	Churches of Christ Care
Jackie Marshall	Parent
Margaret Chong	Mt Isa Police
Gail Marshall	Mt Isa TAFE
Joyce Dempsey	Parent
Catrina Fellon-busch	James Cook University
Lee Pang	Education Queensland
Kerry Major	NWQPHC
Liz Dempsey	AICC
Susan Samardin	Parent
Harley Mason	Student
Kelly Roger	
Stephanie Ketchup	Communities for Children
Alan Baillie	Education Queensland District Office
Ian Tarttelin	St Kieran's School
Alice Bin Tahal	Townsville Catholic Education Office
Rose Iles	DEST
Lila Pigliafiori	DEST
Jenny McLean	Spinifex College Residential Campus
Peta Butler	Isa Skills
Kerry Parker	Department of Communities
Mandy Armstrong	Department of Communities
Eileen Brown	Mount Isa Community Development Association
Phil Sweeney	Spinifex College
David Hegarty	Sunset State School
Vanessa Hipwell	Department of Child Safety
Melanie Ah Kit	Department of Communities
Alison Bohannan	Mount Isa Community Development Association Inc
Aderyn Chatterton	Sunset State School
Greg Rankin	Mt Isa TAFE
Daniel Goddard	Sunset State School
Ricky Talbot	Spinifex Junior Campus
Danielle Germaine	St Kieran's Catholic Primary School
Heather Armstrong	NWQPHC
Loretta Roos	Isa Skills – Job futures
Dempsey Olga	Parent
Donna Connelly	Parent
Christine Watson	OATSIP – DOC
Andrew Kube	Education Queensland
Natasha Chong	Isa Skills and CDEP
Max Simpson	Isa Skills and CDEP
Christine Storey	Communities for Children
Jenny O'Connor	Good Shepherd Catholic College
Nancy George	Community Justice Group Elder
Alvin Hava	YL – Mt Isa TAFE

Statement of Facilitation

After Acknowledgement of Country, the introduction of the QIECC membership, and the formal introduction of the transition areas, participants formed into 5 separate groups to begin discussions.

The forum theme “transitions” was consistent with the upcoming QIECC Annual Forum scheduled for October 2007.

Transitions sub - themes description:-

1. **Home to school** - the stage where a child transitions from a home and/or childcare environment to formal early childhood education
2. **Primary to secondary** - focuses on the end of the primary years and the earlier years of secondary school
3. **Junior secondary to senior secondary** – from year 10 into the senior years of schooling (Years 11 and 12).
4. **School to work, training, higher education** – pathway from high school to further education and training or employment.
5. **Remote and rural to urban** – physical relocation from a remote or rural geographic location to an urban location, to undertake education, training or employment.

The forum was facilitated by Noel Samardin, however, each of the five breakout groups, linked to each sub-themes were facilitated by QIECC members and Secretariat staff, with the assistance of Noel Samardin and Alvin Hava.

For the purposes of the breakout groups, three questions were posed:-

1. What Is Happening?
2. What are the Issues?
3. What do you see as solutions?

Whilst the focus was on the sub-themes, and the three questions posed, community members had the opportunity to voice general issues or concerns relating to Indigenous education in their region.

All contributions were scribed for later plenary feedback and confirmation.

For the purposes of this report, each of the breakout groups discussions are included to enable readers to note specific issues and suggested solutions/recommendations from each of the breakout groups.



Common Themes:

- Poor literacy/numeracy outcomes.
- Student suspensions – often for retaliation rather than primary behaviours, absence of support whilst on suspension
- School disruptions - cultural considerations, funerals, moving town; students and young people require support during process
- Non-attendance is an issue – out of school distractions, lack of transport prevents children going to school
- Large number of disengaged young people – not in school, not in training, not in employment
- Lack of collaborative activities between school/community
- Indigenous staffing in schools – not many, low paid, no career paths, lack of permanency, low profile in school, not valued
- Policies change – changing goalposts. Particular reference made to the Commonwealth programs such as ASSPA.

Recommended solutions:

- Parent peer support group to enable effective and collaborative engagement with school and school staff, on an individual level as a parent and also on a collective level to influence decision making.
- Compulsory Cultural Awareness for teaching staff and Principals – essential that it be localised, with local Indigenous community involvement in development and delivery.
- Indigenous Community involvement in teacher selection processes
- Permanency for Indigenous Education Workers; professional development opportunities; valuing Indigenous workers in schools by Central, Regional, District and school staff.
- Alternative programs for students on suspension and adequate investigation into reasons behind suspensions.
- Appropriate planning, which includes their family, is required for young people to make informed choices about their education, training and employment options – early and relevant career advice.
- Policies required that address grassroots issues
- Give policies a chance to work – long term policies that build in evaluation mechanisms to test their effectiveness before changing them.



SUMMARY OF BREAKOUT GROUPS

Break Out Group: *Home to school*

What Is Happening

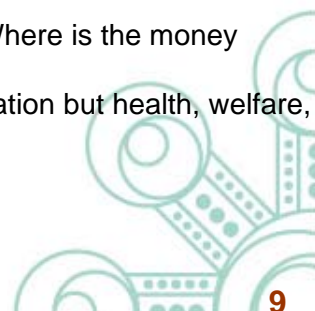
- Younger and Younger people do not attend school
- Poor literacy/numeracy and behavioural problems
- Communities for children assisting 0-5 in education
- Parents not pushing their kids to go to school
- School is being treated as a gap filler to what is happening in people's live
- Families dependant on social security benefits, no future in forms of jobs
- Lack of vision, aspirations in younger generation
- Schools have been too institutionalised, not very open to looking at the bigger picture

What are the Issues (transitions)

- Truancy – prep/primary/secondary. Becoming a problem
- Parents not enforcing the children to go to school
- Student get easily distracted out of school activities
- No transportation – bus
- Lack of collaborative activities between school/community
- Children not meeting peer expectations, stigma, stereotyping
- Red tape and policies involved to address grass-roots issues and needs
- When younger kids don't attend prep and early primary grades leading to poor literacy/numeracy, communication, behavioural problems
- Education and schools does not have a high regard amongst children and parents
- High disruptions to schooling ie moving town, funerals
- Not enough Indigenous specific staff in the schools
- Pay rates of indigenous staff very low compared to cleaner
- Cultural awareness of how students communicate and how that is linked to their education

What do you see as solutions

- Breakfast program
- Schools need to be more community orientated, especially as it relates to strengthening parent-school relationships
- Making prep compulsory
- Make schools an environment that is fun, non institutionalised
- Out dated curriculum
- Playgroup activities (outreach) positive play activities
- Social benefits to be taped into school attendance
- More murri men in key specific positions in the school
- Making indigenous education funding more transparent. Where is the money going, where it needs to go
- Looking at a holistic approach to addressing not only education but health, welfare, others
- Media coverage to promote school, make it localised



- Cross cultural training to be out in the community rather than sitting – seeing is believing
- Community based programs ie Communities for Children to work with parents , carers rather than the schools collaborative approach
- Early intervention programs to assist schools
- Establish a community driven young mothers/fathers group to be initiated in a community setting in various places

Break Out Group: Primary to Secondary

What is happening

- Catholics – good retention rates (primary)
- Good HR/Employment
 - Support for Indigenous workers (very important)
 - Admin Staff need to be flexible
- School-Community Partnerships
 - Big plus is the state residential college, great sharing of information here

What are the issues

- ASSPA discontinued
- PSPI – difficulties of getting funds
- Community diverse
 - Staff Cross Cultural Awareness is needed – make compulsory
 - Practical Advice
 - Especially Induction
- Lack of stability and flexibility of staff in state system and especially in Catholic
- Mindsets of teaching staff
- Split Campus High School (not 2 high schools)
- No bus service/transport
 - Get kids to school (bus)
 - Parent participation (bus)
- Transient communities
- No formal Indigenous Education Workers networks

What do you see as solutions

- More Indigenous workers in schools
- Support for Indigenous leadership
- Could have more breakfast and lunch clubs



What is happening and what are the issues?	What do you see as solutions?
<p>Racism – injustice; teachers directly out of university; what sort of cultural awareness have they had; they need to know how to deal with kids;</p>	<p>Cultural awareness programs for teachers transferred to the area with LOCAL AREA cultural knowledge, programs that recognise diversity in of local community Local cultural awareness at recruitment stage</p>
<p>Indigenous liaison officers to have more power,</p> <p>One participant (41 y.o.) noted that out of the 28 Indigenous young people she went to school with, 8 are in employment and 20 have gone nowhere.</p> <p>No change in system today.</p> <p>Indigenous teacher aides – how many?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - token gesture (we don't need that service) - provide a service to community that's real - essential services for murri students in school - provides a safeguard for murri students - Spinifex College using Indigenous staff - Need more Indigenous workers - Easier for parents to apply for positions - Parents can do the job but recruitment process is a hurdle 	<p>Local Indigenous community involvement in recruitment processes of teachers Mentor program for parents and young people Positions should be “fattened” up, ie clarity of duties, power within the school structure, permanent and ongoing, career development options Local community involvement in recruitment processes for Indigenous workers Appropriate selection panel and process Build in career path for workers.</p>
<p>Short history of education – 1975 before compulsory schooling for Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander people, education to a mainstream standard.</p>	
<p>Suspensions an issue – most are due to secondary behaviour, ie reacting to provocation, rather than instigating it. Home for 2-3 days and no follow up.</p>	<p>Suspension policy to include real alternate program, rather than students at home with no work and falling further behind.</p>
<p>Pathways Program – initially setup for lit/num, not for bad behaviour, but it seems that it's being used for students with bad behaviour, rather than addressing lit/num issues</p>	<p>Year 4 standards so lit/num programs should be in school and used to address lit/num issues.</p>

What is happening and what are the issues?	What do you see as solutions?
Young people in part time employment (outside of school) are not being engaged as front of counter staff. In the back rooms.	
Teachers – respect for all children and their behaviour. Cycle of behaviour.	Could be incorporated into cultural awareness (Local input)
Discussion around only one or two Murri students in a classroom – those children do not have additional support	
Commonwealth funding in schools - who's accountable? SRA/ITAS/PSPI* Under ASSPA*, there were Indigenous committees that needed to be formed before funding flowed, now there is nothing. ITAS – parents signing forms, but tutoring not being done; pooling funds for “all” kids, rather than being used as supplementary	Mandate, rather than recommendation, that Indigenous parent and community input be a compulsory requirement of funding.
Public face – murri kids don't deal with it; Kids on the street “move on” powers	Whole of government response required.
Uniforms – Prep thru to high school; it's an effort for some murri students to attend school, and they want to, however strictness of uniforms means they are disciplined therefore discouraged from going to school. Fees – Extra costs that parents can't afford Excursions – Students want to participate but can't due to affordability Create aspirations and expectations for young people.	More flexibility with uniform policy in order for kids to attend school and engage.
Policies change – changing goalposts. Particular reference made to the Commonwealth programs such as ASSPA.	Give policies a chance to work – long term policies and build in evaluation mechanisms to test their effectiveness before changing them.
Recognition of differences	
Young people play up in school, the transition program to provide a service and program for these young people, then re-entry into mainstream schooling	



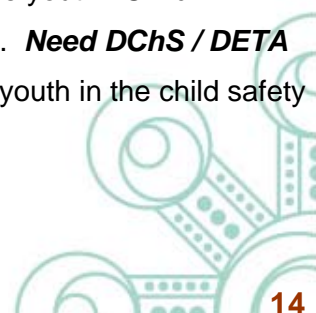
What is happening and what are the issues?	What do you see as solutions?
Parents can't always help their children with homework, due to time, their own capacity, other responsibilities etc Assessment centre assists children, but only in the Senior campus. Students slipping through primary school without basic skills required to succeed or manage at secondary school & beyond	Provide a similar program in the junior campus as well as in primary school
Parents support teacher Teacher supports parents Parents use support staff that exist, although there are very few and resources are limited	Encourage two way communication
Transportation an issue Students want to go to school but can't get to school	
New child safety laws have taken away parents right to discipline their children. Some parents voiced concerns about such laws – however no consensus was sought on this topic.	
Parent connection – parents to show a united front. Parent meeting outside of school Discussion about a parent support group.	Establish a parent mentor group. Immediate feedback group was that interested parents at the forum give a commitment to providing such a support network.
Health of kids affecting their education	Health checks in schools
Curriculum	Appropriate curriculum for murri kids
Year 7 to 8 transition 4 core teachers once in year 8, rather than too many so that getting used to the new system doesn't interfere with year 8 transition	4 core teachers to make transition easier Year co-ordinator.

Break Out Group: *Secondary to Training/Higher Education/Work*

- CDEP's challenge to get participants "job ready" and thence to permanent employment. ***Little work and training opportunity in outlying places.***
- ***Need to help people look at their big picture beyond CDEP.***
- ***Remote area training issues***
 - Accommodation, travel to nearest training centre
 - Personal protective equipment needs and enrolment fees
 - Very hard for people who want to stay in their own communities.



- Knowing about and having an **OP score** as prerequisite entry for young Uni entrants.
- Knowledge about post school realities for youth. Lack of **parental and community knowledge** of how things work and what's needed to support youth making decisions about post-school opportunities.
- Specific Aboriginal programs can marginalise Aboriginal people / parents etc from the mainstream processes. **Need both Aboriginal and mainstream programs for Indigenous youth.**
- Some **students can be (wrongfully) channelled** while in school into avenues that end up restricting their options and opportunities eg school certificate exits – ending up with only CDEP options.
- **Maximise support** for local youth to pick up the full range of **local opportunities** available.
- More Indigenous staff in upper secondary levels **working with students one-on-one** and **assisting them explore their post-school opportunities and related learning plans.**
- Family, school and student **joint planning discussions** (with facilitator when / as needed).
- 30% Spinifex senior campus are Indigenous
 - couple of 2006 students went to JCUNQ incl 1 medical
 - SBA's x 40 students
 - >100 at TAFE
 - Literacy focus careers program
 - 300 work placements
- **Schools as communities** with industry/health etc interface and school/work pathway connections.
- End of Yr 10 preparation incl literacy and numeracy records and planning meetings – preparation of individual education plans. For Aboriginal students this includes CEC's but **need more Indigenous workers in the schools generally plus upper secondary specifically.**
- **Youth in the child safety system** are usually complex behaviour challenges: difficult with the schools' interface – both for schools and the youth. Child behaviour standards may be different to schools standards. **Need DChS / DETA deliberation and concrete plans** for individual Aboriginal youth in the child safety system.



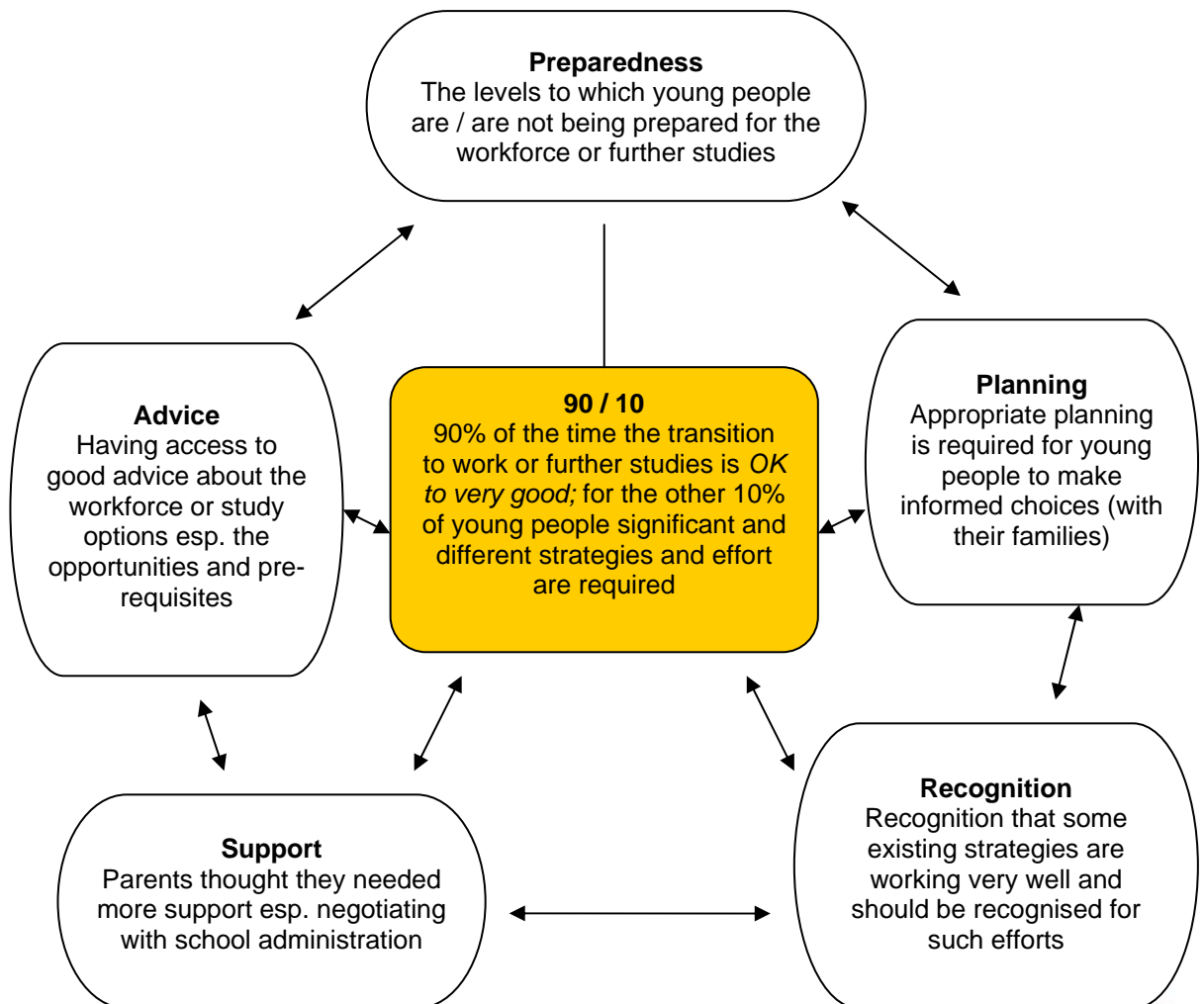
- Community, parental and youth **valuing education**; valuing educators and their beyond-teaching responsibility.
- **Large disengaged youth situation** in Mt Isa – education/justice/child safety on one hand; back home with families on the other hand.
- **Home issues** leading to and impacting on youth education opportunities.
- The influence of **peers** is greater.
- Recognise and role model the “good” families and “good students”; **recognise and celebrate the 90%** that’s working well.
- 44 Indigenous youth at Good Shepherd, 6 in senior, 1 is the school captain.
- Mt Isa Community Development Association re health & community services sector sees strong need for **cultural development / cultural recognition / cultural studies / social development** orientation via social sciences, media etc for Mt Isa to complement strong predominance of industry.
- **Community education for community development** via
 - cultural studies
 - life skills eg budgeting

Summary – Secondary to Training/Higher Education/Work

- Not in school
 - Large number of disengaged youth population
 - Work and training opportunity in outlying places
- In school (school based matters)
 - One on one as well as general career education, the big picture beyond CDEP
 - Joint parent, student, school planning opportunities
 - Individual learning and education plans
 - OP scores as tertiary prerequisite
 - Aboriginal specific plus mainstream programs
 - (Wrongful) channelling of students
 - Coping with peer pressure
 - Literacy
 - Schools as communities incl cultural development / cultural recognition / cultural studies / social development and community development education
 - Indigenous workers in schools
 - Youth in the child protection system and schools



- Community
 - Parental and community (and student) knowledge
 - Valuing education and educators
 - Community education for community development
- Options (local options)
 - Local opportunities incl school/work pathway connections
 - CDEP and youth matters (see above)
 - TAFE and youth (see above) incl training options and matters for remote area youth
 - Tertiary and youth (see above)
- 90% doing well (but Indigenous girls' options?)



Break Out Group: *Rural/Remote - Urban*

Key Issues Raised

- Spinifex Residential College
 - 3 Campuses (Jnr, Snr & Res)
 - Residential Campus in 5th Year
 - Students from Camooweal, Boulia, Burketown (Prep – Yr 7)
 - Doomadgee (Prep – Yr 10) band 9
 - History of children easily disengaged from boarding schools in coastal areas
 - Res college has strong educational focus as opposed to a Hostel Environment
 - Philosophy of multiple pathways for students
- Issues
 - Disparity between state run facility and private boarding school regarding commonwealth resourcing
 - Abstudy/Centrelink \$8000 means tested
 - AIC (Assistance for Isolated Children)
- Abstudy – SRA (Shared Responsibility Agreements) Commonwealth
- Tenants from rural communities (VPG)
- Environment – away on health related issues
- 30 people in 1 bedroom unit
- Accommodation issues for students on traineeships/apprenticeships
- Quadrennium Cycle
 - Kids in custody moved from Mt Isa and area to Townsville
 - Most kids P-Yr10 – detention centre
 - No follow through
- Mt Isa District student population (4700-5000 Indigenous, 40% of overall population)
- Supplementary services in Community

Break Out Group: *Rural/Remote to Urban*

Key Issues Raised

- Spinifex Residential College
 - Res College built as the only other choices for Mt Isa District kids was coastal boarding school or school of the air
 - Generally kids did not succeed when going to coastal boarding schools
 - Main focus of Res College is connecting back with kids communities
 - Different from Hostel as it provides educational programs
 - Geographically sensible for Mt Isa District due to Mt Isa being only “hub” in remote are. This model may not work in every EQ district
 - Different families in communities traditionally either go to coast or Mt Isa therefore don’t get everyone to Res college

- Education Director for Mt Isa questions the meaning of Govt's excuse of "This is not core business" when establishing things outside of normal school. Core Business = any means of kids staying engaged and how successful their results are beyond the next election budget
- Showcasing or just sharing of ideas/practices between schools/districts only has one avenue through Ed Views (for State Schools) or individuals making it there business to know what's going on in other districts.
- Showcase awards but only the winner and their practices are shown, not all the other entries
- Perception in community that certain schools will produce certain outcomes. Need more communication to the community on the successes.
- Families migrating to Mt Isa for various reasons (health, work etc) but then have no housing. Resulting in numbers of families living in the one house. Creating environment of absenteeism from school or not even enrolling in school.
- School based apprenticeships lead to getting a job but then there is no housing. DEST mobility program is not widely known about or accessed in the community.
- Abstudy & Assistance for Isolated Children
 - Parents are sceptical of sending kids to boarding schools because of chances of having to pay assistance money back.
 - Needs to be a better way for money's to come to boarding school/residential college.
 - Opportunity to connect the funds better for boarding students compared to residential students
 - Federal and State Govt's could work more collaboratively
 - TSIREC is putting suggestion to Commonwealth to send funds direct to facility
 - Privacy between Govt agencies eg centrelink, DETA, Child Safety, Communities, Justice causes problems
- Kids 10-17 y.o in detention centres
 - Sometimes this is their first contact with literacy/numeracy
 - When returning into community they don't go to school
 - Justice Dept does contact school in community to advise child is returning from detention centre but there is no support to actually enrol the child in school
- Mt Isa Community Development – Home Skills Program
 - Funded by Xstrata
 - Find people needing this service when migrating from other communities for various reasons
 - Accommodation is huge issues
 - Program has 5 focus areas
 - Tenant advice (renting, real estates etc)
 - Budgeting and money skills
 - Home care (cleaning etc)
 - Personal health and hygiene
 - Eat well – be active



STATEMENT OF OUTCOMES

As a consequence of the Community Forum at Mt Isa, it is anticipated that it will have a number of positive impacts to influence the work of the QIECC and its feedback to government to have a level of influence on policy and also for the engagement of Community.

As part of its Terms of Reference, the Committee is to obtain views from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Queenslanders in relation of Indigenous education matters, in order to represent community views at a Ministerial level. Outcomes of the Forum will be relayed to both the State and Commonwealth Ministers of Education. The report will also be posted on the QIECC website.

Additionally, QIECC will report outcomes back to the Mt Isa community in an appropriate manner.

