

## THE WIDE BAY BURNETT INDIGENOUS STRONGER FAMILIES PROJECT, QUEENSLAND

### *The project setting*

The project is located in the Wide Bay Burnett region of Queensland. The region covers Hervey Bay, Maryborough, Bundaberg and district, Cherbourg and the Central Burnett towns of Gayndah, Mundubbera and Eidsvold.

The project is managed by a project management group with representatives from these cluster areas, and the auspice is the Community Congress Educational Development Unit Ltd. The project office is based in Bundaberg.

### *Why is the project needed?*

The focus of the project is to work to strengthen Indigenous families. The Indigenous community across the Wide Bay Burnett region recognised the need for early intervention and prevention through parenting programs for Indigenous communities and specifically including Indigenous parents, young people and leaders.

The program will enhance, empower and improve connections between Indigenous families, relatives, community members, leaders in our youth, men and women. Professional support will be provided through the development of productive partnerships between government, non government and other service providers

so they can better respond to and resource our Indigenous communities across the Wide Bay Burnett region.

### *What are you trying to do in this project?*

We have a particular focus on families with children aged from 0-5 years and issues around family violence. Through our communities developing their own solutions to their own local problems we are aiming to improve family functioning by developing understanding, knowledge and skills about positive parenting and family wellbeing by implementing programs developed by the local communities. We also aim to develop positive leadership in our young people and to strengthen their connections to the community and improve their sense of self worth and identity.

### *How are you going about it?*

Developing and establishing relationships with key stakeholders in the regions is essential. This means communicating with service providers, community people, elders and young people. This will bring about a more cohesive approach to communities.

We visit the communities to connect with them and develop relationships, we acknowledge this as a key factor through enhancing participation through dialogue from a cultural perspective. We then work with them to discover how the program can assist them, how it could best work for them. We have done this in part through running community information workshops, interagency meetings and

developing good partnership processes.

Currently, we are running the Sister Girl project which is targeting positive parenting and developing leadership with young mothers through using mentors who are community women who have a respect for the younger women (aged 16-25) and are women with whom the young women can connect.

We are supporting a valuing education program that is being conducted at the Cherbourg State School. It is helping young primary age children to value and respect themselves and to value education. It also involves working with the parents to help them to support and value their gundoos (children). This program emphasises the importance of recognising better educational outcomes.

We are also supporting a young Aboriginal men's support group (aged 15-25). We acknowledge them as part of our community and recognize that their needs are not being met. We are working with these young men to give them recognition of who they are as part of our future. It's about listening to them and connecting with them, developing them as a group, addressing their needs and issues that are impacting on them and clarifying key issues. We also hope to encourage potential leaders. This group is unique because the young men have been able to embrace having an Aboriginal woman initiating this program as the group leader. We now have mentors to encourage the young men to continue to share their problems and issues.

