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A COMMUNITY EDUCATION COUNSELLOR IN INNISFAIL

*Robert G. Jones

A review of the establishment and first year of operation of the community education counsellor in Innisfail.

N.B. Aboriginal is to be taken as meaning Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander.

INTRODUCTION

The first community education counsellors (CEC's) were employed to work in Queensland's schools in 1975. Today there are 37 working throughout Queensland's schools and although their role may vary according to local needs and individual expertise, they generally provide the following services:

- Counselling Aboriginal students and parents about education and related issues.
- Assisting teachers to understand and work more effectively with Aboriginal students.
- Providing a link between local Aboriginal organizations, local Aboriginal communities and schools.
- Encouraging Aboriginal students to be proud of their culture and identity.

The majority of CEC's are employed by the Queensland Department of Education and most work in secondary schools. This belies the fact that many Aboriginal children encounter significant concerns at primary school.

The CEC position in Innisfail differs significantly from the usual CEC positions in two ways.

1. The Innisfail CEC works exclusively in the local primary and preschools, i.e., five primary schools and four preschools, which have together about 275 Aboriginal pupils.

* *Guidance Officer, Queensland Department of Education, Innisfail.*

2. The position was initiated by the local Aboriginal community and funded by the Federal Department of Aboriginal Affairs (D.A.A.), not the Queensland Department of Education. The CEC salary and allowances are administered via the local housing co-operative.

In this article I will discuss the history and first year of operation of the Innisfail CEC position. Under the latter I will consider such issues as role, base, time allocation, school's perceptions, community perceptions, training, the Concerned Parents Group, the importance of the personal characteristics of a CEC and the future of the Innisfail position. The basis of this article is a series of interviews conducted by the author during 1983 and 1984 with the CEC and the principals, teachers, social workers, committee members, parents and others (e.g. commonwealth education officer, district guidance officer) that the CEC worked with.

HISTORY

It is difficult to pinpoint the exact starting point for history of the Innisfail CEC position. Rather, it seems that a number of events acted together in creating the position.

1. In 1981 an Aboriginal teacher aide was appointed to Innisfail High School to act as a CEC. This proved very successful and inspired the community to reflect on the possibilities of establishing a similar position in the primary schools.

2. A local branch of the Queensland Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Consultative Committee (QATSICC - an advisory group on education) was formed in 1982. This group known locally as the Concerned Parents Group (CPG) began to consider issues such as absenteeism, homework, and the lack of communication between some Aboriginal parents and schools.

3. In March 1983 the local Commonwealth education officer ran a workshop for the CPG on submission writing. Consequently a submission for the CEG position was written and after consultation with local principals was submitted to D.A.A. It was approved in September 1983 (see Appendix A).

A selection panel was formed consisting of one CPG member, the manager of the local housing co-operative, a local teacher and the author. The position was advertised locally and from the many applications received a short list of six applicants was made. These applicants were interviewed and Evelyn Rumble was selected. In

choosing her, the selection committee deemed the following characteristics desirable:

- Of Aboriginal descent and able to work within Aboriginal and White cultures.
- Ability to communicate effectively with Aboriginal parents and children and school personnel.
- Not a defensive or reactive person, rather, an easygoing confident person who could be rational under pressure.

One important issue to emerge from the establishment phase was that, of the five principals consulted during the submission writing stage, three left the area at the end of 1983. Evelyn therefore had to deal with new principals who had little concept of the evolution of her job. This problem was overcome, but some concerns persisted as subsequently outlined.

This, then, is the background to the CEC's appointment. Following is a review of her first year of operation, and discussion of several key issues.

ROLE

When Evelyn commenced duties in January 1984 she was in a sense breaking new ground. Very few CEC's had worked exclusively in primary schools and it was a totally new concept for the primary schools and the community in Innisfail. Hence, there was little in the way of precedent to guide her. Instead, she used four other sources to clarify her role (that is, find out exactly what she should and shouldn't do).

The initial source of guidance for Evelyn was the CPG submission to DAA. This listed the types of issues that concerned the parents and some of the duties expected of the CEC. However, the author thinks the submission had two weaknesses: a lack of detail and a problem oriented approach.

Perusal of the submission reveals that there is no detailed account of the concerns, e.g., when referring to absenteeism, no mention is made of which schools were experiencing the problem, the rate of absenteeism and any variations in these rates. This lack of detail meant Evelyn had to spend quite a bit of time gathering information on the types of concerns evident, the nature of these concerns, and how to deal effectively with them. If this had been attempted earlier it could have saved considerable time and effort.

More serious, in the opinion of the author, was the fact that the submission was problem oriented, that is, it discussed only the problems associated with Aboriginal students. This, I think, led Evelyn and schools to perceiving her role as a problem solving one, that is, not much thought was given initially to Evelyn running programs designed to prevent problems, or positive programs, e.g. culture programs. It is easy, with the benefit of hindsight, to be critical of the submission. It must be remembered, however, that it was written by a group of caring, concerned parents who, unfortunately, had little experience in setting up programs such as this.

Another source of role clarification for Evelyn was the small group of people who offered both formal and informal support throughout the year. This included the CPG committee, the commonwealth education officer, the district guidance officer, other CEC's and the staff of the Innisfail Special Education Unit. All of the above at one time or another were able to discuss with Evelyn aspects of her role and, drawing upon their vast experience, she was able to clarify her role. Certainly the author would attribute much of Evelyn's success to this type of personal support.

Evelyn's initial training sessions were another source, and I have discussed these in detail below. At present all that needs to be said is that it provided an invaluable forum for discussing and clarifying her role.

Possibly the largest influence on Evelyn's role was the negotiations she carried out with principals. Early in the year she visited the schools she proposed to service and had discussions with individual principals as to the role she was to play in each school. Because of the general uncertainty attached to her role, I think these negotiations resulted in a problem solving role. That is, principals were uncertain of any other ways to use Evelyn's services because they did not know much about the role of CEC's. Of these four factors, the author thinks that the submission and the negotiations played the largest part in shaping the CEC role which essentially became a problem solving role. I must stress that I am *not* being critical of the principals, teachers, other agencies, etc., who emphasized a problem solving role. After all, if a young Aboriginal lad was, say, not attending school, the CEC would be a logical alternative to consider. The point I am trying to make is that many powerful forces combined to influence Evelyn (someone new to education and in a new unique job) into adopting a crisis model.

Below I will describe the sorts of concerns Evelyn dealt with, how these concerns were referred and how she dealt with them, the

problems that arose with the role, and the eventual evolution of the new role statement.

CONCERNS

As anyone who has worked in the social welfare field well knows, all situations encountered are usually unique in terms of the people, problems, etc., involved. So it was with the situations Evelyn confronted. However, most could be subsumed under the following broad headings:

- Children* - absenteeism, failure to complete homework, misbehaviour in class.
- Parents* - low expectations of children (i.e. not expecting children to do well at school).
- Schools* - A lack of knowledge (and sometimes understanding) of the local Aboriginal community.

Evelyn commented that often some of these concerns were interrelated (e.g. parents had low expectations and little contact with the school and the child failed to complete homework). She also said that absenteeism was the issue that she confronted most often during the year.

I think there is a need to carefully consider each of the above concerns in terms of 'cultural misunderstanding': did the problems arise because the Aboriginal people and/or school personnel did not understand the values, goals, language of the other? (By language I mean the dialect the Aborigines might use, and that other famous dialect used too often by school personnel, educational jargonese!) Evelyn and the author suspect that 'cultural misunderstanding' was probably at the heart of at least some (most?) of these 'problems'. In fact, as I shall show later, this issue led partly to Evelyn revising her role.

Referrals. The way in which concerns were referred was one Evelyn adopted after consultation with the principals. She visited each school at set times during the week. (The issue of timetabling will be discussed later.) At the beginning of each visit, Evelyn would consult with the principal about how she could be of assistance. The principal and Evelyn usually resolved that she should deal with some sort of 'problem' as discussed above. Generally problems were referred to the principal by class teachers. Other agencies (e.g. Department of Children's Services) often referred concerns directly to her.

Referrals, as indicated, were initially verbal but Evelyn has now formalized the procedure by designing, in consultation with school personnel, a formal referral form and notes on its use (see Appendix B). This form, she hopes, will be used by schools and other agencies. Parents will, hopefully, continue to call on her help directly.

Evelyn developed this form for three reasons. It will be an efficient way to collect information, it will formalize the referral procedure and, hopefully, help avoid any misunderstandings. For example, by including the parts about principals' comments and parent contact, it will remind teachers to discuss the concern with all involved. The section on what is expected will ensure teacher expectations of the CEC are clarified.

Very few concerns were referred directly by parents. That is, the vast majority of referrals came from schools. This situation tended to improve, however, towards the end of 1984 when Evelyn moved her work base to the District Guidance Office (see below for detailed discussion).

Dealing with concerns. Evelyn found that during the year she engaged mainly in the following activities (when dealing with the concerns stated earlier). These are listed in order of the time expended (longest to shortest): counselling parents; counselling school staff; counselling children; organizing and supervising activities (e.g. homework classes, Aboriginal Week activities); writing reports. (*Counselling = defining problems, gathering and distributing information, suggesting alternatives*).

As the above indicates, counselling skills assumed enormous significance. This was quite wisely recognized by the various bodies that organized the CEC's training and hence the main thrust of training was counselling skills.

Problems with the CEC Role. Generally all concerned, that is, Evelyn, school personnel, other agencies (e.g. Department of Children's Services) and the C.P.G. agreed that Evelyn was most successful in dealing with nearly all situations. Of course, the degree of success varied with individual situations and really is an issue too complex and lengthy to discuss here. However, as one principal put it, "it was all certainly worthwhile". Towards the end of 1984, however, Evelyn, the Commonwealth education officer, the high school CEC, the author and some principals began to have reservations about Evelyn's role in schools.

The sources of these reservations were twofold. First, Evelyn found that some agencies wanted her to assume roles that were not really hers. For example, some parents wanted her to take their children to school each day. Some teachers wanted her to assume teacher aide duties such as supervising reading groups. In the author's view, this was a result of the initial confusion about the CEC's role alluded to above and, more importantly, Evelyn being perceived as a "Mrs Fix-It", the solver of all and any problems.

Related to this was Evelyn's expressed concern (late 1984) that she was constantly dealing with problems and that this in many cases was inappropriate and/or inefficient. For example, many schools were concerned about Aboriginal children failing to do homework. In an effort to alleviate this situation, Evelyn helped organize homework classes. That is, volunteer teachers and parents would supervise for two days/week, any children (Aboriginal and white) who wanted to come to the class after school. The greatest advantage seemed to be that children could get help immediately if they wanted it. The classes met with initial success but soon ceased owing to a lack of support from children and especially parents. The author believes this occurred because:

1. The classes required a considerable input from parents in terms of time. Few parents were prepared to keep this going and those who did found it quite onerous.
2. Not all children needed the classes. That is, some children had little or no problem with homework. Therefore the children who had no problems were probably not motivated to attend.
3. Those children who did have problems with homework may have found school a threatening place and could have been reluctant to stay after school to do work they found difficult.
4. I strongly suspect a type of cultural misunderstanding was involved. That is, some parents and some school personnel did not understand the goals, values, even the language the other attached to the issue of homework. If this were true, homework classes would not really deal with this issue.

Rather than run homework classes (which were essentially a remedial, negative innovation), Evelyn looked for more positive, preventative measures.

The following are some of the suggestions Evelyn and the author generated:

- Run inservice courses with teachers to alert them to the culture of the local Aboriginal communities, especially the aspects that may affect school.
- Increase Aboriginal parent's understanding of and contact with schools. For example, this may be achieved by encouraging parents to attend parent-teacher conferences and individual counselling of parents.

This example of the issue of homework serves my purpose of illustrating why Evelyn wanted to restate her role in a more positive, preventative and specific way. A new role statement evolved, and was duly discussed with and approved by the CPG (see Appendix C). So far, the school personnel have approved wholeheartedly of the concepts behind the new role and the role statement itself.

This is not to say that the problems listed above have, or will ever cease to exist, or indeed that Evelyn will ever stop helping to deal with them in the manner described above. Rather, she is now committed to attempting to deal with concerns in the most positive, preventative models.

To sum up then, the CEC's role is shifting (hopefully) from a crisis model to a more positive, preventative model. Certainly it is more closely defined, as are the concerns and methods of referral.

BASE

When Evelyn commenced duties, she was based at the local Catholic primary school. The CPG did this for the following reasons:

- The office space was available.
- The school staff were very sympathetic to the concept of the CEC.
- The school staff were far more stable than other state primary schools and hence could offer a continuity of support.

Several disadvantages, however, soon became apparent. The CEC -

- had poor access to the telephone.
- shared the room often with two remedial teachers and hence had a limited capacity to conduct private interviews.
- was generally difficult to locate.

Most importantly, Evelyn thought these disadvantages discouraged parents from visiting her.

The CPG and the school's administration shared Evelyn's concern but no other suitable accommodation became available till October 1984. It was then that the Innisfail Special Education Unit (SEU) opened in the grounds of Innisfail State School. The SEU was designed as a base for the two guidance officers, three itinerant remedial teachers, the speech therapist and the migrant resource teacher. The district guidance officer offered the CPG the opportunity to base Evelyn there. It was thought that it would offer the following advantages:

- Private interview facilities.
- Secretarial support.
- A central location, easily accessed by parents.

The CPG approved, and Evelyn moved in and it was obvious by the end of the year that the move was successful. There was a dramatic increase in the number of parents who visited Evelyn and much more efficient communication with schools, parents, etc. Two other more subtle but critically important advantages became evident:

- Because she was based at the SEU with the rest of the district's support staff, Evelyn became identified as part of that staff and this, the author thinks, enhanced her credibility.
- The support staff at the SEU were able to offer enormous support to Evelyn. She had very experienced people whom she could discuss concerns with, gather information from and generally feel supported by.

The enormous success of this move (all principals etc., interviewed cited it as being an outstanding success) raises a much broader issue. That is, should all CEC positions become part of the Guidance & Special Education Branch? Should all CEC's be based

at Special Education Units and be employed under conditions similar to those under which advisory teacher's operate?

All of those interviewed by the author as well as several CEC's would agree with this proposal. They cited the following advantages:

1. As they would be part of the Department of Education system, CEC's would receive greater acceptance and credibility in schools.
2. As a recognized section of the Department of Education, CEC's would have some form of a hierarchy to argue for greater training, support, etc.
3. The CEC role would complement the support roles of Guidance staff, remedial teachers, etc.

The author, who has had dealings with two other committees which have worked in other areas of social welfare and who have administered Federal funds and employed personnel, considers the second point very pertinent. I have seen both of these committees (*not* the CPG) dominated at times by groups with very narrow interests and a limited understanding of the welfare area. This has led to many problems. This is not to say it couldn't happen in a government bureaucracy. The author's experience indicates, however, the possible excesses of a committee are far more devastating than the possible excesses of the Department of Education.

The chief disadvantage of a CEC becoming part of the Education system is the possibility of the CEC "losing touch" with the local Aboriginal community. In Evelyn's case, however, that has not happened (e.g. more parents visit her at the SEU).

TIME ALLOCATION

The initial submission suggested the CEC visit five schools which together had a population of about 275 Aboriginal students. To do this, Evelyn devised a timetable and allocated a day or part of a day per week to each school, according to the number of Aboriginal children.

Evelyn soon found that the needs of each school were different and she modified her timetable accordingly. She modified it again later in the year when other schools and agencies (which were not mentioned in the submission) requested her assistance. Actually this is a good indication of how successful she was: the word spread among principals and other social agencies about how useful

Evelyn's services were and they requested assistance. Towards the end of 1984, however, Evelyn felt overloaded, i.e., too many issues to deal with in a set amount of time. She therefore opted to provide a quality service (restrict the number of issues and schools dealt with) rather than attempting to deal with all the schools and issues in the area. All concerned (i.e., school personnel, CPG) generally have supported this decision although it is probably too early to tell how effective it will be.

SCHOOLS' PERCEPTIONS OF THE C.E.C.

As discussed above, there was initially some uncertainty felt by schools and Evelyn as to her role in schools. This was complicated by the transfer of three of the five principals consulted during the establishment of the CEC position. These difficulties were overcome, however, by an ongoing series of negotiations between the schools and Evelyn. Hence the transfer system that operates on schools in the Innisfail area has the potential to impede the establishment of a working relationship with school staff. That is, as the example above shows, it seems that Evelyn can establish a working relationship with a principal and/or a teacher only to have to start all over again with that teacher's replacement.

Evelyn thinks that she will therefore need to have an ongoing program of meeting with new school staff and discussing her role. Part of this process will include informing them of the history of CED positions and their role, which is where Appendix C (the role statement) is quite valuable.

Beyond the issue of formal relationships with school staff, she found it valuable to establish an informal relationship with the staff, that is, get to know them on a personal basis outside the problem situation context. This sort of personal relationship she found, means a teacher is often more receptive to discussing an issue. By spending morning breaks with school staff and simply chatting, Evelyn hopes to establish these sorts of informal relationships.

Finally, the author thinks she has been well received in schools because they realize they share a common goal with her - that is, the best possible education for children.

EVELYN'S INFLUENCE ON SCHOOL STAFF

In the capacity of guidance officer, the author visits all the schools serviced by Evelyn. During 1984, the author discerned that the CEC's presence was having a subtle effect on school staff. That is, the staff were becoming more sensitive to the issues involved in the education of Aboriginal children.

This was evinced in two ways. First, many teachers and principals who had previously discussed the progress of Aboriginal children by using doubtful theories and cliches began to discuss children's progress in terms that indicated an understanding of the fundamental issues involved. Second, the author noted a decrease in ethnocentric and/or racist remarks made about the Aboriginal people. Perhaps two examples gleaned from conversations the author had with a principal and a teacher may serve to illustrate the above.

Principal: I never really appreciated that the Aboriginal community was like the rest of the community; that there are little groups and cliques in their community just like ours.

Teacher: Till I met Evelyn I thought they [meaning Aboriginal parents] didn't care. Through Evelyn I met a few - some of them were all right, just a bit shy.

The author does not want to exaggerate Evelyn's success in changing teacher attitudes and beliefs. Rather, it would be fair to say that there has been a subtle, small progress in the area and it is to be hoped that it will continue.

TRAINING

Evelyn's training may be divided into two strands: a formal pre-service/in-service program and an informal needs-based program. I shall discuss each of these strands below.

The formal program was as follows:

Pre-service

Jan. 16-18	Induction programming covering basic role, Department structure and counselling skills in Cairns.	Organized and run by Cairns District Guidance Office (DGO)
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Inservice

<u>Date</u>	<u>Details/Venue</u>	<u>Organized/Run by</u>
March 12-16	Placed with CEC at Mossman to observe.	Cairns DGO
March 15	One day meeting with other CECs in Cairns.	Cairns DGO
May 2-4	Attended Guidance Camp for Innisfail Year 11 pupils.	Innisfail High School CEC
May 14-18	Induction seminar in Brisbane.	
Sept 19-23	Counselling skills and meeting with other CECs - Brisbane.	Department of Education
Dec.3-7	Discussion of initiatives involving Aboriginal education in Brisbane.	QATSICC

Several aspects of the formal training component need to be discussed. The original submission made no provision for training. Evelyn, however, was invited to the training programs run for the Department of Education CECs.

As indicated earlier, this program placed a heavy emphasis on counselling skills. An appropriate response, as counselling seems to be the activity that took up most of Evelyn's time. She found, however, that although the theoretical aspects of counselling were discussed thoroughly, she never had enough chances to practise the skills. The author has agreed to attempt to do this with her in informal sessions after the training programs.

The informal training strand really began when Evelyn moved to the Innisfail SEU. This consisted of the very many occasions when Evelyn was confronted with a problem and would consult one of the guidance officers or remedial teachers, who inevitably would give her a complete detailed opinion. The sorts of problems Evelyn discussed ranged from broad issues such as curriculum, and counselling techniques, to minor but in most cases still important issues such as a certain school's routine and Departmental procedures.

Evelyn and the author agree that this informal training was almost as important as the formal seminars because it provided Evelyn with the sort of accurate 'grass roots' information vital to anyone who wants to operate in schools. Certainly this sort of training occurred naturally and easily because Evelyn was based with the Special Education personnel, and adds strength to the argument for CEC's being based with Special Education staff.

The author's major criticism of the training program is that there is not enough, especially in comparison to the training programs for comparable jobs. For example, social workers and guidance officers must have a minimum of three to four years tertiary study prior to entering their profession. The author therefore recommends a complete and urgent upgrading of the current piecemeal approach to training, especially pre-service training.

THE CONCERNED PARENTS GROUP

The CPG generally offered a great deal of support and encouragement to the CEC during the year. Evelyn thinks she certainly could not have functioned as well as she did without that support. However, two minor concerns arose:

1. The composition of the committee changed rapidly and frequently with only a few 'regulars' to offer some ongoing stability. This did not affect Evelyn a great deal but was disconcerting.

2. The unrealistic expectations of some committee members who thought that because Evelyn was working in schools the problems would disappear rapidly. This is one of the disadvantages of the committee system as indicated above. Members with little concept of the problems faced can place unrealistic expectations upon the CEC. This, however, did not interfere greatly with Evelyn's performance. It meant though, that she needed to familiarize some members with the nature of the problems she faced.

COMMUNITY PERCEPTIONS OF THE CEC POSITION

To evaluate this aspect, the author held discussions with C.P.G. members and a few prominent members of the Aboriginal Community. Though it could be argued that this sample was not truly representative of the community, the author thinks it provided some insight into the Aboriginal community's perceptions of Evelyn.

All the feedback the author obtained was very positive indeed. It seems that the CEC's assistance was highly regarded and increasingly sought after. There has been a steady increase in parents contacting her directly.

THE CEC'S PERSONAL CHARACTERISTICS AS RELATED TO HER EFFECTIVENESS

All persons interviewed by the author measured the success of the CEC in terms of her effectiveness in dealing with the concerns listed earlier. All agreed that there was a remarkable improvement in all of those concerns. To achieve this, Evelyn had to deal with

issues such as her role statement, timetable, referral procedures, the transfer of school staff, base, and the perceptions of the schools and community. To help her deal with these issues she had the support of the C.P.G., principals, teachers, special education staff and her training sessions. The author thinks, however, that the factors that contributed most of all to Evelyn's effectiveness were the personal characteristics listed earlier:

- Of Aboriginal descent and able to work within Aboriginal and white cultures.
- Ability to communicate effectively with Aboriginal parents and children and school personnel.
- Not a defensive or reactive person, rather an easygoing confident person who could be rational under pressure.

The importance of these characteristics is evident if the nature of the CEC role is examined. It is a job that involves mostly counselling and/or communication within the context of two contrasting cultures. The CEC is involved often with people who bring to a situation emotions such as anger, mistrust, guilt, fear, anxiety and at times blatant racism. Because of this, the CEC's job often involves a great deal of stress. Consequently, it is the author's opinion that personal qualities such as communication skills, stability, maturity, confidence and non-reactiveness are the critically important foundations upon which any CEC can build an effective role.

THE FUTURE

As earlier discussions indicated, the CEC position in Innisfail was a remarkable success. DAA have recognised this and have funded the position for the foreseeable future.

Evelyn certainly has a solid foundation to build on. She has resolved many issues including her role, base, timetable, referrals, etc. She has the support of the community and the schools, both of whom acknowledge that she has helped resolve many concerns affecting Aboriginal children. The author thinks, however, that four issues will need to be considered in the future. They are : the continued evolution of the CEC's role, training; the status of CECs and the growth in CEC numbers.

It is likely that the CEC's role in Innisfail will continue to change simply because certain conditions may change. These conditions include a growth in the schools' and communities' awareness of the CEC, more training and, hopefully, certain concerns

(e.g., absenteeism) diminishing to the point where they no longer require the attention of the CECs.

This issue is directly related to the status of the CECs. Should they become part of the Queensland Department of Education or be the responsibility of the local communities? Both of these issues certainly affect all CECs, including Evelyn, and the author would hope that they will be resolved quickly to enable effective training and administration of all CEC positions.

Finally, the author would like to see an increase in CEC numbers. It is a measure of the CEC's effectiveness that other areas are applying to have a CEC appointed. For example, two areas in great need that the author visits, Tully and Babinda, have applied for CECs. After being witness to the great things possible with a CEC position, I sincerely hope more are appointed.

APPENDIX A

To The Officer-in-Charge
Department of Aboriginal Affairs
32 Aplin Street
CAIRNS Q. 4870

PROPOSAL FOR AN ABORIGINAL/ISLANDER PRIMARY SCHOOL LIAISON PERSON

The Concerned Parent Group of Innisfail (local QATSICC) is very concerned about the welfare of our Aboriginal/Islander primary school students. The group has done a considerable amount of ground work within a number of primary schools in this area, thus confirming these problems.

1. There is a high absenteeism rate amongst Ab/Isl. students.
2. Parents are apprehensive to approach schools.
3. Students are not doing homework for various reasons.
4. Parents don't understand the school system.
5. Teachers and parents feel inadequate to cope with students' problems due to lack of communication.

We believe a school/community liaison person's position should be created so that effective communications can take place between school-parents-students and community in general.

A liaison person would:

1. Be an accessible channel into schools for parents.
 2. Act as go-between for student and teachers.
 3. Be a confidante to students re. talking over problems.
 4. Bridge the gap that exists between parents-school-parents.
-

The primary school liaison person will be based at the Good Counsel Primary School in Innisfail. Permission has been granted by the principal, Mr John Walsh. This type of person is not new to the Good Counsel School as they've had two attached to the school in the past three years or so.

The liaison person would be responsible to the Concerned Parent Group who will act on behalf of the Ab/Isl. community. A report once every term will be expected of this person by the C.P.G. The feedback would then be reported to the community through the general meetings of the C.P.G., which are held every term.

The administrator of the Chjowia Housing Co-op will take responsibility of administrating monies.

This person would be chosen by a selection panel consisting of:
a) A primary school guidance officer; b) Principal of the Good Counsel Primary School; c) One member of the Concerned Parents Group; d) The administrator of the Chjowia Housing Co-op.

Qualifications necessary are:

- a) Must be of Ab/Isl. descent.
 - b) Must identify as such.
 - c) Be able to communicate effectively with Ab/Isl. community
 - d) Mature, responsible and willing to accept any challenges.
 - e) Have driver's licence and have his/her own transport.
-

Costing:

Salary	\$15,000.00
Car allowance	1,000.00
Telephone allowance	500.00
Filing cabinet	150.00
Stationery	200.00
Leave loading	300.00
Desk & chair	200.00
Total	\$17,300.00

Statistics of schools concerned:

<u>School (primary)</u>	<u>Whole population</u>	<u>Nos.Ab/Isl.students</u>
Goondi S.P.S.	280	40
Innisfail Central S.P.S.	268	53
Silkwood S.P.S.	120	25
Good Counsel Primary	280	26
East Innisfail S.P.S.	387	72

Other primary schools in Innisfail district: Mundoo, Flying Fish Pt. Mourilyan, Daradgee, Sth Johnstone, East Palmerston, Mena Creek, combined Ab/Isl students only approximately 40.

Signed by the Secretary of Concerned Parent
Group on behalf of C.P.G. Committee.

APPENDIX B

Evelyn Rumble
Community Education Counsellor
Special Education Unit
Park Street, Innisfail, Q. 4860

Dear Principal

I would like to formalise the way referrals are made.

In future I would like teachers to fill in the attached referral form. This will help in 3 ways:

- 1) It will help me gather important information.
- 2) It will minimize the chances of some sort of misunderstanding.
- 3) It may help teachers and myself to clarify what the concern is and what can be done.

I would imagine the following procedure could be used:

Teachers discuss concern with Principal, Parents and others (e.g. remedial teachers)	Teachers fill in form; Principal signs form.	Form sent to C.E.C.	C.E.C. visits school and discusses concern
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The above is only a suggestion and I would be more than happy to discuss and modify any aspect. All information will be kept confidential.

Yours faithfully

-sgd- Evelyn Rumble

COMMUNITY EDUCATION COUNSELLOR REFERRAL FORM - Park St Innisfail
Telephone: 613733

NAME: _____ DATE OF BIRTH: _____

SCHOOL: _____

TEACHER: _____ GRADE: _____

PARENT/GUARDIAN: _____

ADDRESS: _____

REFERRED BY: _____ DESIGNATION: _____

REASON FOR REFERRAL: _____

HAVE THE PARENTS BEEN INFORMED? _____

HOW CAN I BE OF ASSISTANCE? _____

PRINCIPAL'S COMMENT & SIGNATURE _____

SIGNATURE: _____ DATE _____

ACTION TAKEN: _____

APPENDIX C

COMMUNITY EDUCATION COUNSELLOR

December 1984

HISTORY

The first Community Education Counsellor (CEC) positions were created in Inala in 1975 in response to the local Aboriginal and Islander community and schools requesting a liaison person to act as a go between for the schools and the community. Today there are 40 CEC's in Queensland and it is hoped that there will eventually be 70 positions.

My position was created in 1984 and is one of the first CEC positions to be based in primary schools. The position came about when a group of local Aboriginal & Islander parents who wanted to create closer liaison between schools and the Aboriginal & Islander Community formed a committee and wrote a submission to the Department of Aboriginal Affairs (D.A.A.). The committee is a branch of QATSICC (Queensland Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Consultative Committee) and is known as the Concerned Parents Group. They requested and were granted funds to employ a liaison person.

My position is therefore funded by D.A.A. and I am based at the Innisfail Special Education Unit (Ph.613733).

GUIDELINES

Below are the things that I may be able to do to help you. These guidelines may change as a result of perceived needs and negotiation.

STUDENTS

- To be a model for students. To be an understanding person whom they can discuss their concerns with.
- To encourage in students a positive attitude to school.
- To help students to understand the school system.
- To encourage aspirations, to help them aim for higher things.
- To help students make the transition from preschool to primary school and from primary school to high school.
- To run suitable activities during National Aboriginal Week.

PARENTS

- To help parents understand the school system.
- To encourage parents to visit schools and to attend parent/teacher interviews.
- To make parents more aware of their children's successes.
- To offer a sympathetic ear.
- To help parents understand their children's concerns.
- To encourage parents to take an active part in QATSICC.

TEACHERS

- To help teachers understand Aboriginal & Islander culture, values, the way they think and act.
- To help teachers understand the local Aboriginal & Islander community.
- To be a link between the school and home.
- To offer a sympathetic ear when teachers are experiencing a concern with a student and to clarify some factors that may be involved.
- To help with referrals e.g., to the Aboriginal and Islander Health Team, Guidance and Special Education.

