

# 2007 Showcase Awards for Excellence in Schools

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## Submission Template

**Submission overview:** Families as First Teachers (FAFT) addresses the Queensland Education targets of quality outcomes and continuous improvement for students. FAFT is about helping families support their pre-school aged children's early literacy and numeracy development. FAFT acknowledges that the early years of a child's life are critical learning years and takes advantage of family's natural teaching ability and their desire to support children's learning. FAFT provides opportunities for adult participants to make a range of high interest, hands on, motivating activities that develop the skills and confidence to help prepare their children for school.

**Description:** Kuranda District State College has a high enrolment percentage of Indigenous students from nearby communities including Mona Mona, Kowrowa, and Mantaka. In January 2005 the school undertook a review of school curriculum, attendance rates and behaviour management data. In line with Partners for Success, Destination 2010 and Halving the Gap targets, the school commenced a range of consultation meetings with the community to better understand the needs of the children. Patterns of low academic outcomes, irregular attendance and non-compliant behaviour were highlighted. The FAFT project developed out of an identified need from Indigenous families through an initial reference committee made up of two community liaison officers, the Principal and representatives from local Indigenous community organisations (ie KMKM and Ngoonbi).

The FAFT program has two points of delivery. The first point of delivery is to train parents in supporting children's literacy and numeracy skill acquisition. This support may take the form of material and resource creation, activities that they can use with children and strategies for working with children. The second point of delivery is to work with the children directly. Staff and volunteers use many of the activities and strategies used to engage young children in Kindergartens, Playgroups and Pre-school settings.

The program is implemented in each of the five surrounding Kuranda communities by a team of Indigenous community workers and non-Indigenous teachers. The program began operating on a weekly basis in 2005. This increased to two days in 2006 and is now three days a week. This program moves school beyond the traditional confines of the school fence operating in community halls, church buildings, private homes and shady places under trees. This model identifies the fact that some families in the past have been reluctant or unable to come into the school grounds and form strong partnerships with school staff. FAFT is a Best Practice (appendix D) example of achieving outcomes in what constitutes success in Queensland state education as outlined in Destination 2010.

### **FAFT Values:**

- Early years programs. We utilise the Early Years Curriculum Guidelines (QSA 2006)
- The existing cultural capital and literacy practices of the Indigenous families and other local families.
- The explicit use of intergenerational social and learning structures.
- Home school partnerships that improve learning outcomes for children
- The diverse and vast experience and learning skills of all teachers, community workers and family members who participate.
- Mutual learning - the need for teachers, families and Indigenous workers to work and learn from one another.

### **FAFT Delivers:**

- An **innovative** program that moves school beyond traditional rigid boundaries to respond to community needs and address recurrent themes of low academic outcomes for Indigenous students.
- An early years program drawing on identified Principles of Practice for our framework of operation as detailed in the Early Years Curriculum Guidelines (QSE 2006) These include the beliefs that; children learn best in environments where there are **supportive relationships** among all partners in the learning environment. Early childhood programs are most effective when they recognise, value and build upon the cultural and social experiences of the children and finally, building continuity of learning as children move through school provides foundations for their future success. Ernie Grants Holistic Framework has also informed much of FAFT's infrastructure.
- An **inclusive** learning environment where explicit school language structures are modelled and links made between home and school learning. Learning strategies and activities ("what works at school") are modelled to families so they can assist their children with literacy and numeracy learning and homework projects. In FAFT workshops we make and use learning resources that utilise items readily found in homes. Through this process families are provided with the skills to support their children's formal learning development. This creates a cycle of success whereby adult's literacy and numeracy skills are enhanced.
- A **transferable** process evidenced in the fact that Atherton State School have introduced the FAFT model, Mossman and Weipa have expressed interest in starting FAFT programs. Visits from the OECD, a presentation at the National ACER Principals conference and the National Dare to Lead award have all resulted in enquiries regarding establishing FAFT programs in other centres across Australia.
- A **financially sustainable** (school funded) program that continues to grow in both participant attendance (see appendix D) and time allocation (from 1 day a week in 2005 to 3 days in 2007). Recurrent funding has been sought from the Department of Communities, Playgroup Australia and DEST to increase the quality, frequency and capacity of the program.
- A **sustainable program** as FAFT is a team undertaking. Paid staff, key community representatives, volunteers and some participants are continually being trained to maintain the FAFT program. Departure by key people would not hinder the continuation of FAFT.
- A program that offers many outcomes for a relatively small financial outlay.

## **Connection to QSE – 2010, Destination 2010 and/or Education and Training Reforms for the Future:**

### LE1 –Improved learning outcomes for the diverse range of students in Education Queensland schools.

Bound for Success (2005-6) highlights the underachievement of Indigenous students. This fact is the driving force behind FAFT. As FAFT attendees reach year 2 the literacy and numeracy outcomes that commenced with a foundation in the FAFT program have improved (See appendix D graph 4).

### LE2 – A learning framework with improved integration of curriculum, pedagogy, assessment and reporting engages the diverse range of students in:

FAFT utilises the Early Years Curriculum Guidelines as a framework for operation.

### WO1 –Workforce has the capability and flexibility to deliver the objectives of QSE-2010 with teachers involved in learning and development opportunities to ensure continuous growth of skills, knowledge and professional behaviours necessary for contemporary best practice.

FAFT has responded to the needs of the school community. All primary teachers have had the opportunity through FAFT to meet families and develop understandings of Indigenous communities, how they live, what is important to them and a start to more open relationships with families and their children. New teachers go out with the FAFT program as a part of their induction program. FAFT program workers and volunteers are trained in Support a Reader and Support a Number programs as well as in general teacher-aide type roles and responsibilities.

### WO2 – Leadership drives educational reform, supports productive relationships and promotes innovation. Leadership capacity contributes to organisational performance

College principal has shown trust in delegating the DEST – PSPI funding to run the FAFT program to a senior teacher to coordinate and manage. Senior teacher released from class duties to plan, deliver and assess the FAFT program. The FAFT manager builds community competency, capacity and capital by developing community member's skills, attitudes and aptitudes to develop a "critical mass" of people able to deliver the FAFT program should key personnel leave. The success of FAFT as an innovative program will hopefully lead to a similar "reading" program for primary students being established in the communities after school hours.

### SC1 – Schools have innovative and distinctive responses to community and student needs

FAFT was developed and implemented due to the needs of the children as expressed by the community. FAFT has been so successful in attracting children and community members that Community Health now accompanies the FAFT program as they have increased access to the community.

### SC2 – Schools have productive partnerships with their community, business, industry and other government agencies

Home/school partnerships are considered critical to academic success. Teachers note more parents coming into the school and an increased ease of contacting families. FAFT's success is based on having exceptional rapport with the community, otherwise it would not have worked. As previously mentioned, Community Health coordinates its services around FAFT program delivery days.

### SC4 – Schools have increased enrolments

FAFT has supported families' understandings of the new prep program and actively encourages enrolment in the non-compulsory program.

## **Outcomes:**

### Increased school readiness.

- In 2007 attendance rates for indigenous children has improved by 40% and school readiness for indigenous year 1 and Prep students was 100% this year in that all children attended school prior to day 8 with uniforms, education materials and lunch. (see Appendix D Graph 2)

### Learning outcomes

- In July 2006 and again in January 2007 DEST increased FAFT funding as the program met the targets established in achieving indigenous student engagement, attendance and community engagement.
- Reduced negative behaviour incidents by 74% from 2004. (Appendix D graph 1)
- Increase in positive student behaviour referrals – (Appendix D graph 1)
- A strong expectation that there will be continued improvement in Indigenous students' results in reading, writing, spelling and numeracy benchmarks. – (Appendix D graph 4)
- In 2007 the ILSS program is closely linked with FAFT, enhancing communication between ILSS students, their families and grade 1 teachers.
- Real World Experiences created for the Senior Hospitality Students as they linked up with the FAFT program to create resources (which are used at the activity sessions) and offer catering.

### Increased community capacity

- Increased number of family members attending workshops illustrating strong community support (see appendix D graph 3).
- Increased number of students enrolling and engaging in preschool education from 34 in 2004 to 42 in 2006.
- Parents and caregivers are more aware, confident and skilled in the learning that their children are doing at school (see appendix A case study) and have an increased understanding of school mechanisms as evidenced in appendix 1 graph 3 detailing school readiness.
- Increase in the employment of Indigenous staff. Three Indigenous staff in 2004, five staff in 2005 and eight in 2006 and 11 in 2007.
- Workshops are accessed by indigenous and non indigenous families.

### Profile of FAFT

- In March 2007 the FAFT program received a Dare to Lead Excellence award (see appendix A). This led to Kuranda District State College becoming a member of the Dare to Lead Coalition which is committed to accelerating improvements in the quality of educational outcomes for indigenous students.
- In September 2006 the FAFT team presented at an ACER conference in Canberra about the success the program had achieved for our indigenous community. The outcomes delivered and presentation was so successful that the team has been invited to deliver the presentation in New Zealand in early 2008.
- In May 2007 the OECD International Indigenous Education conference was held in Cairns. As a part of the program, a school visit by the delegates to witness FAFT in action was held. We received a congratulatory letter from the Deputy Secretary of DEST about the outcomes that the program delivered.
- Positive publicity for the school in community, local, state and national newspapers.

### Building relationships

- Links have been developed with Community Health workers and often visits coincide. Strong support from health workers is evident through conversations with health workers and families.
- Class teachers have been provided with opportunities to develop relationships with the families of their Indigenous students by attending workshops. During these times there are conversations about school events, curriculum, student progress and other school related issues.
- Significant increase in parents and students who feel the school is a good school. 62% of parents (satisfied or very satisfied) in 2004 rose to 76% in 2005 and remained constant at 76% in 2006. This was an increase from below state mean to comparable with state mean and has been maintained up until 2006. These results were taken from the School Opinion Survey.

### **Evidence:**

All the claims made in the submission have been supported by evidence as documented in the appendixes. In addition, all the data submitted, including the raw data sources that it was taken from was provided to Dr Hillary Whitehouse, Senior Lecturer, JCU for verification. Hilary has provided a letter (appendix E) substantiating our claims.

### **References:**

Education Queensland (2006) *Destination 2010*

Education Queensland (2006) *Early Years Curriculum Guidelines*

Education Queensland (2005-6) *Bound for Success. Cape York and Torres Strait Education Discussion Paper*. Queensland Government. Department of Education and the Arts.

Grant E. (1998) *Ernie Grant's Holistic Framework*.

### **Personnel involved in the project (names and roles):**

<b>Kathryn Mannion</b>	<b>Senior Teacher</b>	<b>Project Leader</b>
<b>Rosetta Brim</b>	<b>Teacher Aide</b>	<b>Project Facilitator</b>
<b>Roz Owen</b>	<b>Teacher Aide</b>	<b>Project Facilitator</b>
<b>Martha Brim</b>	<b>Community</b>	<b>Community Leader</b>
<b>Marcella Hudson</b>	<b>Community</b>	<b>Community Leader</b>
<b>Chris Capra</b>	<b>Principal</b>	<b>Data Analysis / Acquittals</b>

### **ENTERING YOUR SUBMISSION**

- 1. Ensure you have enclosed all compulsory information by completing the Entrants' Checklist in appendix C.**
- 2. Ensure the principal signs this submission form.**
- 3. Forward your submission to your Regional Coordinator by 20 April 2007.**

## **Appendix B**

Letter of Support from Community Health

## Appendix C



**Australian Government**

**Department of Education, Science and Training**

Mr Chris Capra  
Principal  
Kuranda District College

Re: Kuranda District College – ‘Families and First Teachers’ (FAFT)

Dear Chris,

I write to offer my congratulations to you and your team on the continued success of the FAFT project.

Since the department’s original approval of FAFT in 2005, the projects aims included;

- provide a link between school and community
- increase parental and community engagement
- create school ready children
- involve parents and community with their children’s educational journey
- creating literacy and numeracy within families at risk
- increase student attendance
- creating pathways
- exposing pre prep children and families to early childhood learning

and certain milestones included;

- Parents and community school awareness
- Increase numbers of children enrolled and engaged in Prep Education
- Improved school attendance

Through regular progress updates and Performance Reports provided by you, our department has been able to confirm value for dollars invested and measurable outcomes achieved.

The department has and continues to showcase FAFT as a ‘best practice’ model and proof of that was the recent visit, organised by DETA and DEST, by an international delegation conferencing in Cairns on Indigenous Education. The delegation was extremely impressed by the structure and deliverance of the project as well as the participation by community.

I note, other ‘systems’ are aware of the success generated by FAFT and are looking at creating similar strategies. I also note, the project has won numerous awards including one under the ‘Dare to Lead’ Initiative.

Once again, I congratulate you and your team on the great work achieved and the excellent outcomes under FAFT for indigenous communities in your area.

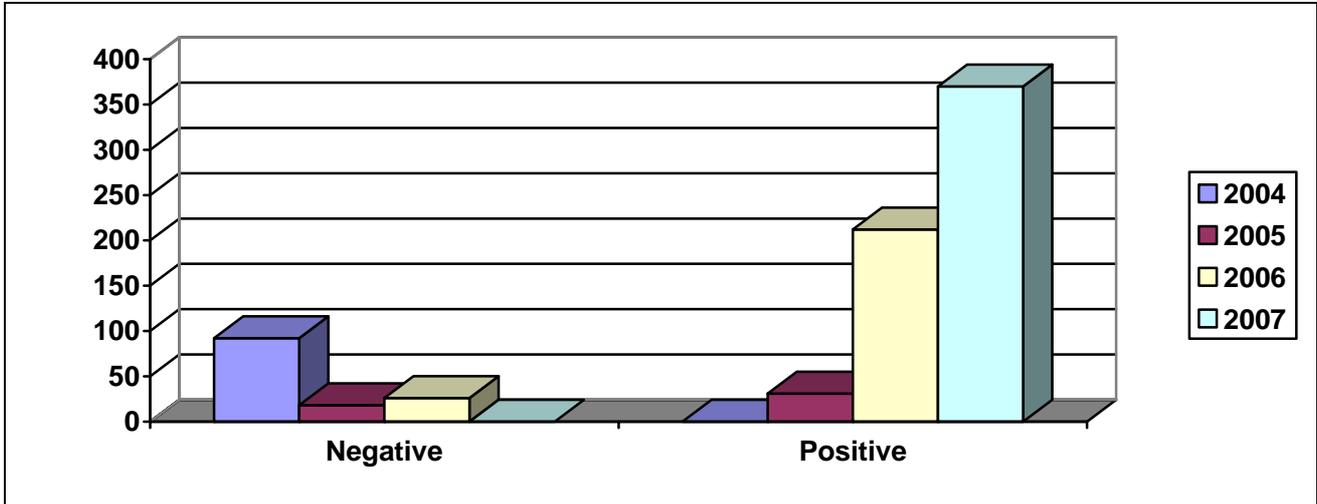
Kind Regards  
Leon Epong  
District Manager  
Cairns District Office  
Ph: 07 4048 7114

## Appendix D

### School Collected Data

**Graph 1**

**Positive and Negative behaviour trends in Year 1 children since FAFT commenced in 2005**

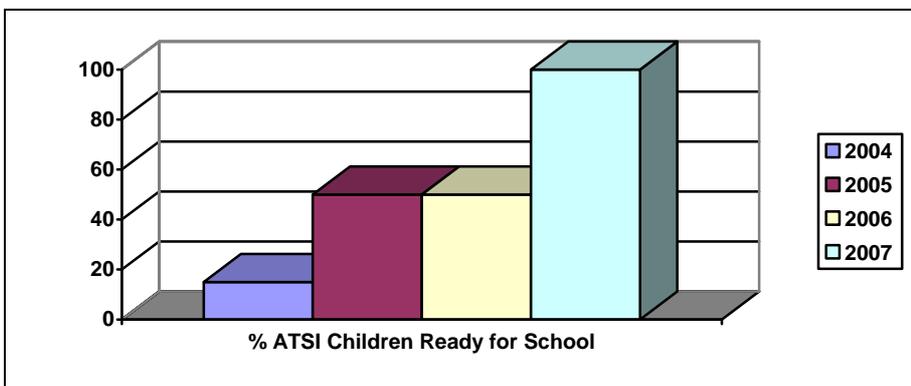


Note 1 – The data collected above is whole of year 1 population data based on “real incidents”. For each positive behaviour incident displayed by a student and witnessed by a staff member, the student is issued with a paper certificate. The student presents the certificate to the office for recording on the college’s Managing Student Behaviour data base (the certificate is also redeemable for prizes to ensure that the certificate is handed to the office). For each negative behaviour that constitutes a level 2 behaviour (as outlined in the college’s Student Responsible Behaviour Plan) the teacher documents the incident on a “yellow form” that is sent to a member of administration for follow up and data entry onto the college’s Managing Student Behaviour data base.

Note 2 – The data collected above represents the entire school year for years 2004, 2005 and 2006. 2007 is representative of January to May inclusive.

**Graph 2**

**School Readiness Trends of Indigenous Year 1 children since FAFT commenced in 2005**



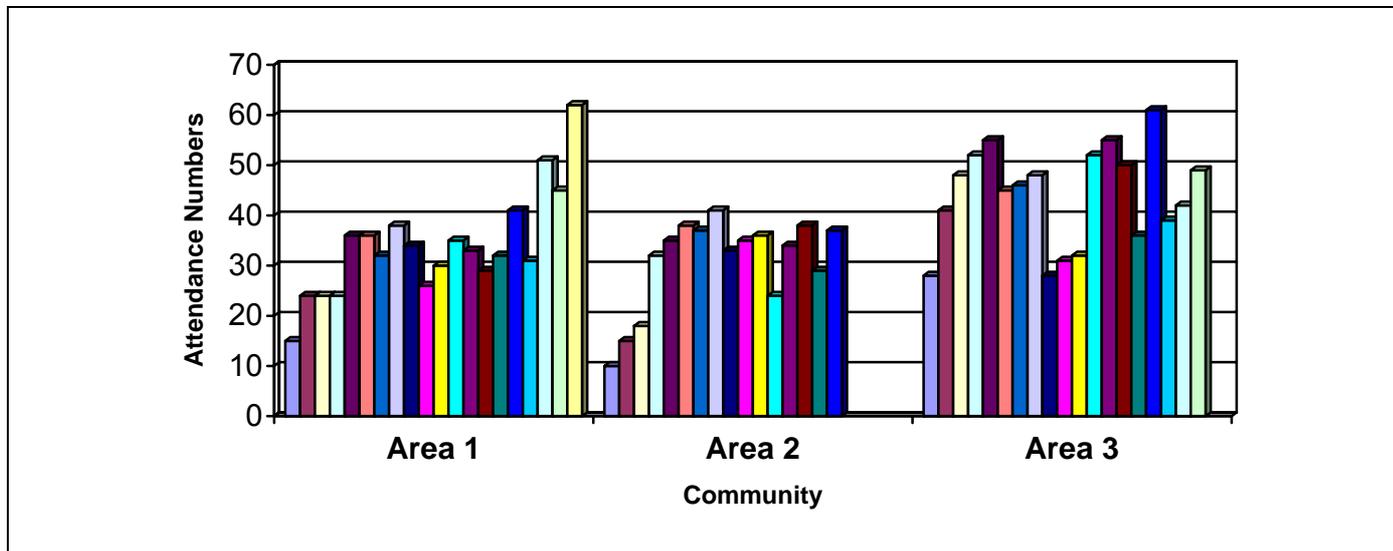
**Readiness Indicators**

- In regular daily attendance by day 8
- Has school lunch
- Has school materials
- In uniform

Note 1 – The data collected above is whole of year 1 and Preschool / Preparatory Year population data. The data collected was in the form of criteria checklist against which each individual child was recorded.

**Graph 3**

**Community Attendance at FAFT 2005 – 2007**

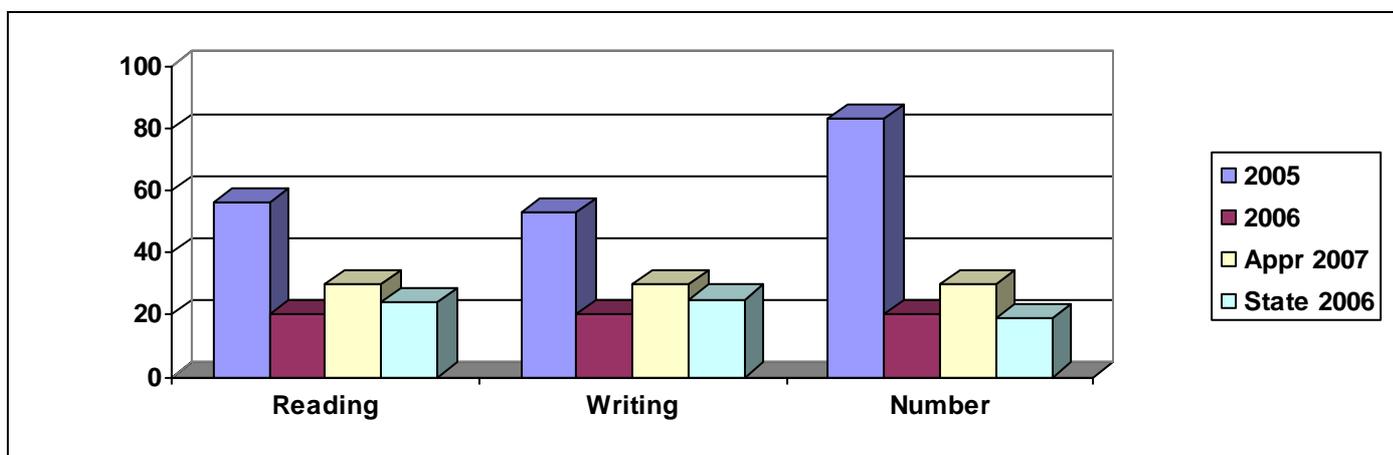


Note 1 – The data represented in this graph has been collated from the rolls taken at each session. The data represented is conservative in its nature as additional people were in attendance who did not sign in and / or the staff in attendance would have been too “shamed” to ask for names.

**Education Queensland Provided Data**

**Graph 4**

**Year 2 Results - Percentage of Children requiring additional support**



Note 1 – The 2007 school results are approximations after school data collection only. These results have not been validated at a District level as yet.

## Appendix E



School of Education

PO Box 6811, Cairns, QLD 4870

### **Letter in support of Families as First Teachers Program Kuranda District State College, Kuranda**

The purpose of the Families as First Teachers Program (FAFT) is for staff to work in partnership with families of Indigenous students to prepare young children for school. This program is now in its third year of operation.

I have examined the data set presented by Principal Chris Capra and the team, lead by Ms Kathryn Mannion and Ms Rosetta Brim, and I am willing to confirm these data were properly collected and represent a true picture of the success of the FAFT program.

Data clearly show that on four key indicators measured within the first two weeks of first term, school readiness was 100% for 2007 Prep and Year 1 students. The indicators were that each child brought the necessary materials to school, presented in uniform, brought lunch and was in daily attendance by Day 8. Data collected from 2004 show the immediate impact of the FAFT program in 2005 and that the goal of 100% readiness was reached by the third year of program operation.

Population data on positive and negative behaviour trends in Year 1 has been carefully collected and logged by school staff for the years 2005, 2006 and 2007 (to the end of May). Behaviour trend data are based wholly on real life incidents. Each time a Year 1 child received a commendation for positive behaviour, this was recorded on a database. Each time a Year 1 child received a yellow slip for negative behaviour, this, too, was recorded on the database. Comparison of these data sets show a significant fall in the number of recorded negative behaviour incidents, with no Year 1 child receiving a yellow slip to the end of May 2007. By contrast, the number of teacher commendations for positive behaviour has risen sharply (by a factor of 13) since 2005. These are reasonable measures that clearly show the FAFT program is having a demonstrable effect on positive early-years school engagement at Kuranda District State College.

Dr Hilary Whitehouse

Senior lecturer, School of Education, James Cook University, Cairns

[Hilary.Whitehouse@jcu.edu.au](mailto:Hilary.Whitehouse@jcu.edu.au)

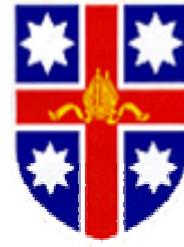
Phone: 07 40 421421

## Appendix F



The Diocese of  
North Queensland

# The Venerable Christopher



Anglican Church  
of Australia

12<sup>th</sup> June 2007

### **FAMILIES AS FIRST TEACHERS**

To whom it may concern

Families as First Teachers (FAFT) has now become a very important component of the Kuranda education process; as it supports families in getting their Children ready for the all important preparatory year at School.

The programme draws on the skills of intergenerational families and support workers in the critical years of the Child's life to bridge the gap between the home and formal education.

Families teach the Child many things about their culture and FAFT uses the natural abilities of Parents, Grandparents and other members of the community to enhance these opportunities for the well being of the Child in the early formative years.

Kuranda and district is made up of many small communities where intergenerational gatherings are often difficult and where families are often isolated. In the past these communities have had little contact with the local school and there has often been mistrust between the communities and the school. FAFT has now bridged that gap and offers a way to strengthen relationships between the early all important years of a Child's life and School while at the same time supporting and enhancing the Child's learning opportunities. Young Children need the time to make the transition between home and their communities and full time learning in a School environment and FAFT provides the tool by which this can be achieved.

FAFT brings the Child and its extended family into close contact with the School and enables the start of a partnership between family and school that will be crucial to the Child's learning and development during the schooling years. FAFT workshops enable families to intermingle with teachers and older students so as to build healthy and ongoing relationships. FAFT workshops also provide opportunities to work out accountabilities and paths for the future which involve parents, communities and school. FAFT works with Health and other services providers to facilitate services to many of the communities.

Address correspondence to P O Box 581 Kuranda 4881 Qld  
Telephone (07)40938735 E Mail [wrightc@iig.com.au](mailto:wrightc@iig.com.au)  
Residence 8 Harriman Street Kuranda 4881 Qld

Each week FAFT works on projects to promote literacy and numeracy skills; resources are provided to provide families and children with simple yet satisfactory outcomes that build self confidence for the Child and family members who are able to attend. The programme is designed simply and effectively enhances the Child's life and all who are part of the weekly ongoing events.

FAFT provides Children who usually face extreme difficulties with a head start so that they can obtain an adequate academic outcome. Over many years in Kuranda and in other communities it has been recorded that indigenous children are not obtaining outcomes to the same level as their non indigenous peers, FAFT works through barriers and makes the transition to full time schooling a good deal easier.

Crucial to this process is a team effort of those who provide the programme; a team that is fully conversant with Kuranda and District and who are committed to the task in front of them. The present team of Kathryn and Rosetta provide this and the team is often referred to as being "two way strong".

Many of the participants are school aged mothers who strongly support the programme and the transition it supplies between home and school. FAFT provides the initial steps so that the Child can be confident when they go to school and provide essential foundation for the future of children in Kuranda and District

I strongly commend the programme and would hope that it will be supported and funded in years to come as it is an essential part of the Kuranda learning process and community building.

Yours Sincerely



Chris Wright  
Archdeacon  
Kuranda Anglican Parish Priest  
Chairperson Kuranda District College Council

## Appendix G



# KURANDA DISTRICT STATE COLLEGE

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### Yr 7-12 Campus

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5333

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### Principal

P-12

Mr Chris Capra

### Head of Schools

#### Junior

Mr Robert  
Jennings

#### Middle

Mr Shane Curley

#### Senior

Mrs Lesley De  
Faveri

### Head of Curriculum

Mrs Leanne  
Plasto

1 May 2007

Showcase Awards Panel  
Far Northern Districts

RE: LETTER OF SUPPORT FOR KURANDA DISTRICT STATE COLLEGE  
SUBMISSION

Dear Panel Member

The purpose of this letter is to strongly support the submission of the school program "Families as First Teachers" into the Showcase Awards for 2007. FAFT has had a major positive impact on a number of school areas for the past three years.

The most rewarding aspect of FAFT for the school community is the increased levels of engagement that the students display. By "engagement" I go beyond attendance and school readiness and mean how happy and involved the children are in school. Having had three years exposure to the program, the children can see how much the adult community has become involved in and value the program and this attitude is now being displayed by the students.

The extent to which the adult community is engaging in FAFT is also wonderful. For the first time this holidays FAFT will run over the school holidays without the school staff facilitating the activities. Community members will coordinate the program for two weeks. I am sure that this level of engagement will ensure the sustainability of the program over the long term.

The community has engaged in the project to the extent that they can see the value of prior to school education. The community using the school as a facilitator are now exploring alternate education options such as playgroups and kindergartens, early childhood learning opportunities that before FAFT's existence would not have been considered as important by the community.

Again, I can not support this program enough.

Yours truly,

Chris Capra  
Principal  
Kuranda District State College

Building Personal

