

DARE TO LEAD: PARTNERSHIP BUILDS SUCCESS

2009 - 2013 AN OVERVIEW

**Principals
Australia
Institute**
Learning. Leading.

Dare to Lead



Principals Australia Institute provides quality professional learning, leadership development and support to principals and school leaders. Our programs and services help build effective, inspirational and sustainable leadership in Australia's 10,000 government, Catholic and independent primary and secondary schools.

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01 PROJECT OVERVIEW



Dare to Lead: Partnership Builds Success began in April 2009, and followed the earlier phases of *Dare to Lead: Making the Difference* and *Dare to Lead: Taking it on*. Under various iterations, the *Dare to Lead* concept of school leader engagement and development towards improving the educational outcomes of Australia's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, has been active in Australian schools for more than a decade.

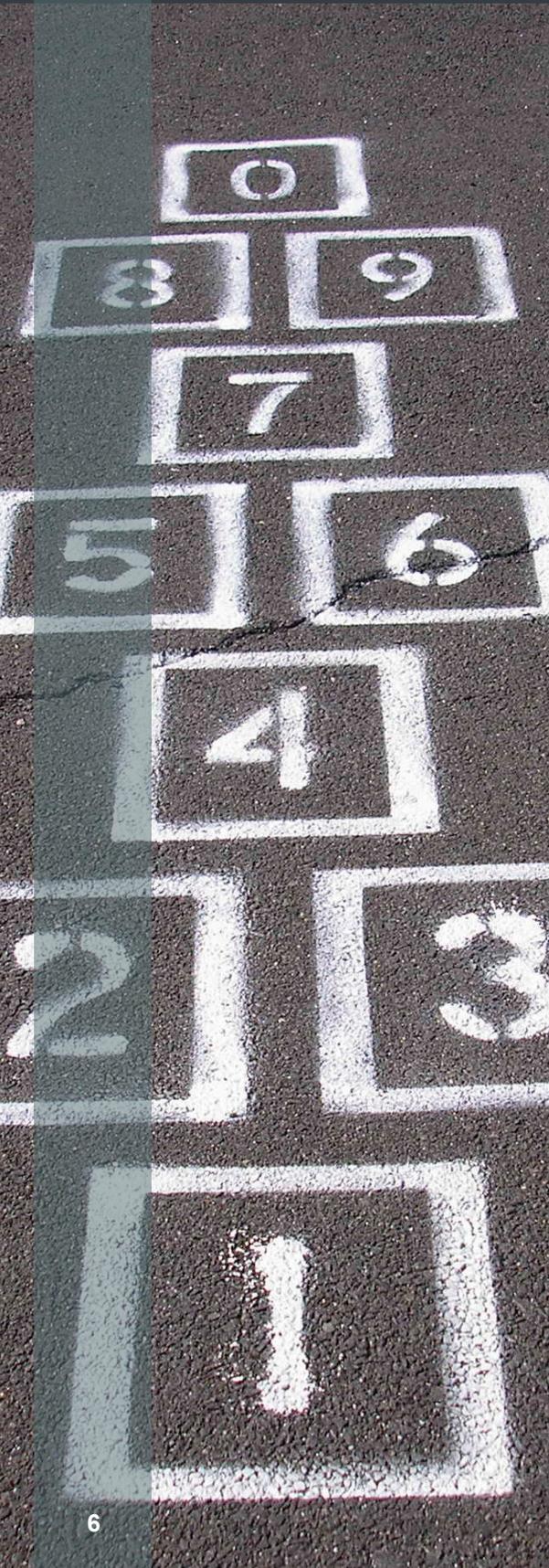
Dare to Lead: Partnership Builds Success was provided a total of \$16,720,000 (including GST) by the Commonwealth between March 2009 and December 2013 to fund the activity areas above. It was also agreed in initial negotiations that during the contract period, the project would actively seek funded partnerships with jurisdictions, corporate and philanthropic bodies and individual schools. This notion is in part reflected in the mutually agreed strapline, *Partnership Builds Success*. In addition to the Commonwealth funding, approximately \$5m was secured from other partners, many of whom entered into end-on-end agreements with the project.

From the beginning of the contract period, *Dare to Lead: Partnership Builds Success* the Project undertook to deliver in six key areas:

- National Project Coordination.
- Professional Learning and Development of School Leaders.
- Educational Partnerships.
- Corporate Partnerships.
- Remote Strategy.
- Communication Strategy.



02 DARE TO LEAD MODEL: PRINCIPLES AND WAYS OF WORKING



Through their facilitation, the Dare to Lead coordinators brought principals and other school leaders together for professional development both literally and virtually and maintained a network for shared learning and promotion of successful practice in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander education.

Importantly as a collegial model, the project has always remained invitational and school members and their teams chose their levels of active involvement (in workshops, conferences, professional development activities, etc.) according to their own levels of need.

The collegial model and the opting-in approach have been important keys to the success of the project and its level of school participation.

A very significant success of *Dare to Lead: Partnership Builds Success* was that school members and teams saw it as coming from within the profession and separate from, but complementary to the requirements and expectations of their employing authorities.

Based on the project's own experience in schools in the earlier phases, as well as a wider evidence base, the Dare to Lead professional learning model makes it clear that successful outcomes will be achieved when a school undertakes a multi-faceted and strategic approach, all the time affirming cultural identity and maintaining links with the Indigenous community.



03 DARE TO LEAD TEAM

Central to the composition of the team is the role of the experienced principal. In almost all cases, the central work of the project (facilitating professional learning) was delivered by team members, known as 'coordinators', who have had considerable experience as school principals, typically in contexts where there have been relatively high numbers of students who are Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders.

From 2009 - 2013, the *Dare to Lead: Partnership Builds Success* team profile included:

- **seventeen coordinators with principal school leader experience,**
- **seven team members who are Aboriginal,**
- **nine casual team members with school leader experience,**
- **seven project support team members.**

The importance of having 'coordinators' (ie those actually facilitating the key professional learning work) with school leadership experience continued to be underlined in surveys of school members. For example in the 2013 survey, 79% of respondents commented on the criticality of this.

- 40,000+ People directly involved in face-to-face professional learning in 2011 - 2013 alone.
- 760+ Collegial Snapshots (an independent school analysis conducted by Dare to Lead), far above the contract deliverables.
- 744 professional learning events, more than double the contract deliverables.
- 11 conferences including 8 national and three tristates-focused.
- 32 schools formally recognised through the Dare to Lead Excellence in Leadership in Indigenous Education Awards.
- Over 50 education jurisdiction and schools partnerships which enhance outcomes for Indigenous students.
- One-on-one executive coaching and mentoring of 35 principals.
- Clear communication with our website receiving 5,000 hits a month and over 65 newsletters produced.



04 MEMBERSHIP AND THE ACTION AREA MODEL



The Dare to Lead concept in each of its iterations including *Dare to Lead: Partnership Builds Success* has been invitational in its approach. In other words, all of the almost 10,000 schools in Australia have been invited to be part of the Dare to Lead network and, if they chose to join that network offering professional support and networking, they then chose their level of engagement, according to their own identified needs. Indeed, in 2013, 84% of survey respondents indicated their strong support for the opt-in approach.

The premise is that schools understand their own circumstances and needs best and will make informed decisions about how to best engage with the professional conversations facilitated by *Dare to Lead: Partnership Builds Success*. While at the close of the contract period there were more than 5000 schools nationally who were part of the Dare to Lead 'coalition', it was never envisaged each of those individual schools would become actively engaged at face-to-face level; it was always understood that there would be varied ways of engaging including:

- **inviting Dare to Lead: Partnership Builds Success to deliver in-school activities,**
- **joining in Dare to Lead: Partnership Builds Success cluster activities,**
- **joining in the Dare to Lead: Partnership Builds Success national conferences,**
- **staying connected via Dare to Lead: Partnership Builds Success learning materials and electronic communications,**
- **sharing professional learning in the local 'action areas'.**

In 2013, 91% of survey respondents indicated a strength of *Dare to Lead: Partnership Builds Success* as being the ‘ability to engage (in the project) in a variety of ways.’

By 2013 there were 5656 coalition members, representing more than 55% of all schools in Australia.

Typically across the years of *Dare to Lead: Partnership Builds Success*, the coalition of school membership was made up broadly of 66% primary school members, 21% secondary, 13% P-12/combined schools.

The cross-system membership indicated a broad make-up of 73% government schools, 17% Catholic schools and 10% independent schools; this *Dare to Lead: Partnership Builds Success* composition broadly resembles the relative composition of the systems themselves.

To build shared professional learning amongst colleagues, the coalition member schools have always been grouped into smaller local networks to enable local sharing and activity; these localised clusters were known as ‘**action areas**’ and it was through the ‘**action area contacts**’ that the Dare to Lead coordinators were able build a stronger connection with member schools.

The action area model was particularly strong from 2009 until 2011 in *Dare to Lead: Partnership Builds Success* but as the project began to work more deeply with individual schools, the numbers of whole-of-action-area events and activity reduced.

The action area model which brought school leaders together across systems and sectors through a unifying theme (ie their commitment to enhancing the outcomes of their Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students) continued to set *Dare to Lead: Partnership Builds Success* apart from other professional support mechanisms and programs. In a 2013 survey of member schools, 86% of respondents indicated a Project strength as being the fact that draws together professionals from across all school contexts.

05 DARE TO LEAD PROFESSIONAL LEARNING



A hallmark of *Dare to Lead: Partnership Builds Success* has been its capacity to deliver professional learning in a variety of modes and in a manner responsive to both local and emergent needs.

The project is not program-based per se but rather provided relevant professional learning in context, always linked to a central leadership question to principals, executive team members and aspirant leaders: am I doing the best I can to enhance the outcomes of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students in my school? (and for schools with no Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander students: am I doing the best I can to build all students' understanding of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australia?).

Across 2009-2013, *Dare to Lead: Partnership Builds Success* designed, refined and delivered:

- **Collegial Snapshots:** a DTL- developed process where the project is invited by an individual school to facilitate an independent, external analysis of what is working well (or otherwise) in the way the school supports its Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students and promotes Reconciliation. More than 760 of these were facilitated in all states and territories.
- **Developing Quality Leaders program:** an intensive program for leadership development, including the building of leadership density in a school; typically involving a number of schools at any one of the two-day plus one-day events, these have been held across the countries.
- **National themed conferences:** 8 held in this period.
- **Conferences specifically targeted to central Australian remote schools:** (Tristates Conferences, 3 facilitated).
- **Action area-based and in-school professional learning events:** widely varied in length and focus: 744 delivered.

- **Executive coaching and mentoring:** particularly in remote locations.
- **Online materials and online facilitated discussions:** such as the *Professional Discussion Starter* series which allows schools to engage in professional discussion without a requirement for face-to-face involvement.
- **Conference papers and presentations at events facilitated by others:** for example, Australian Council for Educational Research, American Educational Research Association, various professional and principals' associations, etc.
- **Bespoke professional learning components for education partners** (eg developing aspiring Aboriginal school leaders).

At least 40,000 people have directly involved in face-to-face *Dare to Lead: Partnership Builds Success* professional learning delivery in 2011-2013 alone.

06 DARE TO LEAD: SERVICES, PRODUCTS AND MATERIALS

Dare to Lead: Partnership Builds Success has produced and made available additional services, products and materials to lead towards the achievement of the project's objectives. They include:

- materials available at no cost on line such as the “School Review Checklist”;
- materials to support the successful implementation of Personalised Learning Plans;
- professional learning booklets (two themes) prepared in conjunction with the Australian Council for Educational Research, based on the Project's Collegial Snapshots;
- during 2009 and early 2010, making professional services available to corporate Australia, to assist them in developing appropriate school-to-work and employment strategies for employing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students;
- providing professional services to partner organisations such as Coal and Allied in the Upper Hunter area, and Edmund Rice Education Australia;
- the Dare to Lead website with approximately 5000 hits per month, and its diverse information about case studies, resources, and so on;
- regular newsletters to the Dare to Lead coalition membership and a wider emailing list of interested subscribers; at least three per year nationally as well as state-based updates.

The Dare to Lead Excellence in Leadership in Indigenous Education Awards conducted in each of the years of the contract period have provided an opportunity for the project to acknowledge those schools who achieved outstanding progress in their Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander strategy, or their Reconciliation strategy. The Awards also provided the vehicle for the sharing of successful practice, with all coalition members as well as local communities being made aware of the aspects of success, namely strategic approaches, data-driven analysis and authentic community involvement.



07 PARTNERSHIPS



The notion of 'partnership' was central to the project. An underpinning of the contract was that the project would seek to engage partners – both corporate and educational - with a view to building a widened base of funding support thereby creating a sustainable approach.

Approximately \$4.5m ex GST was contributed by partners, who included:

- Dept of Education, Western Australia
- Dept of Education, Training and Employment, Queensland
- Dept of Education and Communities, NSW
- Dept of Education and Early Childhood Development, Victoria
- Dept of Education, Tasmania
- Dept of Education and Training, Northern Territory
- Edmund Rice Education Australia
- Catholic Education Office of South Australia
- Catholic Education Office Tasmania
- Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations (for Work Exposure in Government program)
- Dusseldorp Skills Forum

These partners and others allowed the project to widen its scope, increase its professional profile in the schools community and in some cases develop bespoke programs to suit a particular partner's needs.

Partners other than those who provided funding have been significant in the ongoing work of the project. Such partners include:

- **What Works.**
- **Australian Council for Educational Research.**
- **Reconciliation Australia.**
- **Stronger Smarter Institute.**

Their complementary work has enhanced the work of Dare to Lead



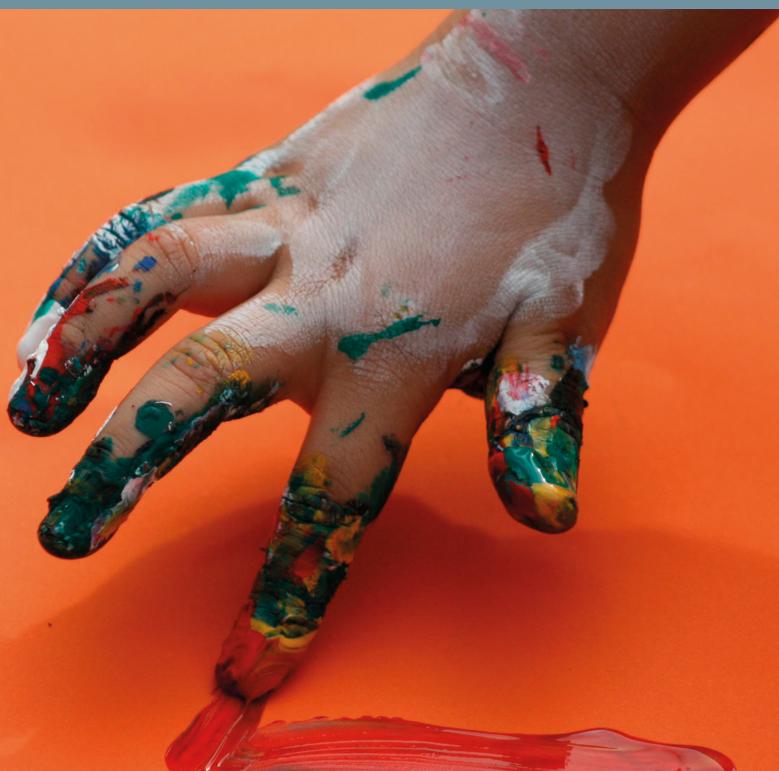
08 PROJECT GOVERNANCE



Sitting within Principal Australia Institute (PAI), the project has always been subject to the governance processes of PAI itself.

The project redefined its Steering Committee which is made up of seven eminent educators who themselves are Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders. The purpose of the Steering Committee is to provide guidance and advice to the project and while it does have a project management focus, the advice from the members who are drawn from across the country and across school, tertiary and community fields is an invaluable compass.

- The vast majority (82%) of Dare to Lead schools believe that their Dare to Lead membership has led to the school implementing actions and strategies to support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Students.
- More than 5600 schools nationally remain part of the Dare to Lead coalition.



09 PROJECT OUTCOMES

Dare to Lead coalition schools report positive outcomes as a result of their participation in the project's professional conversation:

Respondent schools reported levels in 2013 very similar to reported levels in earlier years of the project:

- As a result of our Dare to Lead membership, our school has implemented actions / strategies to support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students...82% (to a 'very high' and 'high degree).
- To what extent has your Dare to Lead membership contributed to better **ACHIEVEMENT OUTCOMES** for your Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students? ...79% (to a 'high' or 'very high' extent).
- To what extent has your Dare to Lead membership contributed to better **ENGAGEMENT** with your school's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander **PARENTS AND COMMUNITY**?...65% (to a 'high' or 'very high' extent).
- Our Dare to Lead membership has fostered an increase in professional discussion **WITHIN OUR SCHOOL** about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander education strategies and outcomes....82% ('strongly agreed' and 'agreed').
- To what extent has your school's Dare to Lead involvement increased the number of people who are committed to and skilled in supporting the school's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander education strategy?...72% (to a 'high' or 'very high' extent).
- The extent to Dare to Lead recommendation in Collegial Snapshot reports to schools are acted upon to enhance the school's strategies.... 87% (to a 'high' or 'very high' extent).

Qualitative measures such as the many renewals of funded partnerships across successive years is a clear indication of the confidence in the Project and likely indicates that the Project's involvement is leading towards positive outcomes for the partners and their stakeholders.



10 LEARNINGS FROM *DARE TO LEAD: PARTNERSHIP BUILDS SUCCESS*

Across the five years of the Project, several key learnings have been made, including some which reaffirmed learnings from earlier phases of Dare to Lead.

These are important because they can inform future projects in the schools and school leadership professional learning space. In summary,

- in schools representing the whole spectrum of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander enrolment profiles, there continues to be a strong commitment to enhancing outcomes and to promoting Reconciliation;
- school leaders value peer-to-peer professional learning;
- school leaders value professional learning which is made available by those other than the employing authority or 'system';
- opportunities for the sharing of practice and shared professional learning (especially face-to-face) are highly sought by school leaders
- opportunities to share practice and share professional learning across systems and sectors are highly valued;
- there is a variety of ways for a school to validly measure the success or otherwise of its Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander education strategy; while these measures might be problematic in making school-to-school comparisons, they remain very useful in in-school contexts.

There continue to be challenges for schools and school leaders in:

- making meaningful connections with their local Indigenous community, particularly in areas where the community itself does not have a high profile;
- in many school communities, especially those with a relatively low Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander enrolment profile, the place of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander education in the school's broad agenda is relatively fragile, given the many other concurrent factors impacting on them;
- school leaders appear to be finding it increasingly difficult to become personally involved in professional learning because of time availability and other pressing agendas and demands;
- many school leaders appear to remain reluctant to invest (funding and time) in their own personal professional learning; this is problematic in this context where it is clear that the personal leadership of the principal in the school's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander education strategy is a critical success factor;
- cultural intelligence: while building one's cultural intelligence is a key factor for success in an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander context, the building of one's cultural intelligence is a process which is much longer than the typical strategic planning cycles of schools.



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