

# More than a Network:

## *Discovering our Professional Power Through Collaboration and Leadership*

Presented by: Karen Shackell; Kelly Carlson and Cassy Read –  
representing the Community Preschool Collective

# *The Presentation Today*

- History
- Community Connections
- Inspiring each other
- The Future
- How this has strengthened our leadership as individuals and as a collective.

# Networks

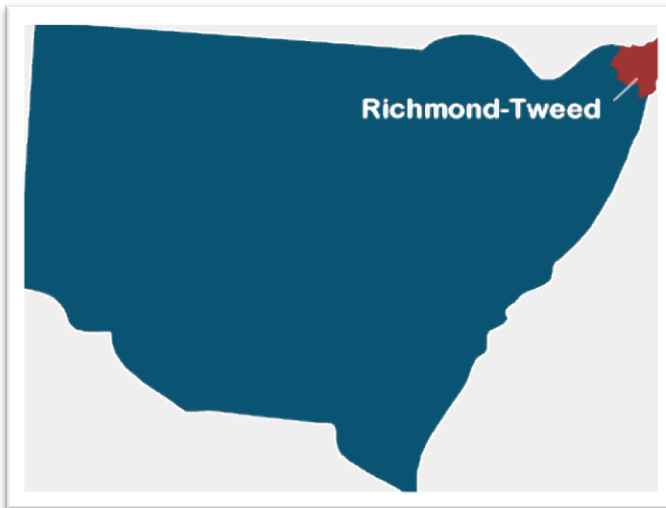
*“Forming supporting networks ... has the effect of lessening feelings of isolation and powerlessness.”*

*“Formation of support and advocacy groups ..has the potential for further improving practice and advancing knowledge through professional development and mentoring with the best interests of children at the heart of the action.”*

Waniganayake, M., Cheeseman, S., Fenech, M., Hadley, F., & Shepherd, W. (2012). Leadership: Contexts and complexities in early childhood education. (p.188)



# Logistics



# *Community Preschools Collective:* *Who we are*



# *History*

- Previously met outside of hours
- Met once or twice termly
- Coastal Directors meeting – limited involvement.
- Discussed Programming and Planning Ideas

# *Not Just Nice Ladies – The Catalyst for Change*



- NQF
- Assessment and Ratings Process
- Invitation to all Community Preschools in our region to join together



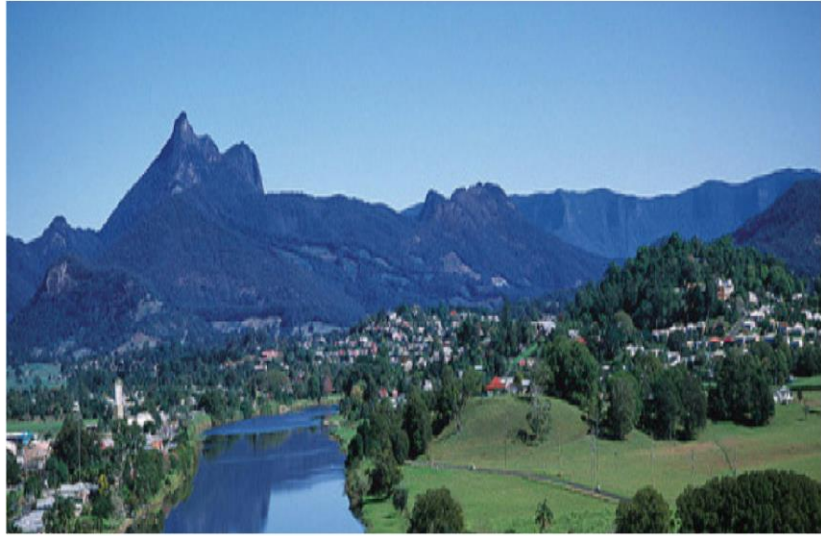
# *Our Commitment and Vision*

**INDIVIDUAL COMMITMENT  
TO A GROUP EFFORT -  
THAT IS WHAT MAKES  
A TEAM WORK,  
A COMPANY WORK,  
A SOCIETY WORK,  
A CIVILIZATION WORK.**

**- VINCE LOMBARDI -**



# Connecting our Communities



- NQS was the start of something really exciting!
- The common thread we shared began to create a collaborative strength that was woven between our services.

Recognition that  
our trust for each  
other was bigger  
than competing for  
enrolments

We all faced the same  
threat from increase in  
commercial for profit  
services.

We all needed  
support from each  
other!



Rosellas  
Community  
Preschool  
*Little People. Bright Futures*



*"It is our relationships all added together that are foundation of an organised effort for change."* Marya Axner 2016

# Sharing Community Capacity

From one service to another.....

- All communities have an array of skilled and willing people to tap into.
- Keep a record of parents occupations- great relationships allow you to call on them down the track!

After completing a strategic plan at our service, a parent offered to help do the same with our network to provide us with direction!

## What is a Collaboration?

A collaboration is a process of participation through which people, groups, and organizations work together to achieve desired results.

## 6 reasons NOT to go it alone:

- 1- Collective Wisdom
2. Pushing our limits
3. Support and belief
- 4: New ideas
- 5: Borrowed Motivation
- 6: Accountability

Ref- Jen Waak 2012

We realised how we could share the connections we had amongst each other for the greater good!



# *It's time to make things Formal!*

- Community Preschool's Collective – Tweed Valley was born!
- Using the information in our survey we had a better understanding of what the broader community wanted in a service and how to market and reflect this as a tool to promote “preschool” education.
- A logo was designed to connect us as a collective to be recognised in our community promoting unity.

A whole community survey was conducted that involved ALL families enrolled across our 10 preschools.



Community  
Preschool  
Collective

Chipping in to cover some of the costs made this process very affordable!



# *The Communities doors opened!*

- The strategic Plan process provided more opportunities to engage and draw on other community members that could help!

We accessed local university projects and students



Thrive towns is a local project that connects people and services.

A connection was also being established with our local Aboriginal families and community

# Developing Kinship

- A local Kinship Festival was being held to celebrate the unity and diversity in our community organized by an local Aboriginal group
- An opportunity to participate together as Community Preschools Collective at the festival



*“Early childhood education services can be a principal player in bringing stakeholders together in a community partnership to strengthen the network of support around children as they grow and develop through their early years and into school.” AEDC 2015*



A NAIDOC week celebration that invited all services was organized!

Our relationship with the Aboriginal Community is emerging. Conversations around employment opportunities are currently happening.





# *Inspiring Each Other*





# *Educator Exchange*



# Benefits

New  
Experiences

Routines



Ideas!



Networking

Cultural  
Context



# *Mentoring Support*



Kunghur  
Community  
Preschool



Gumnuts  
Community  
Preschool



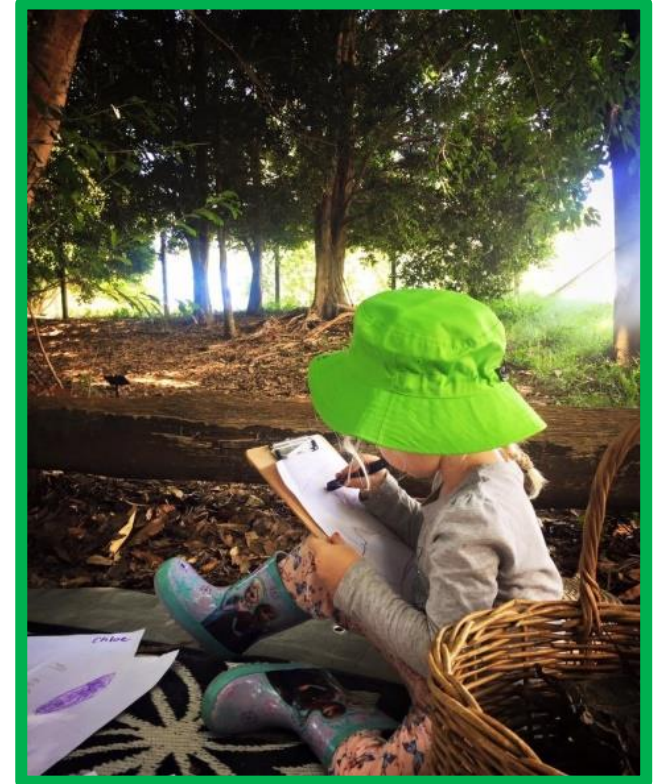


# *Pidjung Jahli* *Rainforest Program*





# *Pidjung Jahli* *Rainforest Program*





# *Pidjung Jahli*

## *Rainforest Program*





# *Riverside Play*





# *Excursion to Pottsville Environmental Park*



# *Other Excursions*

Local School

Local Park for  
Child  
Protection  
Week

Local wildlife  
parks – Fleays,  
Currumbin, Seaworld  
Tropical Fruit World

Possums & Kingscliff  
Mini School  
Combined for beach  
exploration



# *Our Future*



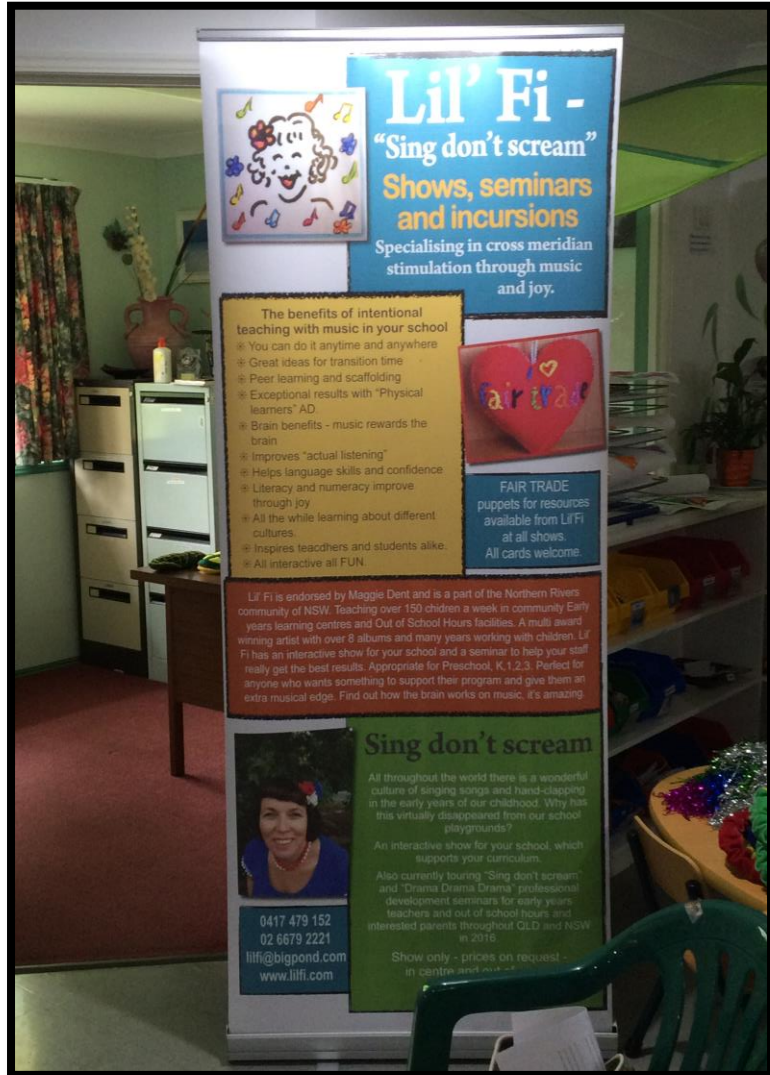
- Where are we going?
- What are our plans?
- The Future is Exciting!

# *Opportunities as a Collective of Leaders*

- The Power of the collective has provided success' in the acquisition of a large grant through FRRR
- This has provided a music program to the entire preschool network.
- Provided Training for all educators
- Provided resources for some of our smaller preschools.



# *Photos of Lil Fi and Training*







# Collegiality and Power:

*“sharing ideas, hardships and achievements does not disadvantage any program or organisation. Rather, professional collegiality can support the improvement of professional practice and relationships within a local community. Most importantly, sharing knowledge and understanding can create a win-win situation for everyone involved.”*

Waniganayake, et al.(2012 p.189)

# *Creating a Culture of Leaders and Leadership.*

Acknowledging that we are all at different stages of our leadership development

Providing practical support and encouragement

Our services are unique to their own communities and locations this extends to our children and families.

Sharing resources; educators; thoughts; ideas and a vision

Acknowledging that we are powerful as a group and utilising this power.

# *Building External Networks*

Shaping Outcomes/Early Intervention

Parental skills and resources links to the local communities.

TAFE

University – Southern Cross

FDC

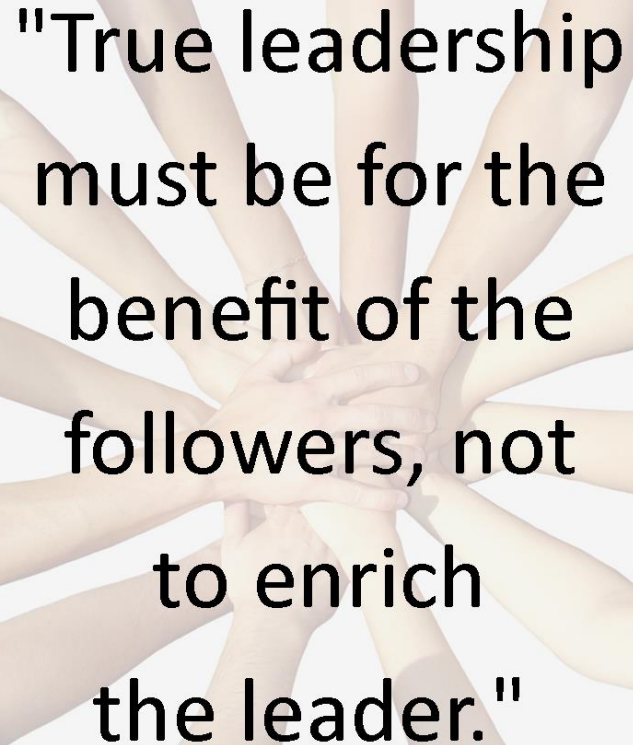
Schools

NRPA

Political Networks

Community Networks

# *The Benefits - Leadership*



"True leadership  
must be for the  
benefit of the  
followers, not  
to enrich  
the leader."

-John C. Maxwell

“

**A LEADER**  
IS SOMEONE WHO  
DEMONSTRATES  
**WHAT'S POSSIBLE.**

”

- Mark Yarnell



# *The Possibilities*





# *The Possibilities*

Business Networks

Articles for our local papers

Meet and greet our local politicians

Further grant acquisitions

Sharing Professional Development costs

Advocacy for preschool for 3 year olds: locally and within the larger networks.

Focus on Social Enterprise for Community Based Preschools = survival.  
Sharing of our successes.

## *In Conclusion:*

*“Successful networking – that is, engaging the cooperation of others-takes time, communication skills and good interpersonal relationships.”*

Rodd, J. (2013). *Leadership in early childhood*. Open University Press(UK). (p.234)