



Australian Parents Council Inc

## ***Indigenous Parent Factor: Successful early learning at home and school***

### **The History**

In late 2000, Leo Dunne (then President of APC) approached the coordinator of Weemala (the Indigenous Education Unit at the Australian Catholic University), Nereda White, to discuss the possibility of adapting APC's parent program *Successful Learning in the Early Years of Schooling: The Parent Factor* to make it relevant to Indigenous parents and carers. That program focused on assisting parents of children in pre-school to Year 2 in becoming familiar with how children learn, how teachers teach reading and writing and how parents can do their part in helping their children's literacy development at home even prior to attendance at compulsory school. These workshops additionally give parents a common language with schools, to assist them to feel more comfortable in discussions with school staff about their own children's language and literacy development.

Weemala staff believed the proposal to be innovative and highly warranted and recommended that Leo speak with Brisbane Catholic Education's (BCE) Indigenous Education team. BCE assigned their Primary Consultant – Indigenous Education, Rosemarie Koppe, to oversee the redevelopment of the program as a co-ordinated effort between BCE's Primary Indigenous Education team members, parents and caregivers of Indigenous children enrolled in pre-school to Year 2 and APC.

Due to the high level of consultation required with Indigenous parents, carers of Indigenous children, Indigenous community elders and education workers, and BCE's Indigenous Education team, the final draft of the redeveloped project was completed at the end of 2002. APC, assisted by members of the BCE Indigenous Education team, piloted a series of (3) consecutive workshops with Indigenous parents and carers at Holy Rosary Primary, Windsor in February 2003.

An important focus of the pilot was a vital aspect of the purpose of the workshops – to provide training for Indigenous parents. With the delivery of these workshops facilitated by Leo Dunne and Rosemarie Koppe, three BCE Indigenous Participation Officers were subsequently trained to be trainers. At this point, some further but minor consultation was required and final changes were made so that the workshops in the form of a presenter's manual were ready for the start of the 2004 school year.

The development of the (3) Indigenous workshops was considered significant enough by the broad Indigenous community and the Indigenous education community that a launch of the workshops was held in April 2004 at Ngutana-Lui (an Indigenous community centre at Inala). In attendance were Indigenous elders, community members and educators as well as significant personnel from the wider education community. Of particular significance was the attendance of Mr. Tony Greer (General Manager of Indigenous Transitions Group – Department of Education, Science & Training (DEST)) and Mr. Jim Castro (Director DEST's National Projects Team) whose attendance led to a recommendation being made to the then Federal Minister for Education, Dr. Brendan Nelson, for a grant to trial the program in states and territories throughout Australia.

To the end of 2009, 55 IPF workshops were conducted throughout Australia by APC's IPF Project team.