

Far North Queensland Indigenous Schooling Support Unit

What did they set out to achieve?

A Community of Practice (CoP) comprising four state schools and a range of community-based organisations, and coordinated by the Far North Queensland Indigenous Schooling Support Unit (FNQ ISSU), assessed the utility of the *Blueprint* for designing a coordinated, district-wide career development program for the predominantly Indigenous Year 10 student population in the Torres Strait and Cape District.

What did they do?

The Torres Strait and Cape District faces a history of challenges. The communities in Torres Strait and Cape York are geographically isolated and experience symptoms associated with remoteness, such as the absence of viable economies and the presence of a welfare economy. Education providers work against a background of alcohol and substance abuse, child abuse, poverty, high incarceration and mortality rates and poor health. 80% of the student population are of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander origin and schools across the district report poor outcomes in terms of attendance, enrolment, retention, completion and achievement. There are limited opportunities for employment and training provision in some communities and mobility to access these opportunities is often difficult. It was also acknowledged that inexperienced teachers found it difficult to teach in an environment that encompasses unfamiliar cultures, languages and behaviours.

A career development program for Year 10 students was designed to help students embark on senior schooling with confidence and focus. The *Blueprint* provided opportunities for parents, industry and communities to get involved, and gave students the opportunity to complete a Certificate I in Work readiness, to undertake work experience or work placement, and to develop a portfolio demonstrating the career competencies outlined in the *Blueprint*.

Did the *Blueprint* help them?

The competency framework was found to be very useful as a tool for mapping the career efficacy of existing resources, and it also helped generate a common language between stakeholders from across the community. This common language enabled participants from a range of stakeholder organisations to come together and focus on ways to achieve their shared goals for young people in the region.

The mapping process identified gaps in current resources, and new resources were mapped against the *Blueprint*. New resources included

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the *Real Game* (available through the Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations); the *Career and Transition Workbooks* (available through Career Keys); a specialist program for Indigenous young people in the region, *RECAP: A resources for career development practioners* (currently available to download from http://www.dest.gov.au/sectors/career_development/publications_resources/recap_resource_for_career_practitioners/), and the NSW Aboriginal Career Aspirations Program.

The CoP found that the competencies were relatively easy to operationalise and map to the services offered by service providers. The group also found that the *Blueprint* possesses an inherent flexibility which makes it well suited for adaptation to diverse local contexts: *Everything that you do needs to be linked to the local labour market and to the communities in which students live.*

On the whole, the CoP found the *Blueprint* a useful overarching document for tying together and co-ordinating the career development efforts of the various stakeholder organisations. The *Blueprint*, "...provides a thorough and comprehensive framework to enable career development to be delivered cohesively," as well as a common language and framework to help facilitate dialogue across different sectors.

