



### Recipient

St Patrick's College

### Grant Amount

\$94,800

### Funding Period

2021 - 2023

### Grant Overview

The College received funding for two integrated projects, dare to Thrive and dare to Grow, which were focused on improving outcomes for student boarding at the school. Dare to Grow aims to provide targeted executive functioning and academic tutoring and support for our boarding students. Dare to Thrive is built on the premise that community engagement, family connections and cultural insight are key in enabling a coherent and smooth transition from primary education in community, to high school education in a boarding setting.



## CASE STUDY: DARE TO GROW AND THRIVE

### Context and Need

With 89% of the boarding students coming from regional, remote and discreet communities in the Cape, Gulf and Torres Strait Islands, they tend to face greater challenges and adversity in their learning compared to the day students. The overwhelming majority of our incoming Year 7 students have never lived away from family, never been required to deal with life in a city and never had to navigate a world where culture is not at the centre.

Reassuring the parents back in community is extremely difficult due to their lack of knowledge of the supervisors and the St Patrick's College Townsville environment; it takes time for that trust to be built.

Current learning support programs and funding rely on verified need and many of our young women do not meet the threshold for an identified learning disability. There is a recognisable and significant gap for these students when they find themselves working on their homework and study outside of the classroom. The students have reported that at times they feel disengaged and disempowered in their learning.

## Activities and Implementation

To assist with the learning skill set an Academic Mentoring Program will be devised, seeking input from the students themselves to ensure they self-identify areas of need to help empower them to see the impact of this program.

To assist with the transition into the boardinghouse and to provide assurance to family groups in remote communities the following actions were undertaken:

- Visit and build connections with family and local elders in the key remote communities from which our 2022 Year 7 students originate,
- Meet with teachers and principals from current primary schools to gain insight into the current academic progress of our 2022 Year 7 students to ensure we are adequately prepared to effectively support the girls in the classroom,
- Talk with local health centre nurses to have a full and clear picture of the health needs of our students,
- Devise and implement an "in house boarding experience" for new students and their families during our student free days

## Outcomes and Impact

The projects together aimed to deliver:

- Improved focus and learning in the classroom
- Improved emotional regulation, particularly during those first weeks of the year
- Stronger connections between the remote communities and St Patrick's College Townsville
- A more unified approach (between school and community) in encouraging the girls in their development and education
- Happier, more resilient and confident girls
- Improved behaviour, focus in class and study sessions
- Improved opportunities for post school pathways.

And success was monitored through:

- The girls' attendance and achievement in class
- The level of access to the "Mercy Room" room - a space which girls can use if they feel unable to deal with the classroom environment
- Social cohesion in the Year 7 dorm area
- Community willingness to support and join together in a unified approach with St Patrick's College in encouraging their girls to stick with and focus on their education

The projects were largely successful with reduced homesickness and an easier transition into the boardinghouse with a lower level of anxiety in the wider family group. There was a noticeable improvement in literacy and better alignment within the appropriate stream for the girls to achieve the best learning outcome.

The opportunity for the College Health Centre Nurse to meet individually with the incoming students and their families to create a clear and precise health history enabled the boarding team to be able to adequately support the individual health needs of the girls rather than reactive support as happened in the previous year.

## Learnings

- Boarding experience to be extended to enable completion of administrative tasks e.g. setting up bank accounts, obtaining key ID and birth certificates etc
- Day-to-day school life still ultimately overwhelming – extra days needed to enable simple day to day admin e.g. how to use the locker combo, reading the timetable, packing bag in the morning, using the learning hub etc.
- Students need time and opportunity to build relationships with the tutors before having the confidence to sit alongside the tutors and ask for support
- Increased conversation with Heads of House to ascertain those students that would benefit from increased support