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Goonellabah Transition Program
“Walking together, Learning together”

Interim Evaluation Report
September 2007

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<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tr>
<td>BRTP</td>
<td>Box Ridge Transition to School Program - <em>the program on which the GTP is based</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CCYP</td>
<td>Centre for Children and Young People, Southern Cross University - <em>the local evaluator</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHEGS</td>
<td>Community Health Education Groups</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NSW DET</td>
<td>NSW Department of Education and Training</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DoCS</td>
<td>Department of Community Services</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ECHIDNA</td>
<td>Empowering Communities Holistically in Determining Needs for Aboriginal People - <em>a local Aboriginal Self-Determination Project developed by a NCAHS Aboriginal Health Promotion Officer</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FTE</td>
<td>Full-time equivalent positions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GTP</td>
<td>Goonellabah Transition Program - <em>the Invest to Grow program</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NCAHS</td>
<td>North Coast Area Health Service</td>
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</table>

*Note:* Throughout this document, the word *Aboriginal* refers to both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.
About the Goonellabah Transition Program

Rationale & Background

National and international evidence
Extensive national and international research from many different fields has consistently demonstrated the critical importance of children's early life experiences and circumstances on their subsequent development and wellbeing throughout their lives. There is clear evidence that well-founded, well-implemented prevention and early intervention programs, starting early in life, can improve young children’s cognitive, social and emotional functioning. This results in a positive influence on their readiness to learn in the school setting and improves educational, social, emotional and health outcomes throughout their lives. Cost-effectiveness analyses have shown that such programs more than pay for themselves, by reducing the later need for government-funded services. As well as these positive outcomes for the children, there are also “ripple” effects across a range of outcomes for their families and communities generally.


Needs & local experience
The Goonellabah Transition Program (GTP) developed from the concerns of some principals in the Lismore/Goonellabah area that some children were starting school at a significant disadvantage to most other children. While some had attended early childhood education services, it was felt they also needed a more structured, multidisciplinary and intensive program to help them prepare to enter kindergarten on a more level playing field. Therefore, the principals liaised with the Coordinator of the locally-developed Box Ridge Transition to School Program (BRTP), which began in 1999 and was receiving positive responses from families and school staff - about establishing a similar program for Lismore/Goonellabah children.

Program Description
Based on the BRTP, the GTP is a flexible, holistic early learning program for children and families needing intensive support with transitioning from home and preschool settings into kindergarten. It works in partnership with, and across, sectors to provide a strengths-based, family-friendly and culturally-sensitive program within a developmental, health, linguistic and social framework. GTP staff work with families to identify health, educational and behavioural factors impacting on their child’s ability to learn and interact socially - and then develop and implement individualised support programs and continually review children's progress against them. Children (aged 3½-5 years) attend two days per week during school terms (for one school year) and families receive fortnightly home visits. Children are strongly encouraged to attend mainstream preschools or daycare services during the remaining three days per week.

The GTP is staffed by a Coordinator/Teacher (0.6 FTE), a second Teacher (0.4 FTE), an Aboriginal Support Assistant (1 FTE), an Administrative Assistant (0.6 FTE) and Community Development Employment Program participants (2 X 0.4 FTE). The GTP staff is supported by a Working Party (for operational support), a Management Committee (for financial management) and a multidisciplinary Advisory Group (with sub-committees to advise about and support program development, implementation & evaluation).
How GTP Targets National Agenda for Early Childhood Key Action Areas

**Healthy Young Families**
The GTP built on the resources and lessons from the BRTP to address this key action area by:

- Using **ECHIDNA Individual Health Plans for children** - a strengths-based, family-focused approach to actively involve families in identifying goals and priorities about their child’s health needs and acknowledging their integral role in managing their children’s health.

- Using existing and developing additional culturally-appropriate health resources - which are used as a visual guide to provide information to Aboriginal families and children about local health services. Photos of local resources and health professionals make up the core component of the books, supported by explanations using Aboriginal English.

- Providing introductions & access to health services within the GTP - as a non-threatening environment where children can be screened and families can meet health professionals.

- Implementing health programs developed by NCAHS Community Health therapists - who work directly with children, individually or in small groups, within the GTP setting and support GTP staff to implement additional programs developed for individual children.

**Early Learning and Care**
The GTP built on the resources and lessons from the BRTP to address this key action area by:

- Implementing the ‘**Home Talk, School Talk**’ Transition Language Program - which is a strengths-based approach that views Aboriginal English as a language with its own linguistic, semantic & syntactic structure, while acknowledging that the language of schools is Standard Australian English.

- Developing and using Early Literacy and Numeracy programs & resources - which seek to move beyond the symbolic representation of Aboriginal culture to reflect the contemporary local Aboriginal communities, its members and culture within the literature and resources used within the GTP. They have received a School’s National Literacy Award (1999) and been included in the NSW DET’s **Specialised Programs to Support Learning in Mathematics**.

- Using Early Literacy and Early Numeracy bags - fun learning tools aimed at increasing families’ knowledge of early literacy and numeracy development and their participation in their children’s literacy and numeracy learning in the home setting. Each week, children take home a new bag containing literacy and numeracy promoting games and books, featuring digital photographs of themselves.

- Using **Social Stories: An Introduction to the Routines of Kindergarten and the People we Find in our School!** - which use sequencing games involving digital photographs of GTP children and school staff to introduce the children to the staff of their new kindergarten and the routines of their primary school.

**Supporting Families and Parents**
The GTP built on the resources and lessons from the BRTP to address this key action area by:

- Basing all programs on Individual Family Service Plans and Individual Education Plans - a family-based planning process, early in each school term, where families review their goals and priorities for their child across various learning areas - including cognitive, fine & gross motor, expressive & receptive language, early literacy, early numeracy and social skills.

- Visiting children’s homes once every fortnight - to provide an informal opportunity to develop the relationship between families and GTP staff, by creating a ‘yarning’ or narrative type of interaction where information can be shared verbally.
**Program Logic**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>High level outcomes</th>
<th>Healthy Young Families</th>
<th>Early Learning &amp; Care</th>
<th>Supporting Families &amp; Parents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Children transition into kindergarten more happily and successfully</td>
<td>Children perform better academically during kindergarten and Year 1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Medium level outcomes**
- Improved social outcomes for children
- Improved behavioural outcomes for children
- Improved health outcomes for children
- Improved developmental outcomes for children
- Increased parental participation in children’s health & education
- Improved school culture

**Low level outcomes**
- Children attend regularly
- Parents participate in planning
- Parents happy with GTP
- School & GTP staff happy with GTP
- Improved parental attitudes
- Improved school & GTP staff attitudes

**Outputs**
- Run classroom programs
- Conduct family-based planning
- Conduct home visits
- Implement individual health plans
- Ongoing resource development
- Ongoing staff training

**Processes**
- Recruit & train staff
- Renovate & furnish building
- Consult with relevant agencies / establish partnerships
- Establish management processes
- Finalise & produce program materials
- Recruit families & children

**Inputs**
- ITG funding
- Goonellabah Primary School In-kind
- NSW DET In-kind
- NCAHS & CHEGS Inc. In-kind & extra funding
- Community & GTP staff In-kind
- Other agency support (eg: Yabur Yulgun)
A Tour of the GTP

The Grounds of the GTP

Coming Inside the GTP

Reading and Storytelling Spaces

Learning in Action and GTP Resources
About Our Evaluation

Evaluation Aims
In line with the Department of Family, Community Services & Indigenous Affairs’ guidelines, we developed a comprehensive evaluation plan to monitor the GTP’s implementation and impact across a number of areas.

Performance Monitoring & Process Evaluation
Comprehensive performance management processes and process evaluation monitored:
- the quality of implementation and delivery of the program – including ongoing reflection about factors (positive and negative) impacting on the program’s success, implementation quality, efficiency, consistency with program logic and adequacy of documentation;
- children’s and families’ participation, overall and in the various program components; and
- families’, children's and GTP and school staff members’ attitudes towards the GTP.

Impact and Outcome Evaluation
Comprehensive impact and outcome evaluation assessed the GTP’s impact on:
- school staff members’ attitudes towards, understanding of and perceived confidence at supporting children and families needing additional support with transition to kindergarten;
- families’ attitudes towards and confidence to deal with health and education systems;
- children's attitudes towards health and education systems; and
- children’s developmental, educational, social, behavioural and health outcomes throughout their transition to school and their early school lives.

Evaluation Design & Methods
Our quasi-experimental, pre-post evaluation design aimed to make use of routinely-collected data wherever possible - in order to minimise the need for additional direct question and answer processes &/or written surveys. However, some information that only children, families or staff could provide was also collected, using less formal, narrative methods.

Performance Monitoring & Process Evaluation
A comprehensive database was developed to manage the following information about each child participating in the GTP:
- their families’ contact and demographic details;
- their families’ participation in their regular program planning;
- dates and reasons for any absences from the GTP;
- details about any hearing & other physical assessments &/or referrals - and their outcomes;
- details of any assessments/reports by school counsellors &/or itinerant support teachers;
- details about any other preschool or daycare services they attended; and
- their developmental progress assessments and any reports made by their GTP teacher.

The GTP Coordinator also kept an ongoing reflective journal throughout the GTP’s development and implementation - providing a detailed record of the successes achieved, the challenges faced, the lessons learned and the changes made to the program.

Finally, detailed feedback about the GTP was also collected from the children, their families and GTP and school staff - during the interviews and surveys described below.
**Impact and Outcome Evaluation**

**Children’s Outcomes**
This evaluation involved ongoing assessments of participating children’s development and early school transition and achievements - as detailed in the table summarising the evaluation tools (see next page). These results will be compared against those of two comparison groups of students drawn from five local partner primary schools: Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal children enrolled in Years K–1 during 2006, not having attended the GTP. These schools were chosen as they had the largest numbers of Aboriginal child enrolments in the region.

Children attending the GTP were also interviewed using an innovative narrative technique, where the GTP Coordinator developed an interactive powerpoint-based “game” with pictures of GTP spaces, people and activities - which the Aboriginal Health Promotion Officer “played” with the children to prompt their feedback about the GTP and their attitudes about going to school.

**Families’ Outcomes**
Families’ outcomes were assessed in three ways. Firstly, families participated in Family Team Meetings at the beginning of each school term. During these meetings, each child’s GTP teacher sought feedback from their family regarding their progress and needs for additional support or information - to help with planning the child’s tailored program for the coming term. The meetings also explored ways families would like more help with supporting their children’s development of basic literacy, numeracy, behavioural, emotional, motor, self-care and other skills in preparation for going to school.

Secondly, ongoing feedback was collected regarding their expectations, likes & dislikes about the GTP, their suggestions to improve it, their knowledge and attitudes about the health and education systems, their level of engagement in their children’s health and education and their perceptions of the GTP’s impact on their children, themselves, other family members, school staff and the overall school culture. This information was collected on semi-structured feedback sheets completed during the GTP staff’s fortnightly visits to families’ homes and conversations during family members’ visits to the GTP.

Thirdly, family interviews were conducted early in children’s second term in kindergarten in the year after attending the GTP. These interviews explored families’ perceptions about the GTP, their child’s transition into kindergarten and how the GTP may have helped or hindered this.

To enhance cultural sensitivity, the GTP Aboriginal Support Assistant and a local Aboriginal Health Promotion Officer conducted these family and child surveys. They were familiar to families through their involvement in the GTP classroom &/or home visiting component. Results from the BRTP demonstrated that, within such a process, families were willing to comment about desired improvements, as well as about aspects with which they were satisfied.

**GTP & School Staff Outcomes**
GTP and partner primary school staff were interviewed about their experiences, understanding and confidence to support families needing additional help during their child’s transition into school. As teachers are often rotated across school Years, baseline surveys were sought from all teachers across the five partner schools. However, followup surveys were sought from teachers and support staff working directly with children in Years K–1 only. These followup surveys also explored the staff members’ perceptions about the GTP’s impact on children and their families.
**Evaluation Tools**

The table below summarises the various evaluation tools used to assess the GTP’s acceptability to all target groups and its impact across the broad range of outcomes detailed above. As indicated, most data came from tools routinely collected by the GTP or partner primary schools.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Outcome</th>
<th>Evaluation Tool</th>
<th>Collected By?</th>
<th>Collected When?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Children’s Education / Development Outcomes</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Literacy (reading &amp; writing)</td>
<td>Assessment, Evaluation &amp; Programming System for Infants &amp; Children - 2 (AEPS-2)</td>
<td>GTP</td>
<td>Early Term 1 &amp; End each Term</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Syllabus Outcomes - English</td>
<td>Schools (K-1)</td>
<td>End Terms 2 &amp; 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Numeracy</td>
<td>AEPS-2</td>
<td>GTP</td>
<td>Continually</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Syllabus Outcomes - Maths</td>
<td>Schools (K-1)</td>
<td>End Terms 2 &amp; 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Language skills (expressive &amp; receptive)</td>
<td>AEPS-2</td>
<td>GTP</td>
<td>Early Term 1 &amp; End each Term</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Preschool Language Assessment Instrument-2</td>
<td>GTP</td>
<td>Early Term 1 &amp; Late Term 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Syllabus Outcomes - English</td>
<td>Schools (K-1)</td>
<td>End Terms 2 &amp; 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fine motor skills</td>
<td>AEPS-2</td>
<td>GTP</td>
<td>Early Term 1 &amp; End each Term</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Who Am I? (WAI) / Beery</td>
<td>GTP</td>
<td>Early Term 1 &amp; Late Term 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gross motor skills</td>
<td>AEPS-2</td>
<td>GTP</td>
<td>Early Term 1 &amp; End each Term</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Problem solving skills</td>
<td>AEPS-2</td>
<td>GTP</td>
<td>Early Term 1 &amp; End each Term</td>
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<td><strong>Children’s Social Outcomes</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Communication skills</td>
<td>AEPS-2</td>
<td>GTP</td>
<td>Early Term 1 &amp; End each Term</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-control</td>
<td>AEPS-2</td>
<td>GTP</td>
<td>Early Term 1 &amp; End each Term</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social cooperation</td>
<td>AEPS-2</td>
<td>GTP</td>
<td>Early Term 1 &amp; End each Term</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social skills</td>
<td>AEPS-2</td>
<td>GTP</td>
<td>Early Term 1 &amp; End each Term</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-help skills</td>
<td>AEPS-2</td>
<td>GTP</td>
<td>Early Term 1 &amp; End each Term</td>
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<td><strong>Children’s Behavioural Outcomes</strong></td>
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<td>School attendance</td>
<td>Daily Class Rolls</td>
<td>GTP &amp; Schools (K-1)</td>
<td>Average each Term</td>
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<td>Student participation</td>
<td>AEPS-2</td>
<td>GTP</td>
<td>Early Term 1 &amp; End each Term</td>
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<tr>
<td>Student behaviour</td>
<td>Suspension Records</td>
<td>Schools (K-1)</td>
<td>End of each Term</td>
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<td><strong>Children’s Health Outcomes</strong></td>
<td>Individual Health Plans database</td>
<td>GTP</td>
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<td><strong>Children’s Feedback</strong></td>
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<td>Feedback about GTP</td>
<td>Children’s survey</td>
<td>GTP / HPU</td>
<td>Late Term 4</td>
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<td>Feedback about children’s transition into school</td>
<td>Children’s survey</td>
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<td>Late Term 1 in Kindy</td>
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<td>Parents’ survey</td>
<td>GTP / HPU</td>
<td>Late Term 1 in Kindy</td>
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<td>School staff survey (Relevant Years only)</td>
<td>CCYP</td>
<td>Late Term 1 in Kindy</td>
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<td><strong>Family Outcomes</strong></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Expectations of &amp; feedback about GTP</td>
<td>Home Visit Worksheets</td>
<td>GTP</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Family Team Meetings</td>
<td>GTP</td>
<td>Early each Term</td>
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<td>Parent Exit Interview</td>
<td>GTP</td>
<td>End Term 4 or if child leaves</td>
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<td>Parents’ survey</td>
<td>GTP / HPU</td>
<td>Late Term 1 in Kindy</td>
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<td>Parental attitudes re: health/education systems</td>
<td>Home Visit Worksheets</td>
<td>GTP</td>
<td>Continually</td>
</tr>
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<td>Family Team Meetings</td>
<td>GTP</td>
<td>Early each Term</td>
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<tr>
<td>Parental participation in children’s health/education</td>
<td>Home Visit Worksheets</td>
<td>GTP</td>
<td>Continually</td>
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<td>Family Team Meetings</td>
<td>GTP</td>
<td>Early each Term</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Staff Outcomes</strong></td>
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<td>Feedback about GTP</td>
<td>GTP and School Staff survey</td>
<td>CCYP</td>
<td>Late Term 1 in 2007 &amp; 2008</td>
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<td>GTP Coordinator’s Reflective Journal</td>
<td>GTP</td>
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<td>Knowledge &amp; attitudes re: high-needs children; expectations of GTP</td>
<td>GTP and School Staff survey</td>
<td>CCYP</td>
<td>July 2005 (baseline) and Late Term 1 in 2007 &amp; 2008</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Evaluation Time Line

The figure below outlines the schedule of implementation and evaluation activities for each Intake of children attending the GTP during the study period.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Pilot Intake</th>
<th>2006 Intake</th>
<th>2007 Intake</th>
<th>GTP &amp; School Staff Surveys</th>
<th>Comparison Data</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>GTP implementation</td>
<td>GTP implementation</td>
<td>GTP implementation</td>
<td>Baseline</td>
<td>School data collection</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>GTP data collection</td>
<td>School data collection</td>
<td>School data collection</td>
<td>Post 1</td>
<td>Comparison Data</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Post 1</td>
<td>Post 2</td>
<td>Jan-Mar</td>
<td>Apr-Jun</td>
<td>Oct-Dec</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Sep-Oct-Dec</td>
<td>Apr-Jun</td>
<td>Jul-Sep</td>
<td>Oct-Dec</td>
<td>Jan-Mar</td>
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<tr>
<td>2008</td>
<td>2007</td>
<td>2006</td>
<td>2005</td>
<td></td>
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</table>

## Ethical Approval

Ethical approval for this evaluation was obtained from Southern Cross University’s Human Research Ethics Committee. Apart from the GTP and school staff surveys, all data was collected by and remained the property of the GTP. Parental consent was obtained for the GTP to release de-identified data for analysis and reporting purposes.

## The Purpose of this Report

This interim report aims to give an overview about the GTP’s implementation progress and evaluation results to date – for the GTP’s 2006 Intake. The following sections provide updates against most of the process, impact and outcome indicators detailed above. However, as these children’s school performance data are not yet available, this report focuses on the data collected throughout the GTP’s implementation and from families and school staff regarding their perceptions of how the GTP has helped the children’s development &/or their transition into kindergarten.
Results to Date: GTP’s 2006 Intake

GTP Implementation Overview

GTP Program Delivery

Two classes operated throughout 2006 - each with 11 children attending on two consecutive days (either Monday/Tuesday or Wednesday/Thursday). Where possible, families with children in each class were visited at home on alternate Fridays - by the GTP’s Aboriginal Support Assistant and a local Aboriginal Health Promotion Officer. Initially, these home visits were conducted on a flexible, informal basis but a more formal visiting schedule was negotiated with families, following a number of missed visits with some families. Where families could not be available on their scheduled days, the GTP Coordinator conducted their home visits at other convenient times. Fridays were also a time for the GTP Coordinator to update children’s files and to visit other early childhood services the children were attending to enhance collaboration and consistency across services with the children’s Individual Education Plans.

The literacy, numeracy and behavioural resources were developed, tailored to children’s Individual Education Plans, for them to take home each week - with most of these templates developed in the GTP Coordinator’s own time and produced by the Community Development Employment Program (CDEP) participants. The very positive response to these resources from families has identified a need for other similar resources across a range of parenting issues and additional funding is currently being sought to support their development. Requests have also been increasing from preschools and other early childhood services for the GTP Coordinator to provide similar resources and support with training staff in their use. Following the success of a trial program with two preschools, additional funding is currently being sought to allow support to be provided to more services.

In 2007, as the children graduating from the GTP’s 2006 Intake have moved into kindergarten, there has also been a need for some additional support and home visits for some of the children and families - during their transition and their first term at school. As the second GTP teacher position has no time for duties other than her face-to-face teaching, the GTP Coordinator has provided this support for the families involved in both classes of the GTP’s 2006 Intake.

The GTP is also committed to enhancing all staff members’ access to relevant further training and education opportunities, including:

- supporting the GTP Aboriginal Support Assistant to continue his Bachelor of Primary Education;
- supporting the second GTP teacher to continue her Bachelor of Special Education;
- actively mentoring the CDEP participants and supporting them to complete administration &/or teacher’s aide qualifications;
- supporting the GTP Aboriginal Support Assistant and the CDEP participants to attend the Aboriginal Early Childhood Conference;
- supporting the GTP Administrative Assistant to attend training in the development and use of Microsoft Access databases; and
- supporting the GTP Coordinator to attend relevant Department of Family, Community Services & Indigenous Affairs events.
Recruitment of Children and Families
A total of about 55 children and families were referred to the GTP for the 2006 school year - more than double the number of children the GTP could service. A Placement sub-committee of the GTP Advisory Group met to review and prioritise all referrals - with some families accepting placements in Wilson Park Special School or other early intervention services; some other families, whose children needed support with only a single issue (eg: psychological support), accepting referrals to relevant specialist services; and some other families, with younger children who could delay starting school until 2008, agreeing to wait for the GTP’s 2007 Intake.

Ultimately, 31 children were enrolled in the GTP at some point during 2006 - with 22 (71%) completing the school year. Of the nine children not completing the year: 6 (67%) moved out of the area soon after enrolling, 2 (22%) were found to be too young and referred to the GTP’s 2007 Intake and 1 (13%) progressed quickly and no longer needed the GTP.

Why Children Attended the GTP

From GTP Records
While all 22 children received some additional support across most of the following areas, a number were assessed as needing intensive support in one or more area:

- 16 (73%) with behavioural issues;
- 15 (68%) with their fine motor skills;
- 15 (68%) with their speech;
- 6 (27%) with their social skills;
- 5 (23%) with their cognitive skills;
- 2 (9%) with their toileting; and
- 1 (5%) with their gross motor skills.

From Family Surveys
When asked what their child had needed help with, the 12 families interviewed in time for inclusion in this report cited a number of different issues, including:

- their behaviour or attitude (5 comments);
- improving their concentration or ability to focus (4 comments);
- problems with their speech (4 comments);
- help with learning their letters or spelling (3 comments);
- with getting ready for kindergarten generally (3 comments); and
- with everything or lots of areas (3 comments).

Child & Family Characteristics
Of the 22 children completing the GTP’s 2006 Intake:

- 17 (77%) were Aboriginal and 5 (23%) were non-Aboriginal;
- 13 (59%) were boys and 9 (41%) were girls;
- 11 (50%) enrolled during the first term, 4 (18%) during the second term, 5 (23%) during the third term and 2 (9%) during the last term;
- their total length of enrolment in the GTP ranged from 7 to 44 weeks, with a mean enrolment length of 31 weeks;
- ages at enrolment ranged from 3.7 to 5.3 years, with a mean age of 4.5 years; and
- ages at completion ranged from 4.4 to 5.8 years, with a mean age of 5.1 years.
Many of these children lived in families experiencing a number of social and economic challenges, including:

- 21 (95%) children had no parent, or guardian, in full-time paid work;
- 9 (41%) families were living in government housing and a further 2 (9%) families currently had no home of their own and were staying with friends or relatives;
- 9 (41%) families had at least one parent dealing with drug &/or alcohol issues;
- 6 (27%) children had experienced physical &/or emotional abuse or neglect;
- 6 (27%) families experienced domestic violence issues;
- 5 (23%) children were partly or fully under the care of other family members, usually their grandparents;
- 4 (18%) children had been allocated Department of Community Services case-workers;
- 4 (18%) families had at least one parent dealing with mental health issues &/or their own learning or developmental disability; and
- 2 (9%) children had siblings with severe disabilities.

**Attendance Rates and Transporting**

Attendance rates were generally very good for the 22 children completing the 2006 GTP:

- the proportion of days attended ranged from 39% to 100% of the days enrolled - with 17 (77%) children attending at least 75% of their possible days, 10 (45%) children attending at least 90% of possible days and an overall average of 84% of possible days attended; and
- the number of whole-day absences ranged from 0 to 34, with an average of only 7.8 per child throughout their enrolment - with reasons provided for 45% of these absences overall.

Twenty (91%) families managed all, or almost all, of their child’s transport to and from the GTP, with various family members involved in dropping off &/or picking up the children - including mums (42% of trips), dads (19%), grandmothers (10%), grandfathers (4%), aunties (2%), uncles (1%) and brothers and sisters (1%) - and about 10% of trips made by bus. Overall, mums were involved in the dropping off &/or picking up for 19 (86%) children, dads for 12 (55%) children, grandmothers for 6 (27%) children, uncles for 5 (23%) children, aunties for 4 (18%) children, granddads and brothers for 3 (14%) children each and sisters for 2 (9%) children. One family received help with transport from GTP staff during their child’s first term and another family received help with transport from a local church group throughout their child’s enrolment.

**GTP Graduations**

Overall, 19 (86%) of the 22 children completing the GTP’s 2006 Intake graduated and have enrolled in primary schools - 18 locally, while one family has moved out of the area. The remaining three children have re-enrolled in the GTP’s 2007 Intake, to receive further support before progressing to primary school in 2008.
**Participation in Evaluation Activities**

**Child Surveys**
Interviews were completed with 20 children, 10 from each class, late in their last term in the GTP (December 2006) - representing 91% of the 22 children completing the GTP in 2006. The two children not interviewed were absent from the GTP on the days of the surveys.

**Family Surveys**
Interviews were completed with 17 families (89% of those with children graduating from the GTP) early in their child’s second term in kindergarten (May 2007). However, only 12 interviews were completed in time for inclusion in this interim report - results from the other five interviews will be incorporated into the final report. Of the 17 family interviews: 5 (29%) were conducted with both the child’s parents, 8 (47%) with only their mother, 1 (6%) with only their father and 3 (18%) with their grandmother. Of the two families not interviewed, one could not be contacted, despite multiple attempts, and the other had left the area.

**Home Visit Worksheets**
Worksheets were to be completed after each fortnightly home visit to each family - including the GTP staff's ratings of the family's interest and engagement about the GTP, their children's health and education issues and of their willingness to take on board the GTP staff's feedback about their child's progress. GTP staff also noted any comments families made about their own or their children's reactions to the GTP or about its perceived impact on the children or families.

As discussed earlier, there were some problems with missed home visits during the first half of the year and a number of completed home visit worksheets could not be located in time for inclusion in this report. Therefore, the comments included in the following results sections are somewhat preliminary as they are based on only the 27 completed worksheets currently available. In light of these problems, the home visit tracking system has been improved and the data from these and the 2007 worksheets will be explored more fully in the final report.

**GTP & School Staff Surveys**
In late 2005, baseline interviews were completed with all 5 GTP staff and with the following staff from their five partner primary schools: 3 principals and 3 assistant principals; 3 teachers of kindergarten-Year 2, 1 teacher of Years 3-6 and 2 teachers of special needs; 1 Aboriginal education assistant; 1 teacher’s aide; and 3 school counsellors. The results from these baseline interviews (regarding their experiences, understanding and confidence in dealing with families needing additional support during their children’s transition into the school system) will be compared to those to be collected in the Post2 Surveys in 2008. Therefore, they are not explored in this interim report.

A first round of followup interviews was completed at the end of the 2006 Intake children’s first term in kindergarten (March 2007) - with all 5 GTP staff and the following staff from the five partner primary schools: 4 principals (with 3 aware of children having attended the GTP); 2 assistant principals also involved in teaching kindergarten (both aware of children having attended the GTP); and 2 teachers of kindergarten (with 1 aware of children having attended the GTP). This report will focus on the results of the 8 school staff, with the GTP staff surveys being explored in more detail in our final report in 2008.
Feedback about the GTP

Children’s Feedback

From Child Surveys
The 20 children interviewed at the end of their year at the GTP showed good understanding of its people and activities. They all recognised the GTP building and the different GTP staff members and most were able to name their own teacher (94%), the GTP Aboriginal Support Assistant (88%), the GTP Administrative Assistant (63%) and the Aboriginal Health Promotion Officer doing the interviews (81%). Most children (75%) were also able to name all or most of their classmates but few (25%) could name the CDEP participant featured. However, most children showed good understanding of all the different GTP staff members’ roles:

- the **GTP Coordinator** and second **GTP Teacher** - were most-commonly associated with playing games, teaching, doing work and playing outside with the children;
- the **Aboriginal Support Assistant** - was also commonly associated with these activities, as well as with helping the children practise their writing and eating with them;
- the **GTP Administrative Assistant** - was most-commonly associated with working in the office but also with playing games and playing outside with the children; and
- the **CDEP participant** and the **Aboriginal Health Promotion Officer** - were most-commonly associated with having little interaction with the children, which was the case.

Initial reviews of the children's interviews have also shown their familiarity with the many activities of the GTP but further reviewing is needed to see if their emotional reactions to the various activities can be ascertained - these results will be incorporated into the final report.

From Family Surveys
All 12 families interviewed in time for inclusion in this report indicated that their children really enjoyed attending the GTP and that they particularly liked: the staff (5 comments); the strictness and security of the boundaries (2 comments); and the activities (2 comments).

While a few families reported negative initial reactions (to interacting with the bigger kindergarten children or the strictness), these were soon overcome and almost all families reported there was nothing their children ongoingly disliked about the GTP. The only ongoing dislike was from one child who wanted to be allowed to sleep.

**Families’ comments about their child’s reactions to the GTP**
- *She was a bit unsure to begin with … but then she really loved it.* (Family 1)
- *I think he liked [GTP Coordinator] the most cause of the strictness.* (Family 2)
- *She loved it, she didn’t want to miss a day really.* (Family 4)
- *He loved it, he couldn’t get enough of it.* (Family 6)
- *He would see me an’ tell me what he’d been doing, so that was good gettin’ him to talk and tell me what he’d been doin’.* (Family 8)
- *He absolutely loved it, he really looked forward to the days he was going there.* (Family 9)
- *He loved going to transition, he liked it better than preschool. He always learnt, he always wanted to go.* (Family 10)
- *She didn’t like it at first, didn’t like it at all, because of the boundaries that were being set, but as the year went on that made her feel safe & she loved it, loved goin’ then.* (Family 11)
- *He liked goin’ to transition, he wanted to stay there.* (Family 12)
From Home Visit Worksheets
From the 27 completed home visit worksheets available for inclusion in this report, 16 (59%) included families' comments about how much their child enjoyed going to the GTP and 4 (15%) about how much they particularly liked their teacher. A further six comments were also made about how much the children enjoyed doing their homework, using the GTP resources and reading, writing or drawing at home.

Families’ Feedback
From Family Surveys
All 12 families interviewed in time for inclusion in this report gave very positive feedback about the GTP and were very grateful to have been involved with it. They particularly liked:

- the staff (7 comments);
- that their child loved attending (5 comments);
- how the staff worked & communicated with them (5 comments);
- the program itself (5 comments);
- the GTP resources their children brought home (5 comments);
- the welcoming environment (3 comments);
- how the staff worked with their child (3 comments); and
- everything (3 comments).

Two families each also commented about appreciating the help with transport when needed, the GTP being free and how their child talked to them about what they’d done at the GTP. While two families would have liked their child to attend for more days, all families reported there was nothing they disliked about the GTP.

Families’ reactions to the GTP
- I can’t say anything bad about transition, liked everything we done, liked all the staff and their input. (Family 1)
- We loved transition and how it got <Child 6> prepared for kindergarten. (Family 6)
- We thought we were blessed, it was a great experience. I just can’t thank you all enough for having <Child 7> up there and for the, the work, the devotion that yous put into him, … and we believe you helped immensely … and that’s honest from my heart. (Family 7)
- Oh, yes, it saved me, it saved us a lot, it helped us, it helped <Child 8> which helped us and me other sons. Just thank you, an’ yous were a really big help for our family. (Family 8)
- It’s like second to none, it’s absolutely brilliant. (Family 9)
- I loved it too. I was so glad that it came around it helped him so much. (Family 10)
- I was cryin’ at the end of the year when she was goin’, cause it was just so good what yas did, it was unreal. (Family 11)

From Home Visit Worksheets
From the 27 completed home visit worksheets available for inclusion in this report, 9 (33%) included families' comments about how much they really liked the GTP and 6 (22%) about how much they really liked the GTP staff. A further 14 comments were also made about how much the families liked the GTP resources sent home &/or how much they enjoyed reading &/or doing the homework with their children.
School Staff Feedback

From School Staff Surveys

All 6 school staff with experience of children and families having attended the GTP gave very positive feedback about it and were very grateful for the support they had received with transitioning the children into kindergarten.

School staff reactions to the GTP

- It’s an excellent program, particularly where you have an understanding of the population going into schools, because Aboriginal children don’t all access the Aboriginal preschool & quite often [GTP] gives them much closer association with school & the place they are going to end up going to … it’s very important for the language & the understanding of the systems & the expectations of school, & so it, it sets up children in manageable amounts of time, where they can learn about what school is & what it can offer them. (Principal 2)
- They work really hard with the families & really get involved with the kids & there’s a really good crossover … so you’ve got a lot of information on the children & that’s really helpful for us. I think they do a really good job but I think it’s a huge issue & I am concerned with the fact that we do still miss kids, but I suppose that’s going to happen with any system. (Assistant Principal 1)
- <GTP Coordinator> has spoken at staff meetings & I’ve spoken quite often one on one with her & she will give us good feedback about the children & our own kindergarten classes. (Assistant Principal 2)
- It’s a fantastic program & yeah, the proof’s in the pudding … with the children coming into kindergarten. (Kindergarten teacher)

Child Outcomes

Access to Health & Other Support Services

From GTP Records

The GTP organised visits from a number of allied health and other support services and referrals to other services, where needed. Of the 22 children attending throughout 2006:

- 20 (91%) received dental checks from NCAHS staff at the GTP;
- 16 (73%) received vision checks from NCAHS staff at the GTP - 3 (14%) others had already received the check through their preschool;
- 15 (68%) received hearing checks from NCAHS staff at the GTP - 3 (14%) others had already received the check through their preschool;
- 13 (59%) received support from paediatricians after referrals from the GTP - all privately elsewhere;
- 10 (45%) received speech therapy services after referrals from the GTP - 8 from NCAHS staff at the GTP, 1 privately elsewhere and 1 through both;
- 7 (32%) received support from NSW DET school counsellors after referrals from the GTP - although a further 1 (5%) was referred but not able to be seen;
- 5 (23%) received support from NSW DET itinerant support teachers throughout their last term at GTP and their first term in kindergarten following referrals from the GTP - 4 (18%) with their behaviour and 1 (5%) with their hearing;
- 4 (18%) received occupational therapy services after referrals from GTP - all from NCAHS staff at the GTP although a further 4 (18%) were referred but not able to be seen; and
- 3 (14%) received ear, nose, throat services after referral from GTP - all privately elsewhere.
Developmental Progress
From GTP Records

Children were initially and ongoingly assessed as fully meeting (2 points), partially meeting (1 point) or not meeting (0 points) indicators across a range of outcome domains & strands adapted from the following standardised tools: the Assessment, Evaluation & Programming System for Infants & Children (2nd edition), the Preschool Language Assessment Instrument (2nd edition), the Who Am I? and the Beery-Buktenica Developmental Test of Visual-Motor Integration (5th edition). Children’s progress on each indicator was assessed against a number of sequential steps towards fully meeting it - which will be explored more fully in our final report.

As shown in the table below, initial assessments were highest for gross motor skills (with 77% of the maximum points achieved) and adaptive behaviours (71% achieved) and lowest for fine motor skills (22% achieved) and cognitive skills (38% achieved). By the end of the GTP year, children were achieving considerably better across all major outcome domains - with their final mean scores representing over 80% of the maximums on five of the six domains. The largest improvements were seen in their fine motor skills (219% improvement on initial scores), cognitive skills (116% improvement) and social skills (75% improvement).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Outcome Domain</th>
<th>Outcome Strand</th>
<th>Max points</th>
<th>Initial Rating mean</th>
<th>Initial Rating range</th>
<th>Final Rating mean</th>
<th>Final Rating range</th>
<th>Improvement mean</th>
<th>Improvement range</th>
<th>% change from pre</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cognitive Skills</td>
<td>Emergent maths</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>7.42</td>
<td>0-26</td>
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<td>5-8</td>
<td>1.37</td>
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<td>6-10</td>
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<td>Interacting with others</td>
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<td>2.21</td>
<td>0-6</td>
<td>5.42</td>
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<td>3.21</td>
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<td>3-6</td>
<td>1.63</td>
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<td>1.16</td>
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<td>6.00</td>
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<td>Manipulating objects</td>
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<td>Producing words, phrases &amp; sentences</td>
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<td>0-156</td>
<td>137.42</td>
<td>96-165</td>
<td>64.32</td>
<td>1-117</td>
<td>88.0%</td>
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</table>
From Family Surveys
When asked how they felt the GTP had helped their child, the 12 families interviewed in time for inclusion in this report cited a number of developmental improvements, including:

- improving their behaviour or attitude to be less aggressive (5 comments);
- making them more sociable and less reserved with other children (4 comments);
- improving their speech and encouraging them to speak more (3 comments);
- making them more confident and independent (3 comments); and
- improving their writing (3 comments).

Families’ comments about changes in their child’s development

- She’s talkin’ to other kids and that now and basically comin’ out of her shell, whereas before she was very quiet and reserved, now she able to go out and mix with all the other kids. (Family 1)
- She learnt a lot, she learnt a lot of spelling from there too, she learnt heaps. She didn’t know how to write her name or anything until she went to transition, she didn’t know no ABC’s, she didn’t know how to write properly, she a lot more skilled now. Her behaviour was terrible before she went, but after that she was good, she learnt a lot, she behave good, settle down. (Family 4)
- She just learnt more and she broke out of her little shell there. (Family 5)
- He was attentive and listened, he remembered his traffic lights to stop. The paediatrician is so pleased with him, like his development. (Family 7)
- It made him grow up a lot more. I think it just taught him how he couldn’t just get what he wanted straight away, & sorta taught him to take turns & to wait & to ask. (Family 10)
- It helped <Child 12> out a lot & taught him things I s’pose he needed to know with goin’ ta kindergarten, so it helped him out a lot i reckon. Like when he first came down, settlin’ with the kids & interactin’ that was a little bit of a problem cause all he’d do was punch an’ wanna fight with kids & he’d end up in planning room but transition’s ‘elped settle ‘im down & he’s sorta just learnt to keep his hands to ’imself an’ just do his work. (Family 12)

From Home Visit Worksheets
From the 27 completed home visit worksheets available for inclusion in this report, 13 (48%) included families’ comments about how impressed they were with their child’s general progress since starting at the GTP, 8 (30%) about how much their child’s behaviour or temper/aggression had improved, 7 (26%) about how much their child’s speech or talking had improved, 4 (15%) about how much their child’s social skills or socialising had improved and 4 (15%) about how much their child’s concentration had improved.
From School Staff Surveys
All 6 school staff with experience of children and families having attended the GTP felt that it had helped the children in the following areas:

- with their **general school readiness** - 5 school staff felt the GTP had helped the children a lot with this and 1 quite a bit;
- with their **general behaviour** - 4 school staff felt the GTP had helped the children a lot with this and 2 quite a bit;
- with their **social skills** - 4 school staff felt the GTP had helped the children a lot with this and 2 quite a bit;
- with their **school English language skills** - 4 school staff felt the GTP had helped the children a lot with this, 1 quite a bit and 1 wasn’t sure;
- with their **basic literacy and reading** - 3 school staff felt the GTP had helped the children a lot with this, 1 quite a bit and 2 weren’t sure; and
- with their **basic numeracy** - 3 school staff felt the GTP had helped the children a lot with this and 3 weren’t sure.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School staff comments about the children’s development</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>✔️ Quite often I know the families, &amp; these children have not had much previous exposure to the order &amp; the discipline that would be needed within that setting. (Principal 2)</td>
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<tr>
<td>✔️ Their questioning, their answering of questions is quite good. Basic numeracy is great. (Assistant Principal 1)</td>
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<tr>
<td>✔️ Yeah, well definitely their language skills I think, in terms of being able to interact with others, adults &amp; others … they’re much more capable, confident about doing that. (Assistant Principal 2)</td>
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<tr>
<td>✔️ Social skills a lot. Yeah, the difference in the children is quite marked &amp; even some of the children that were in the program but with poor attendance, you can still see the difference with them as well. (Kindergarten teacher)</td>
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**Transition into Kindergarten**

*From Family Surveys*

When asked how their child was going with kindergarten: 6 families (50% of those interviewed in time for inclusion in this report) said very well, 5 (42%) said well and 1 (8%) said OK. Families were particularly pleased that their child went willingly (3 comments) and seemed to be keeping up with the schoolwork (2 comments). The child currently going only OK seemed to have hit a bit of a plateau, after a positive start but having become influenced by other children with behaviour issues in a special language support class.

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**Families’ comments about their child’s transition into kindergarten**

- She's goin' pretty good, she goes to school and she doesn't come home crying or anything, she seems to really like it. (Family 1)
- He's goin' really well, he's really enjoying it and he's keeping up with the classes, no negative on it. (Family 3)
- She's goin' good, she loves it. (Family 4)
- He's goin' really well, he's improved, came home the other day showing us how he could write his name smaller - he was so pleased, we praised him up for it & he was so happy for an hour or so. He wants to read 4-5 books every night, brings 'em in to me. (Family 6)
- He loves it and he's going very well. (Family 7)
- It's goin' really, really good, took a little bit for him to settle in ... so the idea of settling in happened really quickly - it was very good, he's goin' really good now. (Family 9)
- She's powerin' on, she's ever ready now, she's very, very well prepared, yeah she likes school. (Family 11)
- This term he's goin' really good, whereas the last term he was a little bit on edge but now he's started to settle down heaps, he's not punchin', he's goin' good. (Family 12)

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All 12 families interviewed in time for inclusion in this report felt the GTP had helped their child with transitioning into kindergarten, most very much so, including:

- getting the children used to school routines and rules (5 comments);
- giving them school-specific orientation materials and visits (4 comments); and
- feeling their child wouldn't have been ready for kindergarten without GTP (4 comments).

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**Families’ comments about how the GTP helped their child’s transition**

- ... if she hadn't of had this time with transition she wouldn't of been ready for kindy at all. (Family 1)
- We didn’t think he go no where near as well this year if he never had transition. (Family 6)
- Especially the transition to school booklet itself which had the photos of the teachers & things, that was really good, it reduced a lot of the stress on <Child 9> before he went to school. There was a lot of orientation work done & the booklets supplied ... without them, he simply wouldn't ave been functional there in any way, shape or form. (Family 9)
- It helped him so much, he wouldn’t have got the same amount of attention at preschool, I don't think. Like preschool helped him but transition definitely did more and helped prepare him better for school, and you guys sort of focused more on his language which is what he really needed. The transition book to school ... he looked at it all through the holidays, yeah and he loved it. (Family 10)
- She loves havin' ya there, she keeps comin' round to yas, yous are a part of her life now, see that's security for her, helps her know you're there, that makes her feel safe. (Family 11)
From School Staff Surveys
All 6 school staff aware of children having attended the GTP felt that it had helped them &/or their families with transitioning into kindergarten, most very much so. Ways the school staff felt the GTP had helped included:

- improving families' involvement with the school (2 comments);
- facilitating improved communications between families and schools (2 comments);
- exposing the children to discipline (1 comment); and
- improving the children’s social skills (1 comment).

School staff comments about how the GTP helped children’s transitions

- Yes they have helped them, most definitely, really brought the family & the school together. I first became aware of the kids from [GTP] that would be targeted to come to this school [in 2007] as early as term 3 in 2006 & we had talks to the families & it really did develop & initiate the relationship between the families & this school. Also the knowledge that the staff in the program have of the child & the family & the sharing of that knowledge, certainly strengthens the position of the receiving school to provide what’s required, so it is about you know, true collaboration, working together sharing information, good communication. (Principal 1)

- We’ve had a couple of children that have been through that program, & certainly the proof is in the pudding – they are able to sit, to attend & their attention & listening skills are much superior than if they hadn’t been. (Principal 2)

- Yes definitely helped them, very strongly support that. (Principal 3)

- We had one here – he started kindergarten but probably shouldn’t have, so he went to the transition program & has come back this year into kindergarten & look [GTP Coordinator] did a wonderful job, you know, & she works very well with social skilling the kids & their families, so they are quite aware of the expectations of school too. (Assistant Principal 2)

- One of the children I’ve just got a couple of weeks ago, he went to another school & it didn’t work out so he came back to us but the knowledge that the carers in the transition program had of this child made his transition here, even though he’d been at another school context, it was seamless, you know, he’s come into the school, he’s fitted right into the school there have been no dramas at all for him & that’s what it’s for, it’s for the children they get the best start. So even if there’s a delay between one & the other it still benefits so. (Kindergarten teacher)
Family Outcomes

Families’ Engagement with Their Child’s Health & Education

From Home Visit Worksheets
From the 27 completed home visit worksheets available for inclusion in this report, the GTP staff rated families as showing high levels of interest in and engagement with the GTP (mean = 8.7/10), their child’s health (mean = 9.1/10) and their child’s education (mean = 8.9/10).

From School Staff Surveys
All 6 school staff with experience of children and families having attended the GTP felt that it had helped the families engagement in the following areas:

- with their relationships with teachers &/or the school - 3 school staff felt the GTP had helped the families a lot with this and 3 quite a bit;
- with dealing with the school system - 3 school staff felt the GTP had helped the families a lot with this, 2 quite a bit and 1 a little;
- with their relationships with their children - 3 school staff felt the GTP had helped the families a lot with this, 1 quite a bit, 1 wasn’t sure and 1 wasn’t asked;
- with engaging about their children’s learning - 2 school staff felt the GTP had helped the families a lot with this, 3 quite a bit and 1 a little;
- with engaging about their children’s health - 3 school staff felt the GTP had helped the families quite a bit with this but 3 weren’t sure; and
- with dealing with the health system - 1 school staff felt the GTP had helped the families quite a bit with this but 5 weren’t sure.

School staff comments about the families’ engagement

- I know that both families felt happy about what the transition program offered them & if they’re happy about it they’re more confident about their child & the support they’re getting, then I guess that builds a bridge then or builds a connection between education & the families. (Principal 3)
- The parents that I’ve worked with are very aware of their children’s health. (Assistant Principal 1)
- Oh yeah, definitely. I think it makes, it forges better relationships with us. (Assistant Principal 1)
- The parents have had interaction with the teachers & the directors of the program, there’s time for follow up with the parents & getting them involved, so with all of those things I thinks it’s been extremely beneficial. (Assistant Principal 2)
- You see those parents more often taking interest with their kids, spending time with them doing these things that otherwise they wouldn’t have done, because they wouldn’t have known how to do them. (Kindergarten teacher)
Benefits for Families’ Other Children

From Family Surveys
All 12 families interviewed in time for inclusion in this report felt that the GTP had helped their other children, most very much so, and in a variety of different ways, including:

- being able to use the GTP resources brought home (5 comments);
- being treated better (more considerately and inclusively) by the child attending GTP (4 comments);
- being “taught” by the child attending GTP while they played “school” at home (3 comments); and
- improving their own speech (2 comments).

Families’ comments about ways their other children benefited

- The kids now play school on the weekends. <Child 1> is the teacher and the other kids get into the resources, they use the letters and different things now so, yes, it has helped the younger ones for when they go to school. (Family 1)
- I was worried younger sibling have troublin’ talking because of the mumble jumble he was doin’ but now he’s talkin’ a lot clearer. (Family 2)
- The kids all used the resources, they’ve learnt, they’ve picked up words and from <Child 3> goin’ to school, and they’re goin’ really well with it. (Family 3)
- Younger sibling is looking for books all the time and wanting to write his name all the time. With the Stop and Go it’s helped us to teach younger sibling a few behavioural management things at home. (Family 6)
- He’s started taking his brothers into consideration like he’s not the only person in the household. (Family 8)
- He brings stuff up to Mum’s all the time, & all the kids sit up there & do it. They love it! It was some card thing but it was shapes, it was a triangle but it was a pizza shape & I didn’t realise & I’m sayin’ that’s a pizza & he’s goin’ no, Aunty, it’s a triangle. (Family 10)

From Home Visit Worksheets
From the 27 completed home visit worksheets available for inclusion in this report, 2 (7%) included families’ comments about how the child attending the GTP was behaving and relating better with their siblings, 2 (7%) about how siblings’ attitudes towards their own homework had improved, 1 (4%) about how siblings’ behaviour or temper/aggression had improved and 1 (4%) about how much siblings enjoyed using the GTP resources brought home.
**Benefits for Parents & Other Carers**

*From Family Surveys*

Eleven of the 12 families interviewed in time for inclusion in this report felt that the GTP had very much helped them in a variety of different ways, including:

- by giving them behaviour strategies &/or other skills they could use at home with all their children (7 comments);
- by the child attending GTP being better behaved and needing less disciplining at home (5 comments); and
- reducing their anxiety about their child’s readiness for school (2 comments).

**Families’ comments about ways they benefited**

- Transition told us about what they were doin’ and we could continue it on at home, and the fact that we were both on the same page, at transition and at home. He improved greatly and like his toileting is fine now, no more problems with it. (Family 3)
- It brought stability to our house, helped us in many, many ways. (Family 7)
- It helped us all, it took pressure off me havin’ to worry about him cause I knew it was helpin’ him, getting him ready. It helped me learn more about <Child 8>. (Family 8)
- It was really fully supportive, lots of booklets and things come home, that sorta helped us with <Child 9> at home as well and we’re still using them on the younger kids. It opened our eyes for a lot of things to do with the other children … like it educated us as parents a lot more, so provided us with more ideas on how to help educate our own children at home before they go to school. (Family 9)
- Now at least I can sit down and do his words with him. I knew he had a speech problem but I didn’t really know what it was but then yous had sent home things what I could work with him so, yeah, it helped me heaps. (Family 10)
- It helped I know for me as a parent, it helped me out with her, cause in preschool, she was learning but not as quick as what she should have been … like I don’t reckon she would have been ready for school just with preschool. But with that extra help that you guys put in there that just sort of boosted it, took her right up to the next level, yeah. (Family 11)

*From Home Visit Worksheets*

From the 27 completed home visit worksheets available for inclusion in this report, 3 (11%) included families’ comments about how they felt more supported with and confident about their parenting since their child started attending the GTP.
The information presented in this interim report clearly demonstrates that very good progress is being made with the implementation and evaluation of the Goonellabah Transition Program - with generally excellent levels of participation by, and very positive feedback from, local children, families, primary schools and early childhood services.

A particularly impressive achievement is the generally excellent GTP attendance rate, especially given the various domestic challenges faced by many of the families involved with the program and the very high rates of families taking responsibility for transporting their children to and from the GTP. The preliminary results from the GTP developmental assessments are also very encouraging, with children appearing to have made substantial progress across a number of key domains critical to their future success in the education system.

We are very much looking forward to collecting and synthesising the remaining followup evaluation data for the GTP’s 2006 Intake and all the evaluation data for the GTP’s 2007 Intake - so we can more fully explore the impact of the GTP on children’s development and transition into kindergarten.