

## About the Nerang cluster critical friend

Leader Story

**Diarmuid O’Riordan**  
Principal of Cluster Key School  
St Peter Claver College  
Nerang Cluster

### Project role

As critical friend to the Nerang Cluster, Associate Professor Peter Grootenboer has been an invaluable asset.

In the first few years Peter’s role was as adviser to the Cluster Committee. He also assisted in the planning of the Maths Camp and summary reports at the end of each year.

The ‘Leading from the Middle’ program introduced in 2011 brought Peter into closer contact with teachers in each of the schools. Peter worked with middle leaders and key teachers to develop their capacity to support teachers to be more effective in the classroom. This involved being a presence in each school, working with lead teachers and assisting in the planning of specific project based learning experiences for the students.

In 2012, Peter was a key contributor in the planning and implementation of the Cluster Conference. In fact, Peter was one of the keynote speakers at the Conference. Throughout 2012 Peter continued to work closely with schools to assist in designing and implementing the Maths Teacher Collaborative Pedagogy Program (MTCPP).

### Project enhancement

There is no doubt that Peter’s presence as critical friend has greatly enhanced the opportunities for teachers to grow and develop as professionals. Initially as an advisor, Peter kept the Cluster focused on the objective of improving mathematical outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students.

In the second half of the project Peter was able to work in schools helping teachers to deliver more engaging mathematical lessons. Peter never once imposed an idea or belittled ideas of others; rather he listened to the difficulties and challenges faced by schools and teachers and offered insights and suggestions as a way forward.

### Teacher impact

Teachers could not help but feel affirmed by Peter. They in turn were more willing to adopt his ideas and apply the learned techniques in the classroom. Ultimately teachers took greater ownership of their capacity to make a real difference in making a positive impact on their students’ learning in mathematics.

### Further comments

It must be said that Peter’s willingness to be a part of the program and his readiness to assist schools and work collaboratively with teachers was a major factor in the added value that a critical friend gives.

His presence provided a powerful professional learning experience for teachers. In some cases it reinvigorated their passion for teaching.

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### **Finding 6.9: Improvement**

*Engage critically with external resources to gauge their appropriateness and relevance for Indigenous learners and compatibility with your aspirations for pedagogical improvement.*