AU Queensland, Australia: Wellbeing as a Whole-School Culture

💡 Segment Focus: First Nations Partnerships, Parent Engagement, and Relational Wellbeing

This hour, hosted by **Independent Schools Queensland (ISQ)** , focused on how Queensland independent schools are re-thinking **student wellbeing** through:

- Deep **First Nations partnerships and culture-centred programs**
- **Parent engagement** as a wellbeing strategy
- **Behaviour and pastoral care frameworks** grounded in relationship and reflection
- Wellbeing of **international students** living away from home

The approach is framed explicitly within **World Children's Day** and the idea that wellbeing is **a whole-school culture**.

🤝 1. First Nations Partnerships and Cultural Wellbeing

a) ISQ and Reconciliation

- **ISQ** is the peak body for independent schools in Queensland.
- ISQ emphasizes its **Reconciliation Action Plan** and ongoing work with schools to:
    - Support **Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students' education**.
    - Provide **PD for staff and emerging First Nations leaders**.
    - Help schools embed **First Nations perspectives across the curriculum** as part of both learning and wellbeing.

b) Radiant Life College & the Gundoi Wellbeing Program

- **Radiant Life College** (far north Queensland) has a majority Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander student population.
- The **Gundoi** program is a **culture-centred wellbeing and identity program** co-designed with local Elders.
    - **Gundoi** means **cassowary**, symbolizing nurturing and protection.
- Each class has **"deadly days"** with: language learning, dancing, arts, on-Country activities and a **Junior Ranger program**.

- **Gundoi** deliberately puts First Nations students **“in the driver’s seat”** of their own learning and culture.
- **Impact:** It has helped students see themselves on a **global stage** , without shame, and imagine futures as doctors, lawyers, etc.. The school is **“in the business of maintaining dreams”**.
- The **non-negotiable** is a **safe, culturally strong space** where identity is honoured.

👫 2. Parent Engagement as a Wellbeing Strategy

Queensland Independent Schools Parents Network (QISPN)

- **QISPN** runs **“Mastering Parent Engagement”**, a flagship program.
- **Distinction:**
  - **Involvement** = schools *doing to* parents (e.g., information nights, newsletters).
  - **Engagement** = schools *doing with* parents, in a genuine **partnership** around learning and wellbeing.
- The program helps schools translate research into **small, practical tweaks** (how emails are written, how meetings are framed).
- **Wellbeing Impact:** When relationships flip from fear/conflict to **“we’re on the same team”** , it reduces stress, misunderstandings and complaint cycles for staff. This has a **direct payoff for teacher wellbeing**.

🛑 3. Behaviour and Relational Frameworks

Parklands Christian College – Responsible Thinking Classroom (RTC)

- **Parklands Christian College** operates **Responsible Thinking Classrooms (RTCs)** as the core of its wellbeing and behaviour education approach.
- **Evolution:** Initially a simple withdrawal room (2006) , it evolved into **multi-disciplinary hubs** staffed by social workers and youth workers.
- **Student Use:** Students use RTCs to: Pause, reflect, complete **RT reflection plans** , and learn to **self-regulate**.

- **Key Principle:** Behaviour is treated as **communication**, not just a discipline issue. There is a strong emphasis on **restorative, relational justice**.
- **Impact on Staff:** The process **removes heat and emotion** from classroom incidents. Teachers know what to do and are not left to manage complex behaviour alone.

✈️ 4. International Student Wellbeing

John Paul College (JPC) – Extended Day Program (EDP)

- **John Paul College / John Paul International College (JPC)** has hosted international students since 1997.
- **EDP Model:** The **Extended Day Program (EDP)** sits between homestay and full boarding.
    - Students stay on campus after school, get **tutoring, supervised study, dinner** , and take school buses home around 6pm.
- **Staff Practice:** Staff practise **"thoughtful eavesdropping"** : by listening to student conversations, they pick up emerging stress (homesickness, exams) and can proactively respond.
- **Goals:** Ensure **equal access** to co-curricular activities and boost academic success, which **reinforces belonging and wellbeing**.
- **Partnership:** Homestay families receive **regular training**, including child-safety updates, to ensure the home environment is aligned with school wellbeing goals.

📝 5. Cross-Cutting Themes

- **Wellbeing is a Culture:** Wellbeing is **not** one program or one role, but a **way of walking alongside students, families and communities with empathy, expertise and purpose**.
- **Relationships First:** Whether it's RTCs, extended day, or mastering parent engagement: **relationships, trust and shared "why"** are what make the structures work.

- **Resilience:** David Ferguson references work like Judith Locke's on avoiding **"bonsai children"**: the need to **build resilience and independence** rather than over-protect.
- **Cultural Safety:** From **Gundoi** to First Nations reconciliation work, cultural safety is framed as a **pre-condition for learning**, not a nice extra.

🔗 **Key Entities & URLs**

- **Independent Schools Queensland (ISQ):** https://isq.qld.edu.au
- **Gundoi Wellbeing Program:** (Facebook)
- **Queensland Independent Schools Parents Network (QISPN):** https://parentsnetwork.qld.edu.au
- **Mastering Parent Engagement:** https://parentsnetwork.qld.edu.au
- **Parklands Christian College:** https://isq.qld.edu.au
- **Responsible Thinking Classroom / Parklands Way:** https://isq.qld.edu.au
- **John Paul College / John Paul International College (JPC):** https://jpic.com.au
- **Extended Day Program (JPC):** https://jpic.com.au