



Representing Gen Y, Elizabeth Roberts and Trae Clark of Chatham High with Carol Campbell on the forum panel.

# Generations quizzed on reconciliation

ISSUES such as education, language and unity were addressed when Taree TAFE celebrated Reconciliation Week with a panel discussion and question and answer session at the campus.

With a theme of reconciliation in the Manning, the session was chaired by campus manager David Rogers.

The morning aimed to take in the views of three generations from the community representing varied backgrounds, with panelists ranging from Aboriginal elders to high school students.

They discussed issues on the theme of 'is reconciliation being achieved in the Manning', giving their opinions and answering questions from the floor.

The panel included Aboriginal elders Aunty Barbara Clark and Rex Morris, non-indigenous representatives Rosemary Polkinghorne and Carol Campbell, Aboriginal community member Hazel Collins and students Elizabeth Roberts and Trae Clark.

The large crowd embraced the concept, taking the opportunity to ask questions to learn of the panel's views and also share their own opinions.

Education was identified as a key area, with some expressing concern that policies to improve indigenous education were formulated but too often not implemented.

Aunty Barbara described education as "the most important thing" for Aboriginal people and urged children to attend class every day.

Other speakers shared their belief that more must be done to teach Aboriginal history to all children – both indigenous and non-indigenous – to garner acceptance and understanding from a very young age.

This included maintaining the traditional languages as well as employing more Aboriginal people at schools and other education centres to assist students.

The panel also encouraged more cultural awareness and greater respect and support of each other, whatever their differences.

The final word went to the younger generation, Elizabeth encouraging her Gen Y peers to embrace reconciliation by learning more about Aboriginal history and sharing that knowledge with friends and classmates.

The session concluded with a barbecue lunch that gave attendees a chance to meet and build the bonds of community harmony.