
David Unaipon College of Indigenous Education and Research
University of South Australia
October 2009
REPORT

Review of *Australian Directions in Indigenous Education 2005–2008*

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Prepared for the
Ministerial Council for Education, Early Childhood Development and Youth Affairs

Submitted by the
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9 October 2009

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Letter of Transmittal

Ms Sharyn O’Neill
Chair, Ministerial Council for Education, Early Childhood Development and Youth Affairs (MCEECDYA) Reference Group on Indigenous Education
Department of Education and Training
Government of Western Australia

Dear Ms O’Neill,

On behalf of the research team it has been a privilege to review *Australian Directions in Indigenous Education 2005-2008* and submit our Report. It has been my privilege to lead the team of eminent Aboriginal educators and consultants who conducted the Review.

Overwhelming scientific evidence indicates that sustainable achievement requires an enduring commitment over the long term. Effort in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander education has too often been characterised by short term interventions. There are encouraging signs that government systems are ready to make long term commitments. The Council of Australian Governments (COAG) has agreed to significant National Partnership Agreements containing new targets, timelines and financial commitment that could lead to timely coherence across all sectors.

The findings of the Review Team indicate that over time there have been a myriad of schemes introduced to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander education. However, their application and success are uneven and spasmodic with funding limited to short-term solutions. In a complex area like Indigenous Education such factors are problematic. All indicators from our review confirm that success would be achieved if longevity in program funding and monitoring of implementation occurs. In absence of these strategies it is almost impossible to know what works and to put in place long term programs.

The Review Team is seeking an intergenerational commitment over the years ahead, with three time frames: an action plan for the next five year set in the longer term context of the next ten and twenty five years. The National Indigenous Education Action Plan announced by COAG has the capacity to bring together this national effort.

Yours sincerely

Professor Peter Buckskin PSM FACE
Chief Investigator
Review Team
Review of Australian Directions 2005-2008 in Indigenous Education
9 October 2009
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Independent Sector WA - Structured Workplace Learning Program
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We acknowledge that this review was carried out on traditional lands of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. We respect their Indigenous spiritual relationship with their country. We respect the traditional custodians of these ancestral lands and acknowledge that their cultural and heritage beliefs are still as important to people today as in the past.

This project has been conducted under the leadership of Professor Peter Buckskin, PSM, FACE – Chief Investigator, with key advisers Emeritus Professor Paul Hughes, AM, FACE; Dr Kaye Price, FACE; Professor Lester-Irabinna Rigney PhD, MACE; Dr Chris Sarra; Ms Isabelle Adams; and Professor Colleen Hayward. We were assisted by Ms Alicen McNaughton, data analyst; Professor Bob Teasdale, literature reviewer; Mr John Gregory, project coordinator; Ms Jody St Clair, project administrator and Ms Kizze Rankine, assistant.

The Review Team wishes to thank members of the Steering Committee for their time and assistance in contributing to the Review of Australian Directions in Indigenous Education 2005–2008.

STEERING COMMITTEE

Chair
Associate Professor Robert Somerville AM, Western Australia

Executive Officer
Trish Wood, Western Australia

Members
Ms Geraldine Atkinson (Indigenous education consultative bodies)

Mr Glen Hansen (Australian Government)

Ms Michele Hall (New South Wales)

Mr Robert Picton (Northern Territory)

Mr David Rathman AM, PSM (South Australia)

Mr Greg Lehman (Tasmania)

Mr John Sullivan (Victoria)

Ms Norma Jeffery (Western Australia)
LIST OF RECOMMENDATIONS

EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

Recommendation 1
Government, Catholic and Independent school sectors combine to conduct a case study for the development of an integrated approach for Indigenous students across the years 0–8. The project should involve all agencies and service providers; the development and use, over time, of unique identifiers; and a structured, sequenced, understood and supported action and evaluation program for childhood development and education.

The case study should develop and evaluate actual curricula and resources to provide skill development in the foundations for learning – particularly in academic literacies and numeracy for school readiness by the first year of formal schooling.

SCHOOL AND COMMUNITY EDUCATIONAL PARTNERSHIPS

Recommendation 2
Schools to establish parent forums, serviced by currently employed Indigenous staff. Schools, in consultation with parents, must define a set of principles and guidelines for how these staff members should limit their participation in parent forums to matters which cannot otherwise be pursued directly by them in the workplace.

Recommendation 3
All jurisdictions to investigate how Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander para-professionals could:
   a) concentrate their work with individual students, their teachers and parents on how school studies actually work;
   b) assist in negotiating each student’s Personalised Learning Plan; and
   c) continually emphasise why it is necessary for each student to attend regularly and do all the work consistently.

Recommendation 4
Each school sector to redefine and monitor the role and function of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander para-professional school workers. Develop appropriate terms and conditions so that specific training and career progression can be provided.

SCHOOL LEADERSHIP

Recommendation 5
All education providers should work with the higher education sector to progress accredited leadership programs and continue to support, on a long-term basis, school leadership development. These should be based on the ‘Stronger Smarter’ principles for principals and teachers and refer to the Stepping Up: What Works in pre-service teacher education publication. (Price and Hughes for ‘What Works’)
Recommendation 6
For in-service teacher education all school sectors must continue to work their own programs on a long term basis based on the ‘Stronger Smarter’ philosophy and include as an integral part the ‘Dare to Lead’ and ‘What Works for Indigenous students’ programs.

QUALITY TEACHING

Recommendation 7
MCEEC DY A to establish a national initiative involving all education systems and jurisdictions to promulgate evidence-based directions. These directions must be built on diagnostic data from rigorous quantitative and qualitative research to inform action for effective programs in all literacies – digital, numeric and scientific, in addition to academic English.

Recommendation 8
All school sectors to establish an inter-jurisdictional panel of experts to frame a methodology and a budget for the delivery of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages and consider how out-of-school schemes might operate.

PATHWAYS TO TRAINING, EMPLOYMENT AND HIGHER EDUCATION

Recommendation 9
Secondary schools, further education institutions and Indigenous communities to expand partnerships so that strategies can be developed to attract, retain and successfully graduate Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students across a broad spectrum of further education courses.

Recommendation 10
MCEEC DY A to seek advice from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander education consultative bodies, the Indigenous Higher Education Advisory Council, Universities Australia and other strategic stakeholders on effective strategies and implementation arrangements to ensure that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and students within those communities are encouraged to engage successfully in higher education.

TEACHER EDUCATION

Recommendation 11
All school sector teacher registration boards to require that employees have undertaken core components of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander education in their degree program. This content should include education for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students based on the ‘Stronger Smarter’ philosophy; as well as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures.

Recommendation 12
MCEEC DY A, to advance Recommendation 11, by implementing a national program to incorporate best practice in Indigenous education for university Teacher Education Degrees. In this refer to the Stepping Up: What Works in pre-service teacher education publication. (Price and Hughes for ‘What Works’)

NATIONAL ACTION PLAN

Recommendation 13
NAPLAN to standardise data collection in each of the key domains. It is important for consistency to use a system of unique identifiers to aid diagnostic utility and follow up. Broaden the indicator base for participation, engagement and attainment, and reference these against estimates of the age/grade cohort.

Recommendation 14
MCEECDYA to establish a National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Council, with replicated State and Territory Councils. These Councils should oversee and monitor the development of a National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Action Plan with specific teaching and learning outcomes. This plan must incorporate MCEECDYA and COAG agreed regional and local school level strategies and recommendations.
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The purpose of this project was to provide a report for MCEECDYA on the effectiveness of Australian Directions in Indigenous Education 2005–2008 in improving outcomes in Indigenous education. The report includes recommendations on priorities for future collaborative work to be undertaken by education authorities in the Government, Catholic and Independent school sectors.

Terms of Reference

As contracted, the major objective of the project was to prepare a report for MCEECDYA that addressed six key questions outlined in the tender specification. This report is organised around these questions:

1. What impact has Australian Directions had on Indigenous student outcomes?
2. What impact has Australian Directions had on policy development in Indigenous education?
3. What progress has been made in meeting the objectives of Australian Directions?
4. Which recommendations and associated initiatives of Australian Directions have been successful or are showing indications of success?
5. What factors have enabled or impeded the implementation of these recommendations and associated initiatives?
6. How can education authorities in the government, Catholic and independent sectors collaborate to maintain a strategic approach and reduce duplication of effort in improving outcomes in Indigenous education?

The Review team notes that there was widespread agreement from all jurisdictions and sectors about the necessity and the desirability of acting together to develop and disseminate an updated, successor document to Australian Directions. Therefore we strongly endorse COAG’s commitment to the development of a national Indigenous Education Action Plan with key deliverables that has a stronger focus on addressing and measuring Indigenous educational outcomes at the regional and local levels (Minister Macklin, Press Release 2 July 2009).

The Review Team totally endorses the ‘Stronger Smarter’ philosophy as articulated by Dr Chris Sarra from the Stronger Smarter Institute, Queensland University of Technology. The ‘Stronger Smarter’ philosophy identifies the relationship between the teacher and the student as the most important place in any education jurisdiction.

DOMAIN 1 – EARLY CHILDHOOD DEVELOPMENT AND EDUCATION

Reference is made in the body of the report to the encouraging financial commitments and directions already underway. Even so, the national picture is still one of fragmented effort, with the locus of responsibility for early childhood development and education shared across many agencies, government and non-government.

School modelling should also be receptive to the challenges of ensuring Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children are ‘school ready’ by the time they commence the first year of formal schooling. Against this background schools would be well supported by early education specialists who can work with parents of children in the 0-4 years age group to identify and
respond to special needs that might exist for children and engage parents in playgroup learning processes that will focus on early English literacy and numeracy skills development. In this same vein, early education specialists can work with schools to ensure that the schools are ready for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children.

Recommendation 1

Government, Catholic and Independent school sectors combine to conduct a case study for the development of an integrated approach for Indigenous students across the years 0–8. The project should involve all agencies and service providers; the development and use, over time, of unique identifiers; and a structured, sequenced, understood and supported action and evaluation program for childhood development and education.

The case study should develop and evaluate actual curricula and resources to provide skill development in the foundations for learning – particularly in academic literacies and numeracy for school readiness by the first year of formal schooling.

DOMAIN 2 – SCHOOL AND COMMUNITY EDUCATIONAL PARTNERSHIPS

Research has shown that parents of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, in general, support any school’s emphasis on the reaching of successful outcomes and the teaching of English literacy and numeracy in particular. However, as poor school attendance continues to be a major problem, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander parents as partners in this process, must encourage and become involved in regular school attendance.

The need to acknowledge and embrace Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander leadership in schools has been a consistent feature of all serious reviews in Indigenous education. Whilst jurisdictions throughout Australia continue to espouse the rhetoric of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander leadership, the realities are often somewhat incongruous.

The evidence is that Indigenous staff members do make a positive difference, especially if they are trained in aspects of how English literacy and numeracy are taught and are able to interpret those aspects to parents, community, students and other staff. Students in schools with Indigenous support staff will do worse without them. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander workers need to be much more engaged with parents re teaching and learning processes. This obviously means that the conditions under which they are employed, and the training they need to perform their functions needs to be re-evaluated and monitored for quality.

Recommendation 2

Schools to establish parent forums, serviced by currently employed Indigenous staff. Schools, in consultation with parents, must define a set of principles and guidelines for how these staff members should limit their participation in parent forums to matters which cannot otherwise be pursued directly by them in the workplace.
Recommendation 3
All jurisdictions to investigate how Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander para-professionals could:
   a) concentrate their work with individual students, their teachers and parents on how school studies actually work;
   b) assist in negotiating each student’s Personalised Learning Plan; and
   c) continually emphasise why it is necessary for each student to attend regularly and do all the work consistently.

Recommendation 4
Each school sector to redefine and monitor the role and function of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander para-professional school workers. Develop appropriate terms and conditions so that specific training and career progression can be provided.

DOMAIN 3 – SCHOOL LEADERSHIP

The evidence of our review is that schooling outcomes are a joint responsibility, shared by the parents and teachers of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students with the principals of schools having a major role in ensuring that the appropriate ‘conditions for learning’ are in place. Much work has gone into programs aimed at developing leadership skills. All involved in our research support the need to continue these programs on a long-term basis, to further develop the understandings of all participants in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander education, and to set long-term goals.

All jurisdictions and sectors actively engage in in-service programs for their staff. Fortunately today the ‘Stronger Smarter’ philosophy and the ‘Dare to Lead’ and ‘What Works’ programs use complementary principles that are based on best practice in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander education. We urge continuation of these approaches under the direction of the relevant jurisdiction or sector.

Recommendation 5
All education providers should work with the higher education sector to progress accredited leadership programs and continue to support, on a long-term basis, school leadership development. These should be based on the ‘Stronger Smarter’ principles for Principals and teachers and refer to the ‘Stepping Up: What Works in pre-service teacher education’ publication. (Price and Hughes for ‘What Works’)

Recommendation 6
In-service teacher education across all school sectors must continue to develop their own programs on a long-term basis based on the ‘Stronger Smarter’ philosophy and include as an integral part the ‘Dare to Lead’ and ‘What Works for Indigenous students’ programs.

DOMAIN 4 – QUALITY TEACHING

Fundamental for high expectations in classrooms and teacher/student relationships is quality teaching, quality curriculum and accountability for quality student outcomes. Quality teaching pedagogies for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students are clearly quality teaching for any child. Quality curriculum for an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander student is that with which the student can connect and be intellectually stimulated by. While some collective assumptions
can be made about what might stimulate an Indigenous student’s intellect, it invariably demands the teacher has a good understanding of the child as an individual, including the cultural context in which the child has been raised.

**English Literacies**

A great deal of the current debate concerns itself with acquiring the basics, but effective, equitable participation relies on something more than the basics. Complex and sophisticated understandings are required in at least three literacies, as well as numeracy, if Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children are to participate equally in mainstream society. The three literacies often referred to are English, digital and scientific. These fit under the proper term ‘academic literacies’ – accepted today by specialists in the field, and generally defined as the ways of reading, writing and talking required by students to operate successfully within particular fields.

Specifically within the Northern Territory, but also relevant to other jurisdictions, there is an increased focus on approaches to teaching Indigenous students for whom English is a foreign language. The recruitment and location of teachers in such schools must incorporate specialist training in sound English as a Second Language principles either as undergraduate training, or focussed professional development during their appointment. Beginning teachers must be mentored in their first years of appointment.

**Recommendation 7**

MCEECDYA to establish a national initiative involving all education systems and jurisdictions to promulgate evidence-based directions. These directions must be built on diagnostic data from rigorous quantitative and qualitative research to inform action for effective programs in all literacies – digital, numeric and scientific, in addition to academic English.

**Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Languages**

There have been recurring debates about the language of instruction: whether it should be in English; or whether there should be a system of bilingual education, with English as a second or even a foreign language. However, the most important thing to establish in the teaching of English is which programs work best. That will depend on longitudinal studies built around unique identifiers, and long-term commitments to the most promising programs.

To some extent, those debates are irrelevant when it comes to the teaching of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples have the same right as any other people to receive instruction in their own language.

Current arrangements under LOTE, or other particular schemes, are not enough. They do not allow sufficient time for the teaching by Indigenous Elders of important cultural development aspects such as protocols, mores and respect. Consideration could be given to how so-called ‘Saturday Schools’, or other out-of-school schemes, for example Ethnic Schools funding operate. These could be redeveloped for use in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander situations for the teaching of language and culture.
Recommendation 8
All school sectors to establish an inter-jurisdictional panel of experts to frame a methodology and a budget for the delivery of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages and consider how out-of-school schemes might operate.

DOMAIN 5 – PATHWAYS TO TRAINING, EMPLOYMENT AND HIGHER EDUCATION

A significant part of the challenge in devising receptive school models for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students is the provision of quality secondary school options for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in rural and remote circumstances. It is worth noting the innovative concept of Guaranteed Service Outcomes pioneered by the Western Cape College in Weipa. A Guaranteed Service Outcome signals to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students that if they engage with schooling and complete Year 12 of high school then they are guaranteed either a job; a tertiary place; or a vocational training outcome. Such a concept requires schools to forge productive relationships with all local industries to negotiate workplace training and accreditation, and also creates scope to ensure schooling is receptive to the demands of local economies and communities.

Education and Training Ministers have previously agreed that supplementary measures supporting Indigenous students through pathways into training, employment and higher education are pivotal to improving post-school transitions and breaking intergenerational cycles of poverty and disadvantage.

The commitments to VET made in Australian Directions are important, but so too will be the development of refined datasets to illuminate the broader questions of ‘attainment’ by using other measures of youth engagement and destination, such as:

- completion rates
- type of qualification
- post-education destinations (employment, characteristics of employment)
- programs designed to boost Year 12 completion, university entry and completion
- negative engagements with the juvenile justice system.

Nationally, there is evidence of some improvement in university entry. Much of the improvement is attributed to the development by universities of enabling courses designed to assist university entry. The evidence is that early streaming to other vocational education and training acts to improve the claimed completion rates, but results in fewer complete qualifications for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students than for non-Indigenous students and, for many, simply defers entry into unemployment. Field reports confirm this concern.

Recommendation 9
Secondary schools, further education institutions and Indigenous communities to expand partnerships so that strategies can be developed to attract, retain and successfully graduate Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students across a broad spectrum of further education courses.
Recommendation 10

MCEECDYA to seek advice from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander education consultative bodies, the Indigenous Higher Education Advisory Council, Universities Australia and other strategic stakeholders on effective strategies and implementation arrangements to ensure that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and students within those communities are encouraged to engage successfully in higher education.

Our review of Contemporary Writings (Attachment B) sought to identify pathways that have significant potential to improve learning outcomes. These writings point to a ‘bottom up’ approach as the solution, arguing for self determination through community empowerment and Indigenous cultural learnings. Teachers, who operate at the local level, need to understand this approach in their teacher education at both pre-service and in-service levels. Approaches for such education can be found in the ‘Stepping Up’ proposal developed by Buckskin, Price and Hughes, submitted to the Australian Government Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations (2008). We believe that all teachers need to have these understandings in order to improve their pedagogy through culturally competent teaching which will provide culturally safe and responsive classrooms.

TEACHER EDUCATION

In NSW it has been mandated that all teachers employed must have studied Aboriginal Education in their degree program. If Australia is to improve the quality of its teachers for significant improvement in academic outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students it is necessary that all States and Territories follow the NSW lead. This means that the quality of the Indigenous content in teacher education programs must be improved and has to be based on the most up to date information we have in relation to good practice in this area.

Recommendation 11
All school sector teacher registration boards to require that employees have undertaken core components of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander education in their degree program. This content should include education for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students based on the ‘Stronger Smarter’ philosophy; as well as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures.

Recommendation 12
MCEECDYA, to advance Recommendation 11, to implement a national program to incorporate best practice in Indigenous education for university Teacher Education Degrees. In this refer to the Stepping Up: What Works in pre-service teacher education publication. (Price and Hughes for ‘What Works’)

AN UPDATED NATIONAL ACTION PLAN

The five domains contained within Australian Directions continue to remain useful organising tools in need of updating by the latest of COAG’s priority statements, which will have to be read in conjunction with the more precise measures contained within National Partnerships and Agreements.
There is a consensus among all interviewed that the COAG action plan should address three timeframes: five, ten and 25 years. The reasons for this are generally well known, but in education they are:

- The potential for positive links between cross-agency early years programs; Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health and academic English literacy, as participation and completion rates cannot be tested in five years.
- A ten- and 25-year framework is required to trace inter-generational change.

The above means that data sets, built around unique identifiers, need to be developed to match those timeframes to determine which programs work best with which groups and where. Detailed reference has been made to data tasks in the early years, in English literacy, and in measuring attendance, participation, progression, engagement, retention, graduation and destination.

The acquisition of skills in numeracy for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students also needs further research. Data arising from the Australian Association of Mathematics Teachers project; ‘Make it Count – Numeracy, Mathematics and Indigenous learners’; should continue to be supported long term and closely monitored.

**Recommendation 13**

**NAPLAN to standardise data collection in each of the key domains. It is important for consistency to use a system of unique identifiers to aid diagnostic utility and follow up. Broaden the indicator base for participation, engagement and attainment, and reference these against estimates of the age/grade cohort.**

**Program implementation**

Program implementation requires a long-term, sustainable commitment. The evidence found in our research is that the chance of gaining community support is higher if the program is developed with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander involvement, under the auspices of a National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Council.

The charter of a National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Council should cover all matters that impact on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander education; and on a child’s potential and actual intellectual development from birth through to, and including, secondary graduation and positive post-secondary destinations. Its membership should consist of eminent Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander education experts capable of making outstanding contributions to education, including those with expertise in child health and development.

It will need to work closely with jurisdictions, senior officials and the Productivity and Human Rights Commissions to monitor directions and reporting against objectives derived from the MCEECDYA and COAG agendas and Australia’s renewed commitment to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander education success.

Such a National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Council should be replicated, by arrangement, within each State and Territory Education Ministry – so that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander involvement and counsel can be also replicated in operations as above at the State and Territory level. These Councils need not be large in member numbers, but specifically expert in education.
Essential to the Council’s business is its capacity to examine and report on pedagogies used for teaching and learning outcomes and monitoring the best practice in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander education. The Council’s work is dependent on the specifics of the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Action Plan and NAPLAN data related to teaching and learning.

**Recommendation 14**

MCEECDYA to establish a National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Council, with replicated State and Territory Councils. These Councils should oversee and monitor the development of a National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Action Plan with specific teaching and learning outcomes. This plan must incorporate MCEECDYA and COAG agreed regional and local school level strategies and recommendations.
1.0 INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this project is to provide a report for MCEEDYA on the effectiveness of *Australian Directions* in improving outcomes in Indigenous education. The report includes recommendations on priorities for future collaborative work to be undertaken by education authorities in the government, Catholic and independent school sectors, to maintain a strategic approach and reduce duplication of effort, and to meet targets set by the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) with a view to ‘closing the gap’ between the educational outcomes of Indigenous students and their non-Indigenous peers.

The educational targets were:

- All Indigenous four year-olds, including those living in remote communities, to have access to a quality early childhood education program within five years. (On 29 November 2008, the Council of Australian Governments endorsed a new National Partnership Agreement on Early Childhood Education. Under the Agreement, the Commonwealth and State and Territory governments have committed to ensuring that all children will have access to a quality early childhood education program by 2013, delivered by a four-year university-trained early childhood teacher, for 15 hours a week, 40 weeks a year, in the year before formal schooling. Different targets were set for Indigenous early childhood development (ages 0–3).)
- The gap in reading, writing and numeracy for Indigenous children to be halved within a decade.
- The gap for Indigenous students in attainment at Year 12 schooling (or equivalent level) to be halved by 2020.

*Australian Directions* challenges the perception that disparity between the educational outcomes of Indigenous students and their peers are ‘normal’ and incremental change is acceptable. It contains recommendations to accelerate change by engaging Indigenous children and young people in learning across five critical domains:

- early childhood education;
- school and community educational partnerships;
- school leadership;
- quality teaching; and
- pathways to training, employment and higher education.

The majority of the *Australian Directions* recommendations are designed for systemic implementation in the government, Catholic and independent school sectors in each state and territory. Responsibility for the implementation of these recommendations rests with education authorities. A number of additional recommendations are the responsibility of the Australian Government (Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations) or departments responsible for the training portfolio. Others were developed for consideration by COAG or provide an enabling process.

Terms of Reference
As contracted, the major objective of the project is to prepare a report for MCEECYDA that addresses six key questions. This report is organised around these questions.

1. What impact has *Australian Directions* had on Indigenous student outcomes?

Using a data snapshot and analysis of Indigenous student outcomes against key indicators of participation and achievement over the last ten years (as provided by the client), the objective is to consider trends and determine causal relationships between *Australian Directions* and student outcomes.

2. What impact has *Australian Directions* had on policy development in Indigenous education?

3. What progress has been made in meeting the objectives of *Australian Directions*?

The **objectives** are to:

(a) engage Indigenous children and young people in learning, using the data snapshot and analysis of Indigenous student outcomes referred to at (1).

(b) ensure that Indigenous education is ‘built in’ to core business, so that responsibility for improving outcomes is shared by all stakeholders: educational authorities, schools, Indigenous students, and Indigenous parents/caregivers and communities; and

(c) move from a ‘deficit’ to an ‘inclusive’ view of Indigenous education (i.e. move away from explanations of educational failure that focus on the characteristics of individual children, their families and communities; and towards developing inclusive schools that engage all students in learning).

4. Which recommendations and associated initiatives of *Australian Directions* have been successful or are showing indications of success?

5. What factors have enabled or impeded the implementation of these recommendations and associated initiatives?

Observations and suggestions will be made on how, in future, to better implement those recommendations for which less progress has been made, and whether they remain relevant and important.

6. How can education authorities in the government, Catholic and independent sectors collaborate to maintain a strategic approach and reduce duplication of effort in improving outcomes in Indigenous education?

Accordingly, a methodology for the conduct of the Review was negotiated with the Steering Committee (see Attachment A).

**2.0 IMPACTS ON POLICY AND STUDENT OUTCOMES**
Respondents from each of the jurisdictions and other sectors were asked ‘What impact has *Australian Directions* had on policy development in Indigenous education?’

Field data analysis, arising from the interviews, shows that respondents based in central education offices generally reported favourably on the document’s use to influence and cross-check local policy. However, most respondents made further qualifications in their responses to the follow-up question, “Have any programs been modified as a result of *Australian Directions*?” Evidence from this analysis shows that programs and policy were not so much initiated or modified as used as a check against existing programs.

This impact decreased with distance from the centre and varied with the agency involved. Allied agencies, such as those involved in curriculum accreditation, training standards, vocational education and those separately engaged in the early years, provided a mixed response. Some regarded it as an important influence or cross-check against existing policies. Others denied all knowledge of it and called for more careful engagement in its construction and dissemination. The Catholic Education Offices and Associations of Independent schools correctly asserted that they did not have a directive role over schools in the same way that education departments do. Generally, the document had minimal impact on their policies, and requires promotion directly to schools. Teacher organisations volunteered comment to the effect that they were not aware of the document until the review. The most common recommendation from all these groups was aimed at seeking better and wider dissemination and promotion of the document, directly to schools as well as to central contacts.

Those who denied knowledge of the document suggested that if ever a similar exercise was again undertaken, then it should be on the basis of wide consultation and thorough dissemination. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander officers and organisations went further and questioned the origin of the document – bluntly, in this way – which is repeated here because it draws attention to a key issue: their involvement, or rather the lack of it, in policy development and implementation.

[We have] not had a great deal of impact on the implementation of *Australian Directions* which has been dominated by the involvement of non-Aboriginal people...

A check of *Australian Directions* shows it was developed with input from a range of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander officers, including IECBs, which raises questions about the best way of developing a new document. However, and as an overriding observation, almost every respondent referred to the document as an important guide to check existing practice, and all jurisdictions were able to report progress against it.

As such, *Australian Directions* provided an important measure of national cohesion for policy development in government schools, organised around five domains – early childhood education; school and community partnerships; school leadership; quality teaching; and pathways to training, employment and higher education.

In its written invitation and in interviews, the Review team for the current report asked: *What impact has Australian Directions had on Indigenous student outcomes?* Using a data snapshot and analysis of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander student outcomes against key indicators of participation and achievement over the last ten years (as provided by the client),
the objective was to consider trends and determine causal relationships between the release of the *Australian Directions* document and student outcomes.

In many areas, the overwhelming evidence is that much remains the same. The gaps are not closing at anywhere near the rates contemplated or required by government. To quote the data snapshot provided by the client, “In summary, data from all indicators shows that during the past five years or more, the retention and achievement in education by Indigenous students has seen very little change” (Shelby, 2009).

Data sets cannot confirm the impact *Australian Directions* may have had on Indigenous outcomes in education, less so causality. The time span is too short. *Australian Directions* was not signed into effect until 2006. The latest data sets are for 2008. Comparable outcome data, where they exist, show little change over five years, and more research is needed.

2.1 Limitations of trend data

*Australian Directions* provides recommendations to focus national effort over the 2005–2008 quadrennium. In order to consider trends or causal relationships between *Australian Directions* and student outcome data, data up to and including 2004 has been considered pre-*Australian Directions* and data from 2005 onwards has been considered post-*Australian Directions* for the purposes of this report.

In reality, this segregation may not be as clear due to the staggered implementation of *Australian Directions* recommendations across jurisdictions (*Australian Directions* was not signed off until 26 November 2006).

Also, due to time lags with reporting, annual data is unavailable in some cases up to and including the 2008 calendar year. This limits available post-*Australian Directions* data to only two or three years on 2004 benchmarks.

2.2 Pre-primary participation

*Australian Directions* recommended that Ministers “… commit to providing all Indigenous children with access to two years of high quality early childhood education prior to participation in the first years of formal schooling” (MCEETYA, 2006:20).

Data was not collected in ways that respond directly to the recommendation set out in *Australian Directions*. Nor was it collected in ways that respond directly to the COAG agenda for four year-olds. In 2008, COAG changed the goal with the aim of all children having access to a quality early childhood education program by 2013, delivered by a four-year university-trained early childhood teacher, for 15 hours a week, 40 weeks a year, in the year before formal schooling.

Data sets that related directly to either of these goals were unavailable. Surrogate indicators were supplied, and they are used here, but with very significant reservations and qualifications.

The first indicator is for attendance rates; the second, for numbers enrolled in pre-school programs.
**Attendance rates** are overstated against the age cohort. ‘Pre-school-attendance’ is not the same as four year-old age-cohort participation. Attendance relies on a count of those enrolled and identified as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander, which as already noted leads to significant under-enumeration.

‘Pre-school’ captures a wide range of contact provision for ages 3 to 5, including in at least one jurisdiction, five year-olds starting school in Reception/Year one classes. This leads to significant differences between the data and the COAG goal for four year-olds. The data is not refined in terms of ‘quality’ or ‘quantity’ indicators. Some count as attendances when participation is limited to attendance of less than a term in some form of pre-school offering, of which there are many different types. For these reasons, the information which follows is a very approximate trend indicator. Much work remains to be done to refine this indicator to reflect the COAG goals.

Shelby (2009:11) found that “in 2006 the attendance rates for Indigenous students in government preschool systems ranged from 60% to 88% with a median of 83 %. Non-Indigenous rates ranged between 78% and 94% with a median of 88 %.”

Post-2005 data for numbers of Indigenous pre-primary students is available only for 2006. As shown below, 2005–2006 pre-primary Indigenous student numbers have experienced growth in Victoria, Queensland, South Australia and Western Australia. In contrast, Indigenous pre-primary student numbers have experienced a decline in Tasmania, the ACT and the Northern Territory, and to a lesser extent also in New South Wales. Some Queensland enrolments are excluded from the National Preschool Census; consequently, Indigenous preschool enrolments are understated in that jurisdiction.

**Table 7**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>State</th>
<th>Total Indigenous</th>
<th>Total Non-Indigenous</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>NSW</td>
<td>-10.0%</td>
<td>0.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VIC</td>
<td>-15.0%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>QLD</td>
<td>-5.0%</td>
<td>5.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SA</td>
<td>1.0%</td>
<td>-10.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WA</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>-5.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TAS</td>
<td>5.0%</td>
<td>-15.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ACT</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NT</td>
<td>10.0%</td>
<td>-10.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source:
- *Some QLD enrolments are excluded from the National Preschool Census; consequently Indigenous preschool enrolments are understated.

Different targets were set for Indigenous early childhood *development* (ages 0–3), under the National Partnership Agreement for Indigenous Early Childhood Development, namely to:
- halve the gap in mortality rates for Indigenous children under five within a decade;
- halve the gap for Indigenous students in reading, writing and numeracy within a decade;
and
- ensure all Indigenous four year olds have access to quality early childhood education within five years, including in remote areas. (Commonwealth of Australia, p 2).

2.3 English literacy outcomes

In the words of one authority, “over the last decade State tests have shown little change in results for numeracy and [English] literacy, both in terms of the percentages of students in the performance bands and state average scores” (Government of NSW, 2008:3 emphasis in original); and as Shelby (2009:39) observes, ”Spelling, and grammar and punctuation were introduced in the 2008 NAPLAN and therefore there are no previous years to compare the data.”

Results vary in minor ways over time and between jurisdictions, depending on the year and the indicator, but they are almost always within the margins of variation that can be explained by the reliability of the statistical technique employed.

We were able to access more detailed studies on a confidential basis, and they confirmed these trends. The gap is not closing. There is evidence in at least some jurisdictions that it is growing. The gap varies with location, and increases by remoteness and low socioeconomic status. There are different opinions about which indicators of remoteness and socioeconomic status should be used which requires resolution.

The NSW Auditor-General concurs that resources have been directed to English literacy programs that provide the best benefit for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children. Principals and teachers cannot be informed by systems of what is best if it is not known. It is not known because the data is not collected in ways that permit regular evaluation of the efficiency and effectiveness of any program based on studies involving individual Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children over time to assess the impact (NSW Government, 2008:50). Much time and energy has gone into short-term program delivery and general data gathering. The evidence is clear that it is difficult to disaggregate the data, for example, by Indigeneity, various measures of geo-location, language background and economic status. Small but significant changes in the way data could be linked with programs, locations, backgrounds and their impact on individuals will go a long way to resolving key questions of effect and efficiency.

Literacies other than that in the English language are attracting a great deal of attention for assessment, such as: digital, health, numeric and scientific literacies, and literacy in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages – to name the most significant that are not being attended to as well as is required by Australian Directions. An analysis of the Australian Information and Communications Technology in Education Committee (AICTEC) membership, website and strategy documents reveals a paucity of programs, or even references to, Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and their children.

The National Assessment Program, Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN) report made this observation about digital and, in passing, other literacies:
Indigenous Year 6 and Year 10 students’ mean ICT literacy relative to that of non-Indigenous students is shown in Table 4.12. At both year levels, Indigenous students did not perform as well as non-Indigenous students on the ICT Literacy Scale. The gap between the non-Indigenous and Indigenous students was about 70 scale points at both year levels. This difference is statistically significant and substantial. It is similar to the differences reported between Indigenous and non-Indigenous students in other studies of achievement (Curriculum Corporation, 2007).

The agency responsible for rolling out the digital education revolution referred our inquiries about IT for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students to a website which carried information about a project to supply this IT equipment to 5000 remote students:

“A unique machine with features created specifically for children of the emerging world”.¹

This is a significant, essentially charitable enterprise, but the equipment referred to is not mainstream technology, and it’s very doubtful that it would be capable of running the sorts of software common in the mainstream, enjoyed by the majority of Australian students.

The ‘deficit’ view is that charity and these machines are suitable for children in ‘the emerging world’, meaning Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children. At least 75% of the population is dispersed in small numbers in almost every school, where it might be expected that there would be a priority on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in a $2.4bn roll out.

Two of the evaluations referred to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and limited their analysis to pooling these children in with the general low-socioeconomic subset. There are no Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander people, identified as such, on the standing committee responsible for the roll out. The only studies that specifically referred to programs for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students were of the kind referred to above (laptops for an emerging world), which are more akin to the commercial promotion of a laptop aimed at ‘emerging’ markets, than they are to a scholastic study of what works best for developing the digital literacy of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children.

The review team has been fortunate to access three recent major analyses of English literacy programs with findings that are as significant as they are congruent. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander home languages are almost always different from the languages required by mainstream education. That difference must be both respected and provided for from the early years and on, in a connected and continuing way – for many, by treating English as a second language. Too many different short-term programs are put in place on a shoestring budget, using techniques such as ‘train the trainer’ or private providers who have a proprietary interest in pushing their material, regardless of its effectiveness. They are, to borrow a term used in one of the studies, ‘too diffuse’. The evidence suggests there is an urgent need for sustained, long-term action, coordinated across all the major divides (pre-school, junior primary, primary and secondary; government and non-government, systemic and non-systemic), to include evidence-based programs with staff who are properly resourced to deliver on each of the key literacies.

Nationally, effective programs have yet to be developed for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in the key literacies – Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander, digital, scientific and numeric. The urgency to develop and implement cannot be overstated.

2.4 Retention and Year 12 outcomes

In *Australian Directions*, Ministers agreed that “supplementary measures supporting Indigenous students through pathways into training, employment and higher education are pivotal to improving post-school transitions and breaking intergenerational cycles of poverty and disadvantage” (MCEETYA, 2006:29).

The data supplied sets Year 12 numbers against numbers in Years 10 and 11. Very significant issues of under-enumeration need to be addressed. Reference needs to be made against a base which more accurately represents the age/grade cohort. ‘Halving the gap in Indigenous attainment for year 12’2, and using apparent retention rates as the measure, is not the same as securing a complete qualification or satisfying post-school destination. Post-school destinations include university entrance and VET (which may also include in-school delivery from Year 10 and onwards), as well as continuing employment. A more complete set of indicators would include data that captures the type of course completed, the rate of course completion, and employment secured. Measures of Year 12 attainment make more sense within a broader, nested set of indicators such as these.

The most common indicator is apparent retention rate. Apparent retention rates overstate the degree of achievement and its significance as an indicator of satisfactory post-school destination. The improvements noted, for example, are not reflected in improved employment of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people. On the contrary, recent reports show increasing, negative engagement with the juvenile justice system by young people who are not engaged with education, or employed.

The apparent retention rate appears to have doubled. There are signs of improvement in Year 11 and Year 12 participation and completion rates, which have also doubled over the past ten years, to about half that of the general population.

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The numbers detailed by one jurisdiction illustrate the problem of putting these seemingly encouraging figures into perspective. Five and ten years ago the number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students completing Year 12 was something around 10% of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander age/grade cohort. It now approximates 20% – a doubling. The apparent retention rate, however, is put at about 40% because it is referenced against the number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students in Year 10, where recent moves to raise the school leaving age are believed to have had a greater impact on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students who would otherwise have left.

The same study followed Year 12 enrolments over the year and found that more than 25% of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Year 12 students left between February and August, which puts the initial retention rate in a more pessimistic perspective. It raises questions not only about the timing of census data, but also about the development of effective support and intervention programs.

Nationally, there is evidence of some improvement in university entry, but not in the hard sciences (DEEWR, 2009). Much of the improvement is attributed to the development by universities of enabling courses designed to assist university entry. The evidence is that early streaming to other vocational education and training acts to improve the claimed completion rates, but results in fewer complete qualifications for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students than for non-Indigenous students and, for many, simply defers entry into unemployment (Alfred & James, 2007:8). Field reports confirm this concern.

The commitments to VET made in *Australian Directions* are important, but so too will be the development of refined datasets to illuminate the broader questions of ‘attainment’ by using other measures of youth engagement and destination, such as:

- completion rates
- type of qualification
- Post-education destinations (employment, characteristics of employment)
- programs designed to boost Year 12 completion, university entry and completion
- negative engagements with the juvenile justice system.
3.0 PROGRESS AGAINST OBJECTIVES

This chapter is concerned with the progress that has been made in meeting the objectives of *Australian Directions*.

The aim of this exercise was to look at data provided in the Summary Report on National Indicators Relating to Indigenous Outcomes in Education and Training in Australia (Shelby Consulting, June 2009, unpublished report commissioned by the WA Department of Education and Training) – hereafter referred to as the Summary Report – and to determine whether there are any trends or causal relationships between *Australian Directions* (MCEETYA & Curriculum Corporation, 2006) and student outcomes.

The Summary Report includes data recently released as *ABS 4221.0 Schools Australia 2009*. Data on ‘attendance’ (prepared by the MCEECDYA Performance Measurement and Reporting Taskforce) was not included in this analysis as it was available only for 2007 and data was not nationally comparable.

However, the Summary Report asserted that “attendance rates (data only for government schools) are lower for Indigenous children than non-Indigenous children, with a median of 83% and 88% respectively in 2006” (Shelby, 2009:viii).

Regional exemplars were reported in South Australia and Queensland, where strong central direction was linked to significant local support in the context of culturally competent staff working in culturally secure environments. The importance of these pre-requisites is clear. The Western Australian Aboriginal Child Health Survey (Zubrick et al, 2006:160-163) suggests regularity is a more important predictor of success than average attendance, a finding with significant implications for systems data gathering, management, and the monitoring of individual students.

In line with analysis presented in the Summary Report, this analysis investigates trends or causal relationships between *Australian Directions* and student outcomes, as indicated by available annual national data (by state/territory where possible) on:

- Participation – including pre-primary and primary and secondary;
- Participation Rates for ages 12–18;
- Retention – including state/territory comparisons for Years 10 to 12;
- Benchmarks and Standards; and
- Vocational Education and Training

This analysis identified trends and issues for consideration by Key Advisors. These findings were used to inform interview questions and discussions with key stakeholders during consultation with states/territories for the Review reported here, and to assist with identifying examples of good practice to be considered for in-depth case studies.
3.1 Participation

Table 5 of the Summary Report (Shelby, 2009:10) showed full-time Indigenous participation by state/territory by percentage growth across the period 1997 to 2008. This report summarised that from 1997 to 2008, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander participation increased in all states/territories with an overall increase nationally of 56.7%. However, in order to assess the impact of *Australian Directions* on these figures there is a need to look at annual growth and, in particular, changes in growth post-2005 when *Australian Directions* was introduced.

Figure 1 below shows average annual growth in full-time student numbers for the three years prior to the introduction of *Australian Directions*, and the three years after its introduction in 2005.

**Figure 1**

Full time Indigenous students – average annual growth pre & post Australian Directions

![Graph showing average annual growth pre and post Australian Directions](image)

Source:
- 2002 & 2005 student numbers from Summary Report Table 5, quoting source Indigenous full-time students (ABS 2009 Schools Australia 2008, Cat no 4221.0)
- 2004 student numbers from Indigenous full-time students (ABS 2007 Schools Australia 2006, Cat no 4221.0)
- Average annual growth % has been derived from full-time student numbers.

For Australia as a whole, average annual growth in full-time student numbers from 2002 to 2005 was 3.7% compared to 4.1% for average annual growth from 2005 to 2008.

The states/territories that experienced an increase of more than 0.1% in average annual growth since 2005 are QLD, WA, ACT and NT. Queensland’s average annual growth increased by 1.5% and the Northern Territory’s by 1.0%.
The states/territories that experienced a decrease of more than 0.1% in average annual growth since 2005 are Victoria and Tasmania. Victoria’s average annual growth decreased by 1.0% and Tasmania’s decreased by 3.7% – reflecting negative growth post 2005.

Caution should be used when hypothesising reasons for growth in numbers, as factors such as population change, improved data collection and reporting mechanisms may have led to increased numbers of reported full-time Indigenous students.

Looking at growth by individual year, in Figure 2, New South Wales has been the only state to experience increasing annual growth each year from 2005 to 2008, however all states (with the exception of Tasmania) reported growth in numbers each year – with some years experiencing more significant increases than others. Tasmania was the only state to experience a decrease in annual growth since 2005 – declining from −0.2% growth 2005–2006, to −2.2% growth 2007–2008.

**Figure 2**

![Full-time Indigenous students - annual growth 2002 - 2008](chart)

Source:
- 2002 & 2005 student numbers from Summary Report quoting source Indigenous full-time students (ABS 2009 Schools Australia 2008, Cat no 4221.0)
- 2004 student numbers from Indigenous full-time students (ABS 2007 Schools Australia 2006, Cat no 4221.0)
- Annual growth % has been derived from full-time student numbers.
3.1.2 Pre-primary participation

Post-2005 data for numbers of Indigenous pre-primary students is available only for 2006.

**Figure 3**

![Graph showing Indigenous Pre-primary students - average annual growth 2002-2005 and annual growth 2005-2006](image)

Source:
- *Some QLD enrolments are excluded from the National Preschool Census; consequently Indigenous preschool enrolments are understated.

As shown in Figure 3, 2005–2006 pre-primary Indigenous student numbers have experienced growth in Victoria, Queensland, South Australia and Western Australia. In contrast, Indigenous pre-primary student numbers have experienced a decline in Tasmania, the ACT, the Northern Territory and to a lesser extent also in New South Wales.

3.1.3 Primary and secondary participation

Data on full-time primary and secondary Indigenous students in the Summary Report (Tables 9 & 10) for primary and secondary information is available for 2001 and 2006 but not for individual years. It appears that this data is also not available for individual year levels or age cohorts.

3.2 Participation rates

3.2.1 Preamble

Participation alone is limited as an indicator of performance, as it does not reflect changes in population demographics. If student participation at school increased from one year to another by 10%, an assessment of whether this is an improvement depends on whether the population of school-age students also increased by 10%, or more or less. If the school-aged population increased by more than 10%, then an increase of participation of 10% shows no improvement – merely sustained participation.
For this reason we also look to the participation rate: the number of students in a cohort/number of students in the cohort in the population *100.

Note, however, that the reliability of the participation rate indicator is influenced by issues of possible under-enumeration both within the student cohort and that within the population.
3.2.2 Participation rates ages 12–18

As discussed in Table 11 of the Summary Report (Shelby, 2009:13), Western Australia has some of the highest participation rates for Indigenous 12, 13, 14 and 15 year-olds, but has the lowest participation rate for Indigenous 17 year-olds and the second lowest (to Queensland) for 18 year-olds, also shown in Figure 4 and compared to non-Indigenous participation rates in Figure 5.

**Figure 4**

![Age Participation Rates for Indigenous students, age 12-18, 2006](image)

Source:

**Figure 5**

![Age Participation Rates for non-Indigenous students, age 12-18, 2006](image)

Source:
3.3 Retention

With reference to data presented in Table 12 of the Summary Report (Shelby, 2009:16), apparent retention rates for Indigenous full-time students do appear to be improving (refer to Figure 6).

**Figure 6**

![Graph showing apparent retention rates for Indigenous full-time students from 2001 to 2008.]

Source:
- Student numbers from Summary Report (pg 16, Table 12) quoting source Overcoming Indigenous Disadvantage, Key Indicators Report 2007 attachment, ROGS.

Further exploration of this trend will be useful to determine whether it can be attributed to the impact of recommendations of *Australian Directions*, or due to continued long-term improvements in retention.
Further, a comparison with non-Indigenous figures would be useful to see if there has been a similar pattern of improvements for non-Indigenous students. See Figure 7 for this analysis.

Improvements in retention for non-Indigenous full-time students do not appear to be as significant as that for Indigenous students, although non-Indigenous student retention is significantly higher overall. See Figure 7 and the analysis description below.

**Figure 7**

![Bar chart showing apparent retention rates (%) for non-Indigenous full-time students from Year 9 to Year 12, 2001-2008.](chart)

Source:
- Student numbers from Summary Report (pg 16, Table 12) quoting source Overcoming Indigenous Disadvantage, Key Indicators Report 2007 attachment, ROGS.

Year 9 to Year 10 retention rates for Indigenous full-time students has increased from 85.5% in 2004 to 89.2% in 2008 – an increase of 3.7 percentage points, compared to 98.5% to 99.8% – an increase of 1.3 percentage points for non-Indigenous students.

Year 10 to Year 11 retention rates for Indigenous full-time students has increased from 61.1% in 2004 to 67.0% in 2008 – an increase of 5.9 percentage points, compared to 89.0% to 89.7% – an increase of 0.7 percentage points for non-Indigenous students.

Year 11 to Year 12 retention rates for Indigenous full-time students has increased from 39.8% in 2004 to 46.5% in 2008 – an increase of 6.7 percentage points, compared to 76.9% to 75.6% – a decrease of 1.3 percentage points for non-Indigenous students.

An investigation of jurisdictional changes in apparent retention would be useful. This would also allow consideration of the influence of changing demographics for age/grade cohorts. See the following analysis of Year 10–12 retention by state/territory.
3.3.1 State/territory comparisons for Years 10 to 12

Figure 8 shows apparent retention rates from Year 10 to Year 12 for full-time Indigenous students for the years 2004, 2005 and 2006.

**Figure 8**

Apparent Retention Rates (%) of Indigenous students from Year 10 to Year 12, 2004, 2005, 2006

Source:
- Student numbers from Summary Report (pg 18, Table 14) quoting source Overcoming Indigenous Disadvantage, Key Indicators Report 2007.

It appears that an increase in apparent retention rates of Indigenous students from 2004 to 2005 has been maintained in 2006 in Victoria, Western Australia, and the Northern Territory.

There has been a decrease in apparent retention rates of Indigenous students since 2004 in Tasmania and the ACT.

The Summary Report (Shelby, 2009:19) states that in the Northern Territory, grade progression of Indigenous students from Year 10 to Year 11 is ‘better’ than that for non-Indigenous students.

3.3.2 Benchmarks and standards

Figures 4, 5 and 6 in the Summary Report show reading (1999 to 2007); and writing and numeracy (2000 to 2007 benchmarks for Indigenous students in years 3, 5 and 7.

There does not appear to be any significant improvements in trends since 2005. Year7 numeracy benchmarks appear to have declined since 2005.

Some interesting benchmark findings from the Summary Report include:
- from 1999 to 2007, the reading benchmarks for Years 3, 5 and 7 Indigenous students showed steady improvement, and the gap between Indigenous and “All” students was slightly decreasing. (Shelby, 2009:25,)
- in 2007, Queensland was by far the best performing jurisdiction for the writing benchmark, and in 2008 was only slightly below that of Victoria and new South Wales,
and “further investigation of their programs and initiatives to support Indigenous students in writing is recommended” (Shelby, 2009:ix).

- regarding the National Assessment Program Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN) Spelling and Grammar and Punctuation minimum standards, New South Wales “Indigenous Year 3 students perform better than their Indigenous counterparts in other jurisdictions for both categories” (Shelby, 2009:ix).
- for the writing and numeracy benchmarks, Year 3 and Year 5 Indigenous students in New South Wales perform well, achieving benchmarks much higher than those of other jurisdictions in ‘remote’ and ‘very remote’ areas (Shelby, 2009:x).

3.4 Vocational Education and Training (VET)

3.4.1 VET participation

An analysis of Figure 7 of the Summary Report (Shelby, 2009:59), indicates there does appear to be significant increases in Indigenous participation in VET since 2005. Before this time, numbers had been relatively stable.

Indigenous participation in VET has increased from approximately 57,800 in 2004 to 70,900 in 2007. The number of Indigenous VET students as a percentage of all VET students has increased from 3.6% in 2004 to 4.3% in 2007.

Figure 9 presents the Indigenous VET Participation Rate from 2002 to 2007.

Prior to 2005, the Indigenous participation rate in VET had been decreasing – from 12.7% in 2002 to 11.6% in 2004. Since 2005, the participation rate has increased to 13.2% in 2007.
4.0 SIGNS OF SUCCESS

The Review Team sought evidence in relation to which recommendations and associated initiatives of *Australian Directions* have been successful or are showing indications of success.

While there is little hard data, the Review Team was provided with a progress report that was supplemented by jurisdictional reports, some very detailed. This chapter draws on interviews and written submissions as well as the Progress Report.

Each jurisdiction reported on a range of actions, many of which are showing signs of success. These typically include:

- significant additional expenditure.
- the development of overarching as well as specific action plans in relation to the recommendations. This is an era marked by internal review and the production of jurisdictional policy statements with specific goals for improvement.
- the expansion of early years programs characterised by the new provision of integrated service centres in areas of high population density.
- concerted action working with parents as partners, and with their child’s first teacher.
- renewed attention to [English] literacy and numeracy.
- the re-development of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander consultative groups.
- an extensive range of pre-service and in-service activity aimed at teachers and principals.
- the development of multiple options in TAFE as well as school-delivered vocational education and training.

4.1 Early Childhood Education

The re-statement of this goal by COAG is supported by significant financial commitments to ensure its achievement. The evidence suggests that the recommendations in this domain have been significantly progressed since the release of *Australian Directions*. Progress in this domain may be stronger than in others. Under the Agreement, the Commonwealth and State and Territory governments have committed to ensuring that all children will have access to a quality early childhood education program by 2013, delivered by a four-year university-trained early childhood teacher, for 15 hours a week, 40 weeks a year, in the year before formal schooling.

Additional commitments were made for Indigenous early childhood development (ages 0–3). The detail of these Partnerships and Agreements, and in the progress reports, reveals an expanding, energetic and viable set of initiatives in what is widely accepted to be an important area. It is perhaps the most developed of all the recommendations that have been progressed since the release of *Australian Directions*.

4.2 School and community educational partnerships

Qualitative comments suggest that school-community partnerships simply focus on the equivalent of schools setting out in writing their expectations of parents and students. There are important exceptions to where genuine exchanges occur. This is an area for further development.

Our review of contemporary writings clearly identifies the need to acknowledge, embrace and develop a positive sense of cultural identity. It is worth noting the extent to which this demand
exists substantially in the international literature, (Attachment B), yet is somewhat absent from current Australian dialogue on Indigenous education. In the context of future directions in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander education the need for Indigenous perspectives integrated within the curriculum remains crucial.

The need to acknowledge and embrace Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander leadership in schools has been a consistent feature of all serious reviews in Indigenous education. Whilst jurisdictions throughout Australia continue to espouse the rhetoric of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander leadership, the realities are often somewhat incongruous.

4.3 School leadership

Much work has gone into programs aimed at principal leadership skills, including Dare to Lead and whole-school improvement programs. The responses to survey questions addressing inclusivity and ‘building in’ are evidence of a wide range of important strategies.

Reference is made in the Progress Report to Indigenous Professional Support Units (IPSUs) and their effectiveness in the early years programs of the Northern Territory. Repeat reference is made in field data to the importance of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employment in service delivery, and as role models. That is not to say IPSUs should be staffed solely by Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander people, or that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people should alone be made to address the challenges. Rather, it draws attention to the connection between IPSUs, the wider system, and the importance of supporting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees in the field.

4.4 Quality teaching

In this section of Australian Directions, Ministers commit to a recommendation that will provide “accredited school leadership programs that focus on developing in school leaders the knowledge and skills to improve the academic achievement of Indigenous students” (2006:24). This recommendation is supported in the statement:

> It is exceedingly important to improve outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, and to do so we must improve the graduate attributes of our teachers. Australian teachers, on leaving teacher education institutions, must be culturally competent. We, as a total population, depend on teachers for the skills we attain, the knowledge we gain and the attitudes we cultivate over the years of schooling. By working with pre-service teachers with these three components of cultural competency in mind, we can do the very best to change student outcomes (Price, 2009:v).

Australian Directions also voices a commitment to “develop strategies to attract and retain high quality teachers, especially in regional and remote communities with high Indigenous student enrolments”. Transience is often discussed as a negative in terms of student mobility, but there are problems as well with staff mobility. Some jurisdictions had little to offer other than industrial instruments for remote areas, whereas others, notably Victoria, Western Australia and New South Wales, had in effect schemes aimed at difficult locations in general, including urban areas. New South Wales media recently commented on a progress report suggesting that cash
incentives for some staff and school principals had resulted in major improvements in English literacy.³

Reference was made to specialist support staff in several submissions – guidance, speech and hearing, and to the roles and responsibilities of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander support staff and parents as important and necessary adjuncts to good teaching.

4.5 Pathways to training, employment and higher education

A wide range and variety of initiatives have been undertaken, many of them tailored to specific locations and populations, working with local industries and service providers. This pattern of relevant specialisation is a strength, in that it captures local interest, providing a positive profile for all involved. It may also be a weakness in that it is highly dependent on, and restricted to, local circumstances, which can render participants vulnerable to changing local employment markets. Reference is made earlier in this report to studies which explore these issues.

5.0 ENABLING, IMPLEMENTING FACTORS: WAYS FORWARD

In discussing the implementation of *Australian Directions* and associated initiatives with respondents, we asked: “what factors have enabled or impeded this activity?” In this section of the Report, observations and suggestions are made on how less-progressed recommendations can be better implemented, and whether they continue to be relevant and important.

5.1 Factors enabling or impeding implementation of recommendations and initiatives

Respondents were asked to list supportive and inhibitive factors. Commitment emerges as an overriding consideration; i.e. the commitment of:

- governments – financially and in securing accountability;
- systems leaders, at every level;
- parents and community – in valuing education, ensuring attendance, engagement and good advice; and
- staff, Indigenous and non-Indigenous – in providing the best possible context and content in the delivery of education.

The recommendations of *Australian Directions* are themselves evidence of a comprehensive and vigorous action plan in need of fine tuning and continuing implementation and supplementation, rather than radical overhaul. It is understandable, for example, that a document issued in 2006 needs to be updated against the rapid and recent releases originating with COAG setting new targets and measures, to take account of new research and other developments.

*Australian Directions* provides much detail, organised around five domains, with 11 major commitments and 37 action details. Summary comment in this part of the report is organised around what might be done to strengthen the five domains, namely:

- early childhood education;
- school and community educational partnerships;
- school leadership;
- quality teaching; and
- pathways to training, employment and higher education.

5.2 Early Childhood Education

This is perhaps the most developed of all the recommendations that have been progressed since the release of *Australian Directions*. It promoted the development of many new initiatives in service delivery. This most positive of all findings must be kept in the forefront when considering the remarks that follow.

There is a remarkable absence of Australian data about what makes up an effective early years program (i.e. education for ages 0–8). The prospective contributions that might be made by a range of integrated programs for 0–3 year-olds have not been followed up on a longitudinal basis to see what works best. The same may be said about the contributions of programs aimed at four year-olds, and the follow through for five, six and seven year-olds.
The data that is available is bedevilled by a wide range of different jurisdictional definitions much in need of standardisation. Longitudinal studies of Indigenous children require the development of a system of unique identifiers, often across systems as diverse as health, families and communities, and education – and even within education. The Western Australian Aboriginal Child Health Survey (Zubrick et al, 2006:160–163) is the most authoritative exploration of the issues involved, and the only longitudinal study of significance, although it is known that at least one other jurisdiction did set out to conduct a longitudinal study, and abandoned it. There are no systems in place anywhere that permit systemic longitudinal studies; and until there are, there will be an absence of hard data about which programs work best, with whom and where.

There are very sensitive issues of family privacy and intrusion involved, and these can only be solved by demanding, intensive, careful and continuing involvement between agencies, the community and young parents.

COAG (2 July 2009) committed to a wide-ranging revamp of data collection on Indigenous people. Standardising data collection about early childhood programs and participation should be a priority.

There are significant discontinuities across the service. ‘Education’ includes early childhood in some jurisdictions, and not in others. In some, aspects may be shared across several departments requiring complex interagency agreement about simple matters, such as an enduring unique identifier. There are many challenges working through what might be the best and most cohesive program for a multi-disciplinary, interagency approach to health and literacy development across the age range of 0 to 8, with good ideas in some co-located and shared centres. These ideas come to grief, however, in the wider (and more numerous) communities away from concentrated populations. Clustering can help. The gaps between 0–3, 4, and 5–8 years of age can be as great as the gaps between primary and junior primary, or primary and secondary. We know of one jurisdiction that has examined these issues, without finality, but we were unable to secure agreement to using its data for a case study, because their work is as yet incomplete.

The gap grows when it comes to the relatively recent involvement of systemic non-government providers, such as the Catholic Education Office and Associations of Independent schools. They in turn do not often link with either government or community-based pre-school service providers. There was wide support for a more cohesive, and inclusive, connection between the various providers. As an area, it is ready for collaboration across the sectors.

5.3 School and community educational partnerships

The recommendations in *Australian Directions* are worded well, but, with respect, there is an over-reliance on non-Indigenous senior officials operating without expert guidance and input from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. Currently, senior officials work through COAG agendas to exercise a major influence on program design, delivery and reporting. Structural arrangements must be made for eminent Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to influence program design and delivery, to receive and reflect on outcome data, and provide advice to government and senior officials.

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4 The Centre for Aboriginal Economic Policy Research (CAEPR) at the Australian National University has a series of papers on Aboriginal populations and issues involved, including surveillance by authorities.
International evidence is that identity, participation, attendance, engagement, English literacy, numeracy and retention are positively influenced by cultural security (Bishop et al, 2007). We deal with these concepts in our literature review.

Systems must act to operationalise Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander participation at every level: nationally, by jurisdiction, and locally. Senior officers and policy makers must work with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander parents and experts to vigorously address issues of reporting, decision making in program design and delivery, cultural security, curriculum development (especially for key literacies) and in the development of human capital, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employment in service delivery.

Together, systems must develop and resource culturally supportive participation programs for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, parents and community leaders; and strengthen cultural competencies for all staff, including support staff responsible for initial enrolment, by accurately recording and supporting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander identity.

Sensitive issues were raised about cultural competence, community participation, decision making, and the reciprocal, sometimes basic, responsibilities of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander parents and staff.

They cannot be worked through without expert, ongoing advice. Eminent Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander educators, parents and caregivers generally, must have the opportunity not just to influence, but to make decisions about the design and delivery of education, including expectations governing issues of role and reciprocity.

5.4 School leadership

Many of the recommendations in Australian Directions interpret school leadership as leadership by principals. Much work has gone into programs aimed at principals, including whole-school improvement programs, but they require something more: systems leadership and support.

It is not enough for school principals, and teachers, to know from testing and review that children are not achieving as well as they might. In almost every case, principals and teachers already know that. There are very real limits to the effectiveness of whole-school improvement programs when it comes to improving Indigenous outcomes. The available evidence suggests that whole-school improvement is likely to deliver greater benefits to non-Indigenous students and marginal benefits to Indigenous students; which is not to damn it, but to point to its limitations. The gap grows. Additional system supports are required to close the gap.

Most jurisdictions have a shortage of staff to deal with issues such as foetal alcohol syndrome, speech, guidance, hearing loss and other impediments to learning which require specialised support. Some children remain un-assessed; others are assessed late. Some of those assessed cannot get the special support they require. These sentiments were summarised by one senior officer: “... there are too few teachers working with insufficient resources and poor support in inadequate facilities for too short a time to achieve real student learning outcomes and ... there are no strategies to address this” (NT DET, 2009).
There are enhanced responsibilities for all systems – government and non-government – in receipt of government funding to attend to the development of human capital by increasing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employment in service delivery, and providing culturally competent staff to support their employment.

The development and publication of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employment data in the delivery of education is an important indirect measure of expenditure on the development of human capital. Schools are required to record and report on workforce composition, including the number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people employed (Australian Government, 2008: D41). Priority must be given to actions that will result in improved employment opportunities, or these measurements will come to nothing. Reporting by schools alone is not enough.

The Review Team is well aware of the tension in some jurisdictions about whose right and role it is to convey cultural understandings, or to determine competence. These tensions must be resolved against the overriding requirements of cultural integrity and cultural responsibility using an expert group of eminent Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander educators.

Equally, every Australian is entitled to a curriculum that enables access to and understanding, with integrity, of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures and history. An Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Council, selected wisely, can provide critically important advice and endorsement as a pre-requisite to mandate studies and curricula for students and staff.

The NSW Auditor-General’s report on [English] literacy and numeracy provides perhaps the best public analysis of what is needed to give direction in these areas.

The Western Australian Aboriginal Child Health Survey outlines the rationale and potential benefit of a better system of data collection, built around unique identifiers, and South Australia has the beginnings of such a system in place within its Department of Education and Children’s Services and within the Secondary Schools Assessment Board (SSABSA).

Future directions in these areas, and in many others, have already been mapped out with the promise of being able to direct and/or deliver the sought-after improvements. Unfortunately, there isn’t a standing secretariat of substance to distil, draw together and direct these initiatives. This is not an argument for re-creating the bureaucracies of earlier years, so much as an attempt to put forward as an active agenda item for discussing the development of some mechanism to coordinate new actions using the latest research.

5.5 Quality teaching

Teachers cannot deliver quality teaching unless they receive expert advice and support in their efforts, as noted in the section on School Leadership. Systems must re-engage and re-establish teacher support systems that have been disestablished in the name of economy over the past 20 years. It is not enough to test and review. Research efforts must be re-energised using, as examples, the NSW Auditor General’s report and the findings of the Western Australian Aboriginal Child Health Survey as guides.

Sustainable, long-term programs are needed, and they need long-term staff. We argue for a plan that addresses three timeframes: five, ten and 25 years. Plans like these rely on reducing staff
turnover if they are to be effective. New South Wales, Victoria and Western Australia all have schemes that others might examine as part of the National Partnerships on Low SES School Communities and Quality Teaching.

5.6 Pathways to training, employment and higher education.

Again, there are many commendable schemes in place and it is tempting to at once address this domain in terms of the more comprehensive concept of youth engagement; but that would be to ignore important antecedents that must also be addressed.

National research highlights the interdependencies between poverty, education and health. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students cannot participate on par with their peers unless and until they receive improved support for physical and psychological health. Health cannot improve unless issues of poverty and education are addressed.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people are grossly over-represented in negative engagements with welfare and the juvenile justice system. These issues require a renewed, integrated focus, especially in the early years – from birth – with a pact between health, wellbeing, justice and education agencies to effect improvements in service delivery, and secure improved outcomes as poverty is vigorously addressed.

The development of human capital in these areas of health, wellbeing, justice and education agencies is critical. The evidence is that good and stable programs are negatively influenced by high levels of staff turnover and low levels of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employment in service delivery. Nationally, around 75% of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population is dispersed throughout urban areas, whereas most programs tend to focus on concentrations in remote and very remote areas. COAG agreements intend to target low socioeconomic areas. There are well-founded arguments for balance between program efforts that aim to target children as part of the general population, and programs that are aimed specifically at Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children. There is the difficulty of delivering to both the high density concentrations in some geo-locations and the dispersal that characterises the majority of the population.

The interconnection between poverty, health and education as social determinants of success must be dealt with using the latest research afforded through organisations like the National Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation (NACCHO) and international organisations such as the United Nations (UN) and the World Health Organisation. Concepts of culturally responsive schooling as discussed by Brayboy and Castagno (2007) – namely cultural security, cultural integrity and cultural competence – must be integrated with emerging COAG directions, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employment in service delivery and the development of human capital.
6.0 CONCLUSIONS, FUTURES AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The Review team notes that there is widespread agreement from all jurisdictions and sectors about the necessity and the desirability of acting together to develop and disseminate an updated, successor document to *Australian Directions*. All agree that Indigenous education is about fulfilling a reciprocal schooling process. There are two needs that are paramount to survive in today’s world. The need for personal Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural identification, development and reinforcement will remain one. The need to acquire the skills and understandings necessary to be successful in today’s global western world is the other.

Therefore we strongly endorse COAG’s commitment to the development of a national Indigenous Education Action Plan with key deliverables that has a stronger focus on addressing and measuring Indigenous educational outcomes at the regional and local levels (Minister Macklin, Press Release 2 July 2009). Harnessing the mainstream programs is the key to addressing the ongoing disadvantage faced by too many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. To achieve the COAG agenda will require establishing long-term arrangements for the four aims of the National Aboriginal [and Torres Strait Islander] Education Policy – namely:

- Involvement of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in education decision-making;
- Equality of access to educational services;
- Equity of educational participation; and
- Equitable and appropriate educational outcomes (Commonwealth of Australia, 1989).

This review has been conducted by a group of highly experienced Indigenous educators who have deep and objective knowledge and interest in this area. In this chapter we choose to use all our collective backgrounds to comment upon future education directions that focus on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. Our position is encapsulated in the following statement:

Those who work with us understand very well the need for our children to be stronger and smarter. It is a fundamental human right of our children to have an education that makes them stronger, in a way that enables them to develop a rich and positive sense of their own cultural identity, and smarter, in a way that enables them to participate in a modern society as any other Australian would (Sarra, 2009).

The Review Team totally endorses the ‘Stronger Smarter’ Philosophy as articulated by Dr Chris Sarra from the Indigenous Education Leadership Institute. The ‘Stronger Smarter’ philosophy identifies the relationship between the teacher and the student as the most important place in any education jurisdiction. Against this background the philosophy articulates five key strategies that are fundamental to positive change in classrooms and the delivery of improved Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander student outcomes:

- Acknowledging, embracing and developing a positive sense of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander identity in schools;
- Acknowledging and embracing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander leadership in schools and school communities;
- ‘High expectations’ leadership to ensure ‘high expectations’ classrooms, with ‘high
expectations’ teacher/student relationships;
• Innovative and dynamic school models in complex social and cultural contexts; and
• Innovative and dynamic school staffing models, especially for community schools.

Emeritus Professor Paul Hughes further comments:

As a People we cannot continue to exhibit a ‘learned helplessness’ born as a product of history, racism, class and poverty that we pass on to our children and sometimes display to the school and individual teachers. (Hughes, 2009).

What we have found in this review is not new to anyone who has been engaged in Indigenous education. However, we do feel that there is now a need to action new, long-term arrangements under the existing domains of *Australian Directions*.

It is the view of the Review team that the ‘Stronger Smarter’ philosophy should influence all the domain areas and provides a useful strategic framework with which to contemplate future directions in Indigenous education. Therefore we include more detailed comment related to the strategies espoused above within discussions and recommendations on the five domain areas.

### 6.1 Domain 1 – Early childhood development and education

Reference is made in the body of the report to the encouraging financial commitments and directions already underway. Even so, the national picture is still one of fragmented effort, with the locus of responsibility for early childhood development and education shared across many agencies, government and non-government.

The international evidence is that an investment in the early years will avoid greater expense in the later years – (see Attachment B, Contemporary Writings). The cost of negative engagement with both the juvenile and adult justice systems is already the subject of damning reports, showing incarceration rates for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people running between eight and 13 times that of the general population. However, successful education – throughout the early years and all formal schooling – is a major factor in reducing the incarceration rate and other social disadvantage for Indigenous Peoples.

There are no longitudinal Australian studies that link outcome measures to the types of preschool program on offer, other than the Western Australian Aboriginal Child Health Survey. COAG changed its goal in the area of early childhood education, but that goal needs more than a re-alignment of data-gathering mechanisms to capture the promise of 15 hours pre-school education for all four year-olds, for 40 weeks, delivered by a university-trained educator. It needs to be set in the context of program continuity – building on, with and into the years of early childhood development and primary education. There are too many discontinuities.

Field reports show a great deal of fragmentation with many service providers, often focussed on a narrow segment of the age range 0 to 8 years. The same field reports show that this is an area ready for increased collaboration. Several jurisdictions report initiatives aimed at establishing clustered services in strategically located service centres – near to areas with a sufficient threshold population, urban and remote – to make use of an integrated service that can be delivered economically.
Innovative school modelling should also be receptive to the challenges of ensuring Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children are ‘school ready’ for their first year of formal schooling. Against this background schools would be well supported by early education specialists who can work with parents of children in the 0-4 years to identify and respond to special needs that might exist for children and engage parents in playgroup learning processes that will focus on early English literacy and numeracy skills development. In this same vein, early education specialists can work with schools to ensure that the schools are ready for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children.

**Recommendation 1**

Government, Catholic and Independent school sectors combine to conduct a case study for the development of an integrated approach for Indigenous students across the years 0–8. The project should involve all agencies and service providers; the development and use, over time, of unique identifiers; and a structured, sequenced, understood and supported action and evaluation program for childhood development and education.

The case study should develop and evaluate actual curricula and resources to provide skill development in the foundations for learning – particularly in academic literacies and numeracy for school readiness by the first year of formal schooling.

**6.2 Domain 2 – School and community educational partnerships**

*Acknowledging, embracing and developing a positive sense of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander identity in schools*

Our review of contemporary writings clearly identifies the need to acknowledge, embrace and develop a positive sense of cultural identity. It is worth noting the extent to which this demand exists substantially in the international literature, (Attachment B), yet is somewhat absent from current Australian dialogue on Indigenous education. In the context of future directions in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander education the need for Indigenous perspectives integrated within the curriculum remains crucial. The need for Indigenous contextual learning experiences is also crucial and the difference between the two must be understood.

Put simply, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives integrated within the curriculum refers to explicit curriculum content about Indigenous people, place and story, for example in history the study of local areas of Indigenous cultural and historical significance. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander contextual learning refers to the use of Indigenous contextual circumstances to enable understanding about generic learning concepts, for example, understanding the physics and mathematics that enables a spear to increase its speed with the use of a Woomera.

*Acknowledging and embracing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander leadership in schools and school communities.*

The introduction of the Aboriginal Student Support and Parent Awareness (ASSPA) program in 1992 as part of the AEP saw several thousand parents and other Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community members become involved in school decision making processes. Whilst there is justifiable criticism about instances in which school leaders exploited the use of ASSPA funds and undermined the intent of the program, this was in many instances, a useful first step in
terms of promoting increased involvement in school processes.

The need to acknowledge and embrace Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander leadership in schools has been a consistent feature of all serious reviews in Indigenous education. Whilst jurisdictions throughout Australia continue to espouse the rhetoric of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander leadership, the realities are often somewhat incongruous.

In an effort to align the realities of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander leadership with the rhetoric, strategies are needed to ensure tangible Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander governance in school management, particularly in schools with high numbers and proportions of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students. We also suggest that as part of teacher training, undergraduates have opportunities to learn how to work more collaboratively and productively with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Workers in classrooms.

The evidence is that Indigenous staff members do make a positive difference, especially if they are trained in aspects of how English literacy and numeracy programs are taught and are able to interpret those aspects to parents, community, students and other staff. Students in schools with Indigenous support staff will do worse without them.

Research has shown that parents of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, in general, support any school’s emphasis on the reaching of successful outcomes and the teaching of English literacy in particular. However, as partners in this process, our parents must encourage and become involved in regular school attendance, so that our children can actively participate in and benefit from the learning process.

According to Hughes (2000)

There is clear evidence that some further actions by Indigenous parents are vital for school success. Three clear factors emerge – attendance, participation and parental effort. I would have to say that the single most significant reason for our lack of school education outcomes is that too many of our students do not turn up often enough to participate in classroom schooling processes and do the required classroom work in partnership with teachers to succeed. Therefore our parent’s role is to take action here.

This is a concept that has seen firm and vocal support from the United States President Barack Obama, who, in his address to the National American Association of Colored People on 7 July 2009 also referred to parents’ roles, saying, “… but all these innovative programs and expanded opportunities will not, in and of themselves, make a difference if each of us, as parents and as community leaders, fail to do our part by encouraging excellence in our children”. Obama emphasised that coming from a deprived background was not an excuse and that only by getting an education could children get stronger and able to compete. He went on to say:

… to parents – we can’t tell our kids to do well at school and then fail to support them when they get home … we have to accept our responsibility to help them learn … Putting our kids to bed at a reasonable hour … attending those parent-teacher conferences and reading to our children and helping them with their homework.

Statements such as these have received wide support.
However, although considered as the optimum goal, there can be obstacles to achieving this involvement of parents and caregivers. There are tensions between dispersal and immersion in the dominant culture where, according to the Western Australian Aboriginal Child Health Survey (2009), attainment levels are highest; and clustering where enclave support systems are economical. It is unfortunately true that clustering can contribute to a form of social stratification and streaming. At least two jurisdictions have tried to overcome these problems by establishing regional councils as parent forums, only to find a new set of problems. In one, the definition of ‘parent’ was restricted to ‘Aboriginal parent of an Aboriginal child’. This excluded the non-Indigenous partner, and caregiver. For a time, debate over the propriety or inequity of this definition dominated proceedings to the exclusion of almost everything else. In another, the ‘parent’ forum was captured by paid education employees and/or a dominant faction, who used it to further arguments and causes they could not win or progress in the workplace.

There is no hard evidence to link any of these practices to improved attainment or attendance, since the development of unique Indigenous identifiers is only recent, and limited to one jurisdiction: but there is evidence that several strategies, combined, have contributed to improved attendance. Evidence of academic outcomes, however, is yet to be documented.

Actions which show signs of improving attendance include:

- parent payments based in part on student attendance;
- ‘no school, no pool’, or its equivalent in another community – no footy;
- rigorous local follow up, using Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander support staff;
- real time, computer-based central monitoring and direction, articulated throughout the system – across divisions, through regions and into localities for follow up; and
- social networking, assisted by parent forums, councils and education providers arriving at a formal partnership agreement detailing roles and responsibilities, with follow-up mechanisms accessible to paid staff.

The role and functions of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander para-professional school workers are important in improving attainment and attendance. There is a need to re-establish national guidelines about the skills and understandings these workers are employed under so that they may better assist the teaching and learning outcomes of students. To our knowledge there has not been a major study of this area since the ‘Ara Kuwaritjakutu’ project of 1994.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander workers need to be much more engaged with parents re teaching and learning processes. This obviously means that the conditions under which they are employed, and the training they need to perform their functions needs to be re-evaluated and monitored for quality.

**Recommendation 2**

Schools to establish parent forums, serviced by currently employed Indigenous staff. Schools, in consultation with parents, must define a set of principles and guidelines for how these staff members should limit their participation in parent forums to matters which cannot otherwise be pursued directly by them in the workplace.
 Recommendation 3  
All jurisdictions to investigate how Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander para-professionals could:  
a) concentrate their work with individual students, their teachers and parents on how school studies actually work;  
b) assist in negotiating each student’s Personalised Learning Plan; and  
c) continually emphasise why it is necessary for each student to attend regularly and do all the work consistently.  

Recommendation 4  
Each school sector to redefine and monitor the role and function of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander para-professional school workers. Develop appropriate terms and conditions so that specific training and career progression can be provided.

6.3 Domain 3 – School leadership  
The message that has emerged from all studies to date is that schooling outcomes is a joint responsibility, shared by the parents and teachers of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students; with the principals of the schools attended by the students having a major role in ensuring that the appropriate ‘conditions for learning’ are in place. Much work has gone into programs aimed at developing leadership skills. All involved in our research support the need to continue these programs on a long-term basis, to further develop the understandings of all participants in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander education, and to set long-term goals.

Innovative and dynamic school staffing models, especially for community schools  
The need for innovative and dynamic school staffing models must be observed, particularly in jurisdictions needing to attract quality teachers to rural and remote schools. Student data for such schools suggests categorically the need for the best teachers, but the recruitment processes of jurisdictions continue to be challenged to deliver good teachers to these locations. Teacher recruitment processes to Cape York and the Torres Strait have seen a dramatic improvement in the quality of teachers attracted to this region.

This is the result of a dedicated campaign to identify and build long term relationships with high calibre teachers, in order to nurture a sense of commitment to teaching in predominantly Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander schools, and a sense of understanding about the challenging yet rewarding community context. In 2009 every classroom in Cape York and the Torres Strait was staffed with a teacher who genuinely wanted to be there to make a difference as a teacher. Approximately 30 teachers had their applications rejected as a result of the thorough screening process as they were considered unsuitable within such a school and community context. This represents a dramatic and crucial shift beyond the ‘take whatever we can get’ approach to staffing rural and remote schools.

Teachers of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students can operate more effectively if they are made aware of their students’ social and cultural backgrounds and incorporate this knowledge as ‘perspectives’ in their curricula. Teachers must be given support and guidance about teaching strategies that work well with Indigenous children. This can happen through formal and informal professional development at system and school levels. In particular, Principals and teachers in all schools must recognise and give high priority to the modelling of
Standard Australian English, plus numeracy, for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students in all situations, both inside and outside the classroom. Teachers must understand the linguistic functioning of their students and help them to code switch from home languages to Standard Australian English.

All jurisdictions and sectors actively engage in in-service programs for their staff. Fortunately today the ‘Stronger Smarter’ philosophy and the ‘Dare to Lead’ and ‘What Works’ programs use complementary principles that are based on best practice in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander education. We urge continuation of these approaches under the direction of the relevant jurisdiction or sector.

Recommendation 5
All education providers should work with the higher education sector to progress accredited leadership programs and continue to support, on a long-term basis, school leadership development. These should be based on the ‘Stronger Smarter’ principles for Principals and teachers and refer to the ‘Stepping Up: What Works in pre-service teacher education’ publication. (Price and Hughes for ‘What Works’)

Recommendation 6
For in-service teacher education all school sectors must continue to work their own programs on a long term basis based on the ‘Stronger Smarter’ philosophy and include as an integral part the ‘Dare to Lead’ and ‘What Works for Indigenous students’ programs.

6.4 Domain 4 – Quality teaching

‘High expectations’ leadership to ensure ‘high expectations’ classrooms, with ‘high expectations’ teacher/student relationships

Fundamental to the need for high expectations leadership, classrooms and teacher/student relationships is quality teaching, quality curriculum and accountability for quality student outcomes. Quality teaching pedagogies for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students is clearly quality teaching for any child. Quality curriculum for an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander student is that with which the student can connect and be intellectually stimulated by. While some collective assumptions can be made about what might stimulate an Indigenous student’s intellect, it invariably demands the teacher has a good understanding of the child as an individual, including the cultural context in which a child has been raised and which continues to influence how a child thinks and behaves and the development of life skill.

Quality teaching needs to acknowledge the cultural context in which a child is developing and surviving outside of school hours and connect the teaching process to this context in order for the value of school learning to be recognised and appreciated by Indigenous students, parents and families. The lack of a good understanding of a child’s cultural context and development of skills within this context on the part of the classroom teacher is likely to lead to a cultural conflict between the child and the teacher which can affect the nature of a teacher/student relationship within each Year level and throughout a child’s schooling from kindergarten to the completion of secondary school. When a child perceives that cultural differences are not acknowledged and the classroom environment and the teacher/student relationship is based on the premise that ‘all students are the same’ and the expectation is that all students will behave
according to the cultural values of the teacher that dictate classroom proceedings, then a child will increasingly feel like a victim and take a natural course of action to escape.

While there is no pretending that the complexity of the lives of many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children creates many challenges for educators, the notion of systemic jurisdictional ‘collusion with limited expectations’ of those same children must also be acknowledged as a significant problem. To this end it is clear that jurisdictions must have the courage to exercise existing performance management processes that are already ‘built in’ rather than accepting poor education outcomes that would never be tolerated in mainstream schools, or with mainstream students.

6.4.1 English literacies

A great deal of the current debate concerns itself with acquiring the basics, but effective, equitable participation relies on something more than the basics. Complex and sophisticated understandings are required in at least three literacies, as well as numeracy, if Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children are to participate equally in mainstream society. The three literacies often referred to are English, digital and scientific.

We are aware that all these fit under the proper term ‘academic literacies’ – accepted today by specialists in the field, and generally defined as the ‘ways of reading, writing and talking required by students to operate successfully within particular fields’.

We urge further development in all these areas.

According to Banks (2007: 15),

> Being born into a racial majority group with high levels of economic and social resources – or into a group that has historically been marginalised with low levels of economic and social resources – results in very different lived experiences that include unequal learning opportunities, challenges, and potential risks for learning and development.

These pre-conditions for effective delivery and improvement combine to make up a list that for some is difficult to achieve. Some of the key components are:

• a home background that involves early exposure to and the valuing of reading – being read to as a child, being surrounded by age-appropriate reading materials, being spoken to in ways which encourage the joy and development of oral language – rhymes, songs and ditties.
• a history of regular pre-school participation in an organised educative program.
• socioeconomic status: scores increase with parental income.
• family size and number in the household: scores increase as size decreases.
• geographic location: scores increase in proximity to major centres.
• regular – better than 90% – school attendance, at the same school.
• the informed use of diagnostic data.
• specialist advice and support where indicated, preferably delivered in mainstream classes, not by withdrawal.
• good leadership: meaning a focus on learning, English literacy, staff and students.
• a program that stretches across every year level and transition points – providing continuity, especially from pre-school into primary, with a continuing focus beyond Yr 3.
• fully trained staff, including support staff.
• an inclusive practice, exampled by outward signs such as an acknowledgement of country and of Elders, flying the flag, and the use of local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander place names and stories.

There is a major need for a coherent methodology that is voluntarily believed in and adopted by staff trained in its use. Our research indicated that it might be any one of more than 15 common schemes, variously labelled: Accelerated Literacy; Scaffolding (the same as Accelerated Literacy, but with a different set of proponents); THRASS (Teaching Handwriting, Reading and Spelling Skills); Jolly Phonics; Reading Recovery – extended as a methodology to several areas; Explicit Teaching, coaching, coaching schemes, literacy improvement teams; English as a Second Language; Rainbow Readers; Ashton Scholastic, computer-based testing; and linked with: National Geographic graded readers; First Steps; Indij Readers; Ruby K Payne’s linguistic register; Teaching English as a Second Language; Rocket Reading; New Arrivals Program English; and YALP (Yachad Accelerated Learning Project), a philanthropic Israeli scheme.

There are links and overlaps between many of these, and we were informed that there are many more schemes not listed here. Most schools use a hybrid strategy, dictated by the resources available and teacher backgrounds. However, as all educators know, the actual ‘scheme’ that is used is not the key factor; experienced and capable teachers with depth of and quality teaching skills can get results whatever the ‘scheme’. We remain convinced that using an English as a second language pedagogy should form the base of whatever literacy program is used. From what we could find, however - rarely do these positives come and stay together for most Indigenous students, especially in remote areas.

Ironically, when they do, the research evidence is that non-Indigenous students benefit at least as well as and often even more than Indigenous students. In successful circumstances, the gap grows. This is a very serious point to stress – the gaps grow in circumstances that would widely be regarded as fortunate. This means that it is not sufficient to maintain a focus on good parenting and good teaching alone in order to close the gap.

Short-term, annualised funding, frequently late and associated with some form of reporting and or application procedure, adds to the uncertainty. Vulnerable locations experience high to very high teacher turnover and often rely on a mixture of recruiting procedures, drawing a succession of teachers from widely different backgrounds. This problem will increase as more desirable locations compete increasingly for new recruits, and ageing teachers retire. Some of the most promising evaluations of Accelerated Literacy, for example, point up the disruptive effect of a lack of experienced staff and a high teacher turnover (Walsh & Barrett, 2005).

The stakes are getting higher. Youth unemployment is growing. New competency schemes, such as those associated with Future SACE in South Australia, make higher demands that can only be satisfied by continuing achievement and attendance. This leaves us with the over-arching problem – how to close the gap: a gap which, if anything, grows in the presence of good mainstream teaching, where the majority of students are to be found. While several schemes are showing signs of marked success, there are some things which regrettably have still not been done and ought to be.
Many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students are being cycled through a range of English literacy schemes as they change grades, teachers and locations; and, as locations change, so do policies, programs, principals, teachers and resources in response to short-lived, short-funded initiatives at state and commonwealth level. A more considered approach to standardisation seems appropriate. A start might be made by pooling all the different sources of government funding, state and commonwealth, to develop enduring, long-term programs for evaluation with funding certainty. Long-term programs, with long-term data sets using unique identifiers, will be very important aspects of program validation.

A short list of other potential contributors to a more positive outcome includes:

- aligning pre-service and in-service training programs and support materials, using the most promising schemes.
- reducing teacher turnover by increasing rewards – follow up on the initiatives taken in New South Wales, Victoria and Western Australia to see which of them has the best impact on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children.
- building English literacy and pre-literacy skills into early childhood development and parenting programs and assess their impact using a system of unique identifiers.
- following up on the findings of the NSW Auditor General, whose report on English literacy and numeracy is one of the simplest and most concise summations of what might next be explored.

Specifically within the Northern Territory, but also relevant to other jurisdictions, there is an increased focus on approaches to teaching Indigenous students for whom English is a foreign language. The recruitment and location of teachers in such schools must incorporate specialist training in sound English as a Second Language principles either as undergraduate training, or focussed professional development during their appointment. Beginning teachers must be mentored in their first years of appointment.

**Recommendation 7**

**MCEECDYA to establish a national initiative involving all education systems and jurisdictions to promulgate evidence-based directions. These directions must be built on diagnostic data from rigorous quantitative and qualitative research to inform action for effective programs in all literacies – digital, numeric and scientific, in addition to academic English.**

### 6.4.2 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages

There have been recurring debates about the language of instruction: whether it should be in English; or whether there should be a system of bilingual education, with English as a second or even a foreign language. However, the most important thing to establish in the teaching of English is which programs work best. As noted above, that will depend on longitudinal studies built around unique identifiers, and long-term commitments to the most promising programs.

To some extent, those debates are irrelevant when it comes to the teaching of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples have the same right as any other people to receive instruction in their own language. New South Wales TAFE reports the development of a coherent Aboriginal languages program. The importance of that development has been emphasised in the Literature Review (McCarty et al, 2006) and in the

The necessity for a vigorous program is highlighted by the Western Australian Aboriginal Child Health Survey which points, in the absence of planned instruction and maintenance of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander languages, to an inter-generational loss of around 10%. The consequence of inaction is obvious. Australia, as a signatory to the international convention on human rights, has a moral obligation to take action.

Current arrangements under LOTE, or some other particular schemes, are not enough. They do not allow sufficient time for the teaching by Indigenous Elders of important cultural development aspects such as protocols, mores and respect. Consideration could be given to how so-called ‘Saturday Schools’, or other out-of-school schemes under Ethnic Schools funding operate; and how they might be redeveloped for use in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander situations for the teaching of language and culture.

**Recommendation 8**

**All school sectors to establish an inter-jurisdictional panel of experts to frame a methodology and a budget for the delivery of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages and consider how out-of-school schemes might operate.**

**6.5 Domain 5 – Pathways to training, employment and higher education**

A wide range and variety of initiatives have been undertaken, many of them tailored to specific locations and populations, working with local industries and service providers. This pattern of relevant specialisation is a strength in that it captures local interest, providing a positive profile for all involved. It may also be a weakness in that it is highly dependent on, and restricted to, local circumstances, which can render participants vulnerable to changing local employment markets.

*Innovative and dynamic school models in complex social and cultural contexts*

A significant part of the challenge of devising receptive school models for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students is the provision of quality secondary school options for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in rural and remote circumstances. Recent debate has seen some pursuit of private boarding schools as a means to attend to such a challenge. While the right of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander parents to pursue such choices is respected, such a strategy is extremely limited in its capacity to provide quality secondary students to the extensive majority.

In some cases throughout Australia the establishment of provincial boarding arrangements enables children to participate in larger mainstream secondary schools eg. Western Cape College, Weipa or Spinifex College in Mt Isa. These approaches have enabled more Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students to engage in secondary schooling with a larger volume of students, resulting in capacity to select school subjects from a broader curriculum. The concept of a Monday to Friday boarding school concept is for some an attractive option.
It is worth noting the innovative concept of Guaranteed Service Outcomes pioneered by the Western Cape College in Weipa. A Guaranteed Service Outcome signals to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students that if they engage with schooling and complete year 12 of high school then they are guaranteed either a job; a tertiary place; or a vocational training outcome. Such a concept requires schools to forge productive relationships with all local industries to negotiate workplace training and accreditation, and also creates scope to ensure schooling is receptive to the demands of local economies and communities.

Education and Training Ministers have previously agreed that supplementary measures supporting Indigenous students through pathways into training, employment and higher education are pivotal to improving post-school transitions and breaking intergenerational cycles of poverty and disadvantage. Ministers have committed to:

- improving vocational learning opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students from Year 10 onwards. Western Australian school-based traineeships provide an exemplar of good practice.
- expanding the provision of trade training infrastructure, particularly to publicly funded training providers, to ensure that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students have access to trade training in their own regions. Priority is to be given to expansion in regions with industries that employ significant numbers of apprentices and tradespeople.

The commitments to VET made in *Australian Directions* are important, but so too will be the development of refined datasets to illuminate the broader questions of ‘attainment’ by using other measures of youth engagement and destination, such as:

- completion rates
- type of qualification
- post-education destinations (employment, characteristics of employment)
- programs designed to boost Year 12 completion, university entry and completion
- negative engagements with the juvenile justice system.

Nationally, there is evidence of some improvement in university entry. Much of the improvement is attributed to the development by universities of enabling courses designed to assist university entry. The evidence is that early streaming to other vocational education and training acts to improve the claimed completion rates, but results in fewer complete qualifications for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students than for non-Indigenous students and, for many, simply defers entry into unemployment. Field reports confirm this concern.

**Recommendation 9**

Secondary schools, further education institutions and Indigenous communities to expand partnerships so that strategies can be developed to attract, retain and successfully graduate Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students across a broad spectrum of further education courses.

**Recommendation 10**

MCEECDYA to seek advice from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander education consultative bodies, the Indigenous Higher Education Advisory Council, Universities...
Australia and other strategic stakeholders on effective strategies and implementation arrangements to ensure that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and students within those communities are encouraged to engage successfully in higher education.

6.6 Teacher Education

In *Australian Directions*, Ministers commit to a recommendation that will provide “accredited school leadership programs that focus on developing in school leaders the knowledge and skills to improve the academic achievement of Indigenous students” (2006: 24). This recommendation is supported in the statement:

> It is exceedingly important to improve outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, and to do so we must improve the graduate attributes of our teachers. Australian teachers, on leaving teacher education institutions, must be culturally competent. We, as a total population, depend on teachers for the skills we attain, the knowledge we gain and the attitudes we cultivate over the years of schooling. By working with pre-service teachers with these three components of cultural competency in mind, we can do the very best to change student outcomes (Price, 2009:v).

Our review of Contemporary Writings (Attachment B) sought to identify pathways that have significant potential to improve learning outcomes. These writings point to a ‘bottom up’ approach as the solution, arguing for self determination through community empowerment and Indigenous cultural learnings. Teachers, who operate at the local level, need to understand this approach in their teacher education at both pre-service and in-service levels. Approaches for such education can be found in both the ‘Stepping Up: What Works in pre-service teacher education’ (Price and Hughes for What Works, 2009) and the ‘Stepping Up’ proposal developed by Buckskin, Price and Hughes, submitted to DEEWR (2008). We believe that all teachers need to have these understandings in order to improve their pedagogy through culturally competent teaching which will provide culturally safe and responsive classrooms.

In NSW it has been mandated that all teachers employed must have studied Aboriginal Education in their degree program. If Australia is to improve the quality of its teachers for significant improvement in academic outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students it is necessary that all States and Territories follow the NSW lead. This means that the quality of the Indigenous content in teacher education programs must be improved and has to be based on the most up to date information we have in relation to good practice in this area.

**Recommendation 11**

All school sector teacher registration boards to require that employees have undertaken core components of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander education in their degree program. This content should include education for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students based on the ‘Stronger Smarter’ philosophy and about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures.

**Recommendation 12**
MCEECDYA, to advance Rec 11, implement a national program to incorporate best practice in Indigenous education for university Teacher Education Degrees. In this refer to the Stepping Up: What Works in pre-service teacher education publication. (Price and Hughes for ‘What Works’)

6.7 An updated national action plan

The five domains contained within Australian Directions remain useful organising tools in need of updating by the latest of COAG’s priority statements, which will have to be read in conjunction with the more precise measures contained within National Partnerships and Agreements. In our view, the major tasks outlined in the recommendations above cannot satisfactorily be put into an action plan and attended to by paid employees and advisors acting without formal Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander involvement. To advance a new action plan there is a need to move from current arrangements towards a new national plan which involves authoritative, but not necessarily determinative, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Councils at both National and State or Territory levels.

There is a consensus that the COAG action plan should address three timeframes: five, 10 and 25 years. The reasons for this are generally well known, but in education they are:

- The potential for positive links between cross-agency early years programs; Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health and academic English literacy, as participation and completion rates cannot be tested in five years.
- A 10- and 25-year framework is required to trace inter-generational change.

The above means that data sets, built around unique identifiers, need to be developed to match those timeframes in order to work out which programs work best with which groups and where. Data issues have been canvassed in the body of the report, and COAG committed $46.4m to the task at its July 2009 meeting. A portion of that funding should be used to standardise data collection against goals aligned to COAG’s reform and ‘Closing the Gap’ agendas in early childhood development and education. Detailed reference has already been made to data tasks in the early years, in English literacy, and in measuring attendance, participation, progression, engagement, retention, graduation and destination.

The acquisition of skills in numeracy for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students also needs further attention. Data arising from the Australian Association of Mathematics Teachers project ‘Make it Count – Numeracy, Mathematics and Indigenous learners’ should be supported and closely monitored. This project involves eight clusters located in metropolitan and regional centres with the potential to develop whole-school approaches that document and share effective teaching and school practice in supporting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students’ learning in mathematics and numeracy.
Recommendation 13
NAPLAN to standardise data collection in each of the key domains. It is important for consistency to use a system of unique identifiers to aid diagnostic utility and follow up. Broaden the indicator base for participation, engagement and attainment, and reference these against estimates of the age/grade cohort.

6.8 Program implementation

Program implementation requires a long-term, sustainable commitment. The chance of gaining community support is higher if the program is developed with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander involvement, under the auspices of a National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Council.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people consulted during this review, including a national meeting of IECBs, expressed a strong desire for engagement in policy formation and decision making, reserving some of their strongest criticism for what they saw as their exclusion and a domination of the agenda by non-Indigenous advisors. To be fair, we note that *Australian Directions* was developed with significant advisory input from Indigenous staff and parent representatives. The recommendations are widely accepted. The problem seems not to be with what they say, but in the manner and method of their implementation. The major parties to progress might be well served by the development of a code of conduct and ethics, explicitly setting out roles and responsibilities and avenues for mutual activity and participation.

In addressing this model of implementation Professor Peter Buckskin states:

> Closing the gap in education between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians will require the most constructive consensus between the Commonwealth and State governments and Indigenous educators and Indigenous communities that Australia has ever seen. The current Aboriginal Education Policy launched by Prime Minister Hawke [in 1989] provided a solid foundation for this consensus and improved education outcomes will only result if governments once again engage with and support the above. Energetic and informed Indigenous individuals are keen to participate and governments must genuinely seek out and support their participation. (Bloustein G, Mackinnon A, Comber B, in press)

The charter of a National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Council should cover all matters that impact on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander education; and on a child’s potential and actual intellectual development from birth through to, and including, secondary graduation and positive post-secondary destinations. Its membership should consist of eminent Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander experts capable of making outstanding contributions to education, including those with a background in child health and development.

It will need to work closely with jurisdictions, senior officials and the Productivity and Human Rights Commissions to monitor directions and reporting against objectives derived from the MCEECDYA and COAG agendas and Australia’s renewed commitment to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander education success.
Such a National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Council should be replicated, by arrangement, within each State and Territory Education Ministry – so that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander involvement and counsel can be also replicated in operations as above at the state and territory level. These Councils need not be large in member numbers, but specifically expert in education.

Essential to the Council’s business is its capacity to examine and report on pedagogy used for teaching and learning outcomes and monitoring the best practice in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander education. The Council’s work is dependent on the specifics of the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Action Plan and NAPLAN data related to teaching and learning.

**Recommendation 14**

MCEECDYA to establish a National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Council, with replicated State and Territory Councils. These Councils should oversee and monitor the development of a National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Action Plan with specific teaching and learning outcomes. This plan must incorporate MCEECDYA and COAG agreed regional and local school level strategies and recommendations.
REFERENCES


ATTACHMENT A - METHODOLOGY

Details of procedures

A first meeting was held with the client to discuss the details of the research and define the scope of the Review; develop a Research Implementation Plan; identify the key players and stakeholders; identify relevant data and documentation; and determine the scope of necessary consultation with the client and stakeholders to carry out the following:

- analyse existing known outcomes across a period of time for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students using quantitative and qualitative data obtained from the client, from public documents, from the literature review, and from the Reviewer’s proposed consultation process;
- research current and projected sustainability and outcomes, wherever possible comparing trends and benchmarking against such positive alternative strategies as may be identified during the consultation and by the literature review;
- analyse related reviews of other jurisdictions, and internationally;
- analyse the views and input of key stakeholders; and
- analyse operational connectivity between COAG goal setting, monitoring, resource allocation, policy development, program delivery, staff and student participation, and outcomes.

The detail of implementation strategies and system connectivity was to be explored in key areas: for example, pre-school participation, literacy and Year 12 retention and achievement.

Questionnaire development and distribution

A distinction was made between authorities with direct responsibilities for implementation and service delivery, such as education departments, the Independent Schools Associations, and the Catholic Education Office; and organisations with an advocacy role, such as teacher organisations.

A list of stakeholders for contact was established (see Attachment C). This list was refined further to identify a list for consultation followed by interview. All identified stakeholders were contacted and invited to respond to the review, with follow-up interviews for those who sought them or who were identified for consultation. A list of organisations interviewed can be found in Attachment D.

Survey instruments were refined and finalised in discussion with the client using a team of key advisors and consultants and volunteers representative of the client base. The survey instruments can be found in Attachment E, and include:

- generic cover note and consent form;
- survey instrument for use with education agencies responsible for the delivery of education services;
- and survey instrument for stakeholder organisations.

The client distributed the document to members of the senior officials group and, through them, to jurisdictions. Additionally, direct contact was made by letter from the Review Team, and by
key advisors seeking interviews. Key advisors conducted the interviews, reporting against the survey instrument. Indigenous Education Consultative Bodies (IECBs) met nationally and responded directly to key advisors.

Results were collated and reported against the key research questions.

**Contemporary writings**

Appropriate national and international literature sources, including a comprehensive search of the World Wide Web, were identified, analysed, and the results summarised. Special emphasis was placed on contemporary and international writings, and these are referenced directly.

**Progress reports and document review**

The client provided a confidential report summarising progress by jurisdictions in implementing the recommendations contained in *Australian Directions*. In addition, each jurisdiction provided copies of related policy and planning documents. These were analysed and the outcomes summarised.

**Case studies**

Case studies were not undertaken due to time constraints. Instead, jurisdictions and the Catholic and independent school sectors were invited to each submit two examples of good practice against the domains and recommendations of *Australian Directions* (Attachment F).

While the number and diversity of case studies put forward illustrate the depth and breadth of engagement with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander education across Australia, the evidence that these have achieved increased improvement and outcomes for Indigenous students is scarce.

**Quantitative data collection**

The client provided a 75 page confidential data snapshot and analysis of Indigenous student outcomes against key indicators of participation and achievement over the last ten years (‘Summary Report on National Indicators Relating to Indigenous Outcomes in Education and Training in Australia’, June 17, 2009). The report, prepared by Shelby Consulting, was commissioned by the WA Department of Education and Training to support this review. Some jurisdictions provided more detailed local data during the interviews.

**Quantitative data collection and assessment: sources and targets**

There are several common and major references for data collection in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander education: all valid. The potential references are to:

- Measures contained or implied within *Australian Directions*;
- Measures routinely reported upon by a range of other agencies; and
• Targets set by the latest agreements through the Council of Australian Governments (COAG).

Measures from Australian Directions

Because of its historical context and purpose, Australian Directions contains many references to improving student outcomes without providing precise, quantifiable detail. Many of its recommendations are expressed as aspirational targets or strategies, rather than as actual or absolute outcome measures. For example, the document refers to:

• making progress towards providing all Indigenous children with access to two years of high quality early childhood education prior to participation in the first year of formal schooling (2006: 5), and
• providing support to develop data and assessment literacy in school leaders and teachers to support evidence-based improvement planning (2006: 26); and
• developing strategies to attract and retain high quality teachers, especially in regional and remote communities with high Indigenous student enrolments (2006: 26).

Although no absolute targets are given, more specific performance indicators are found further on in the document, with reference to:

• percentage of Indigenous children assessed as ready for formal schooling in literacy and numeracy (2006:30);
• proportion of Indigenous students achieving national benchmarks and proficiency standards in English literacy and numeracy (2006: 30);
• apparent retention rates of Indigenous students from Years 7–8 to Years 9, 10, 11 and 12 (2006: 30); and
• percentage of Year 12 Indigenous students achieving a Year 12 Certificate (as a proportion of the number of Indigenous students who commenced Year 11 as full-time students in the previous year) (2006: 30).

Many of the recommendations in Australian Directions are directed at enabling strategies that require qualitative narrative and cannot be quantified. Therefore, there is extensive reliance in this report on reports received from jurisdictions for comment on progress towards the recommendations contained within Australian Directions.

The Review Team thus combined this information with references to quantifiable data, principally obtained from sources set out in the section of this report on data analysis, using them as background for more detailed discussions with jurisdictions prompted by the Survey Instruments (as per Attachment D). This combination of sources informed the narrative description on policy directions and recommendations.

Measures from other agencies

More detailed, quantifiable measures have been routinely reported upon by a range of other agencies, including the ABS, DEST, MCEETYA and the Report of the Steering Committee for the Review of Government Service Provision, Productivity Commission, Overcoming Indigenous disadvantage: key indicators.
In this report, and as required by the contract, the Review Team centred on the latest analysis of national datasets, provided by the client through Shelby Consulting. This report indicates that certain key [English] literacy measures have changed and are not directly comparable with those of previous years. Our section on data refers mainly to this report.

**COAG targets**

A final source of measures for analysis was drawn from targets set by the latest agreements through the Council of Australian Governments (COAG), which are arranged hierarchically, cascading from the Intergovernmental Agreement for Federal Financial Reform through to National Partnerships, Agreements and Specific Purpose Payments.

The major measures of relevance are commonly referred to by COAG as ‘closing the gap’, but important further detail has been set out in a series of national agreements and partnerships, some of which are changing.

Outcome indicators were drawn from COAG’s *Closing the Gap* because:

- the indicators are major, defined by superordinate government policy;
- they were identified in the contract as current, key outcome indicators; and
- they set absolute, actual measures for the targets described earlier and quoted from page 30 of *Australian Directions*. 
ATTACHMENT B - CONTEMPORARY WRITINGS

This review explores contemporary writings addressing the education of Indigenous students internationally, and in Australia. It seeks to identify pathways that have significant potential to improve learning outcomes. The record of the past decade shows that ‘more of the same’ is unlikely to achieve equity. The experience of Indigenous education reform in Australia, Canada, New Zealand and the USA is that a raft of government inquiries, consequent changes in policy, and substantial increases in funding have not delivered the desired results. From an Australian perspective, Gray and Beresford (2008) argue that the goal of equity in outcomes remains a distant one, notwithstanding exponential growth in government engagement and expenditure. They note, in fact, that a plateau effect is now evident, with Indigenous school performance settling into a pattern of small, incremental improvements.

In seeking new visions and new directions for Indigenous education, there is one essential caveat: such an endeavour cannot be separated from the broader socio-cultural conditions of Indigenous peoples. Children’s school learning is deeply interconnected with their family’s health, economic, social and employment status. Broader socioeconomic disadvantage must be addressed concurrently with any education reform initiatives. Even when an inter-sectoral approach is taken, Gray and Beresford (2008: 215) still question “…whether it is within the scope of public policy to deal with a problem as complex, multidimensional, and embedded as closing the gap in educational disadvantage for Indigenous young people”. They continue: “Certainly, all the indicators suggest it is a formidable challenge [for which] Australia, Canada and the USA have not yet achieved a resolution”.

The difficulty for public policy in developing effective solutions may be intrinsic to its modus operandi. Public policy typically is formulated and implemented hierarchically, with control vested in governments and other public institutions. It is rare indeed for these institutions to hand power to local communities, or to promote ‘bottom-up’ solutions. Yet this is exactly what many writers are advocating as the most effective pathway to improving Indigenous learning outcomes. Brayboy and Castagno (2009), for example, writing about Indigenous education in the USA, argue convincingly for self-determination through community empowerment. They document a wide range of case studies of successful programs based on local ownership and control.

Most political systems in Australia and elsewhere have been deeply reluctant to empower Indigenous peoples to be self-determining, especially when significant expenditure is involved. Canada and the USA have moved further than Australia towards policies of self-determination by way of legislation mandating some degree of Indigenous control over education. Gray and Beresford (2008), however, suggest that in both countries self-determination has proven more illusory than real, mainly because of restrictions on funding.

Reluctance to empower Indigenous people is also evident at school and classroom level, where principals and teachers normally manage and control curriculum content and processes, often relegating family and community involvement to extra-curricular learning. Brayboy and Castagno (2009), however, argue that reconstruction of cultural and social relations of power and knowledge in schools, classrooms and communities can generate sustainable improvements in Indigenous student achievement.
Indigenous self-determination is a key theme of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (2007). Unlike Canada, the USA and New Zealand, Australia is now a signatory (as of 03 April 2009), and therefore committed to fulfilling the spirit and intent of its 46 articles. The implications of this for education are far-reaching. Article 14, in particular, enunciates:

1. Indigenous peoples have the right to establish and control their educational systems and institutions, providing education in their own languages, in a manner appropriate to their cultural methods of teaching and learning.
2. Indigenous individuals, particularly children, have the right to all levels and forms of education of the State without discrimination.
3. States shall, in conjunction with indigenous peoples, take effective measures, in order for Indigenous individuals, particularly children, including those living outside their communities, to have access, when possible, to an education in their own culture and provided in their own language. (UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, 2007: 7)

One of the most strongly recurring themes in contemporary writings on Indigenous self-determination and empowerment in education is that of cultural safety, often promoted through ‘Culturally Responsive Pedagogy’ or ‘Culturally Responsive Schooling’. As Bishop et al (in press: 8) explain, this involves the creation of a learning context that is responsive to the culture of the child, allowing learners to “…bring who they are to the classroom in complete safety and where their knowledge is acceptable and legitimate”. Drawing on the work of Gay (2000), Brayboy & Castagno (2009) define Culturally Responsive Schooling (CRS) as pedagogy that ‘makes sense’ to students by recognising, respecting and using their cultural identities and backgrounds to create optimal learning environments.

Can culturally safe and responsive classrooms linked to broader policies of self-determination in Indigenous education significantly improve student learning outcomes and achieve equity? This is a daunting question, especially in the current Australian education policy context, with its emphasis on a new national curriculum and an expanded role for test-driven accountability using international benchmarks. The question will become even more daunting if, as Luke (2009) suggests, Australia develops its own version of UK and US policies of funding by test results, and re-regulation of teachers’ work via merit pay based on student performance.

The question certainly highlights the deep, inherent tension between current Australian public policy in education and the needs of Indigenous students and their families. This tension, however, need not be counterproductive. The answers lie in a search for alternative policy approaches based on the principles of self-determination underlying the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (2007), approaches that lead to the development of cultural-based and community-focused models that yield improved educational outcomes for Indigenous learners (Luke, 2009). The search has already begun, initial findings are being reported, and a glimmer of optimism is emerging in the literature.

In New Zealand, McNaughton and Lai (2009) and Lai et al (2009) report a series of studies being undertaken by researchers from the University of Auckland in partnership with schools, communities and policy personnel. The aim is to improve achievement levels in the reading comprehension of Māori and Pasifika students in Years 4 to 8. The work involves program implementation and replication with over 10,000 students, 250 teachers and 48 schools. Central to the studies is a model of school change based on several key principles, including:
(i) Teachers need to be able to act as adaptive experts; i.e., rather than simply employing scripted lessons, they are trained to selectively and strategically apply known instructional procedures that they constantly refine to be more effective. In particular, teachers require knowledge and versatility to adapt to the local cultural and linguistic identities and practices of their Indigenous students and communities.

(ii) Instructional design should be based on local evidence about teaching and learning; i.e., curriculum content and process should be culturally contextualised.

Essentially, the members of the University of Auckland team are seeking to bridge the policy gap between test-driven accountability and culturally responsive schooling. Their work is noteworthy for its scale and sophistication: it is based on extensive standardised testing and rigorous statistical analysis and reporting (see especially Lai et al, 2009). Yet it is also deeply culturally grounded. Of particular interest is the emphasis on localised patterns of instruction (Lai et al, 2009). In each of the replication studies, different instructional programs have emerged in response to local cultural and identity needs; i.e., the unique cultural, linguistic and identity profiles of each community have resulted in significant variations in curriculum process.

McNaughton & Lai (2009: 70) report that the level of gains in the initial study and in subsequent replications was consistently “… in the order of one year’s gain in addition to the nationally expected progress over three years”. They believe these improvements in reading comprehension to be substantial, especially in comparison with other attempts to improve Indigenous literacy in New Zealand and internationally. They conclude, overall, that levels of achievement at the target schools have increased considerably, and that these gains can be attributed with some confidence to the effects of their intervention.

A second attempt to achieve sustainable learning outcomes for Māori students in New Zealand is that of Bishop and his colleagues at the University of Waikato (Bishop & Berryman, 2006; Bishop et al, 2007a, 2007b, in press). The Waikato team is conducting a substantial, long-term, action study to improve the secondary school performance of Māori students in mainstream education. Their work began in 2001 with an extensive process of listening to the voices of Māori students, as well as the voices of teachers, principals and local Māori communities. Bishop et al (in press: 2) describe their work as an “…Indigenous Peoples’ solution to the problems of educational disparities … that aims to improve the educational achievement of Māori students through operationalizing Māori people’s cultural aspirations for self-determination …”.

Drawing on their analyses of the narratives of experience of Māori students and families, Bishop et al (in press: 3) concluded that educators need to create learning contexts within their classrooms:

…where power is shared between self-determining individuals within non-dominating relations of interdependence; where culture counts; where learning is interactive, dialogic and spirals; where participants are connected to one another through the establishment of a common vision for what constitutes excellence in educational outcomes.

Based on Gay’s (2000) writings on CRS, the Waikato team defined their approach as a “Culturally Responsive Pedagogy of Relations”, developing a practical representation in the form of an Effective Teaching Profile (ETP). The ETP essentially sets out the qualities that
teachers require if they are to establish positive relationships with Māori students. There are two fundamentals to the ETP. The first is teachers “…understanding the need to explicitly reject deficit theorising as a means of explaining Māori students’ educational achievement levels…” (Bishop et al, 2007a: 1). The second is teachers recognising their own individual responsibility to be agents of change in the classroom.

The Waikato team used the ETP for the second phase of their research, embarking on an extensive program of in-service development with 122 teachers over a full range of curriculum subjects. The program involved workshops, regular classroom observations and follow-up feedback, group co-construction meetings and targeted shadow coaching. The aim was to significantly expand the number of effective teachers in the 12 participating secondary schools. At the same time, a research program monitored the impact on student achievement using multiple indicators based on qualitative and quantitative measures. The results showed significant improvements in teacher effectiveness, as well as significant gains in students’ literacy and numeracy, especially amongst lower achieving students.

The work of Bishop and his colleagues is deserving of careful analysis. Internationally, it is one of the most sustained and impressive attempts by Indigenous people to enhance the learning of Indigenous students using a culturally responsive model based on principles of self-determination in mainstream settings operating within a national accountability framework. The focus on teachers is especially significant. Most research evidence suggests that teacher effects account for much of the explained variance in student achievement. The Waikato team clearly has demonstrated that teacher quality can be improved, and that improved teacher performance does have a genuine impact on Indigenous student learning.

Bishop’s second substantial contribution is theoretical. As an Indigenous educator and researcher he has grounded his work deeply in Māori culture, values and epistemology. The concept of spirals in an earlier quote is based on his understanding of Māori holistic learning as an outwardly spiralling and expanding process of lifelong learning and knowledge acquisition. He believes that alternative pedagogies can be developed for Māori students based on such cultural understandings. He is absolutely clear that:

… the means of addressing the seemingly immutable educational disparities that plague Māori students … actually lie elsewhere than in mainstream education. The answers lie in the sense-making and knowledge-generating processes of the [Māori] culture. … The power of counter-narratives such as kaupapa Māori … is such that alternative pedagogies that are both appropriate and responsive can be developed out of the culture-sense making processes of people previously marginalised … (Bishop et al, in press: 8)

There appear to be no current studies in the USA and Canada of comparable scale and rigour to those in New Zealand. The most recent review of relevant literature is reported by Castagno & Brayboy (2008) and Brayboy & Castagno (2009). In a wide-ranging analysis they have assessed the extent to which culturally responsive Indigenous schooling in North America (including Alaska and Hawai‘i) has succeeded in providing greater equity within a policy context of curriculum standardisation and high-stakes accountability, driven in the USA by the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act of 2001. They conclude that, overall, NCLB is resulting in less rather than more efforts to implement CRS, and more rather than less of the >650,000 Indigenous students in US schools being left behind.
Castagno & Brayboy (2008) and Brayboy & Castagno (2009) do provide case studies of sustained attempts to implement CRS. What is notable, however, especially when compared with the New Zealand studies reported above, is the lack of rigorous research and evaluation. An impressive array of programs has been implemented. Successful outcomes are reported in almost every case. Yet overall the causal links are weak, with few studies making strong claims about the impact of CRS on students’ academic performance. Castagno & Brayboy (2008) conclude from their evidence that positive learning outcomes generally are achieved when CRS programs are implemented, although the complex nature of the relationships between language, culture, curriculum, pedagogy and learning is still not fully understood.

On the basis of their review, Brayboy and Castagno argue in favour of a more systematic, rigorous and research-based approach to implementing CRS. In particular they consider the following to be critical to the success of Indigenous students:

- An explicit focus on sovereignty and self-determination, expressed via local ownership and control of education;
- Recognition of the legitimacy of local norms, values and epistemologies, and their integration into all aspects of schooling;
- Culturally contextualised curriculum content and processes; and
- Greater attention to the pre- and in-service preparation of effective teachers, both Indigenous and non-Indigenous.

Similar conclusions are reached by Beaulieu (2006), a Minnesota Chippewa and former Director of the US Office of Indian Education, in his assessment of culturally based education programs for Indigenous students. Additionally, he argues against the reform of existing schools in favour of redesigning them within the sociocultural fabric of families and communities. To achieve this, he recommends the development of:

- local standards for the education of Indigenous students;
- curricular approaches consistent with locally defined education objectives;
- accreditation standards that allow evaluation of achievements within the context of accountability to the local community and its elders; and
- local research that informs community members and school educators.

McCarty (2008, 2009) takes a different perspective. Instead of starting with alternative policy approaches such as CRS, she explores how accountability might be adapted to the cultural contexts of Indigenous learners. Her review examines research on the impacts of high-stake accountability policies on Native American learners in the USA, focusing especially on the NCLB Act of 2001. Notwithstanding its laudable goals, she argues that NCLB has become one of the most problematic education reforms in US history, especially for Indigenous students. She attributes this to its high-stakes accountability system, based exclusively on standardised tests of English.

McCarty’s review is incisive. It deserves to be studied with care by Australia’s education policy makers. Based on wide-ranging analyses of quantitative data, she concludes that:

…there is no consistent evidence that high-stakes accountability policies improve academic achievement or ameliorate education disparities. Indeed, a large body of evidence indicates
that the achievement gap is widening due to unchecked economic disparities and the adoption of strategies designed to avoid high-stakes penalties. (McCarty, 2009: 22)

With mounting pressure to comply with NCLB accountability, McCarty believes that some Indigenous communities are reaffirming their tribal sovereignty and rights to self-determination under US law. In particular, they are insisting on retaining control over their schools and ensuring the curriculum is infused with local linguistic and cultural content. Many have local language revitalisation as a high priority. McCarty offers three case studies. In each context the curriculum is grounded in local identity, culture and language, yet aims for academic success as measured by broad-based accountability practices:

(i) The Nāwahīokalaniʻōpuʻu Laboratory School, in Hawaiʻi, offers programs from early childhood education to upper secondary. All subjects are taught through Hawaiʻian language and values, with a strong emphasis on cultural revitalisation alongside academic achievement. Students consistently surpass non-immersion peers in other schools on English standardised tests. McCarty (2009: 23) reports that the school leaders attribute the school’s successes to: “…an academically challenging curriculum that applies knowledge to daily life and is rooted in Hawaiʻian identity and culture”.

(ii) Tséhootsooí Diné Bi’ólta’ (TDB) is a Navajo K to 8 school with all instruction in the lower grades, including initial literacy, in the local language, with English introduced in second grade and gradually increased until, by grade 6, it is used in half of the teaching program. McCarty (2009: 24) notes that the TDB curriculum incorporates both “…tribal standards for Navajo language and culture and content-area standards required by the state”. Longitudinal data show that students consistently outperform their peers in English-only classrooms on local and state-mandated assessments in English literacy, writing and mathematics; i.e., they achieve a deep grounding in Navajo language, values and cultural knowledge without cost to their English language development and academic achievement (McCarty, 2009).

(iii) Puente de Hózhó is a dual immersion public school in Arizona offering parallel bilingual programs for Navajo and Spanish-speaking students. The school emphasises that its mission is to build bilingual, biliterate and bicultural competence. As at TDB, Navajo students are taught in the local language, with English gradually introduced until a 50/50 balance is achieved in grades 4 to 8. The school is noteworthy for its exceptionally high levels of parent5 involvement. Again, performances on standardised tests show Navajo students outperforming peers in monolingual English programs elsewhere in the state (McCarty, 2009).

From her analysis of the above case studies, McCarty seeks to identify alternatives to NCLB standardisation and accountability policies; alternatives that promote fair, equitable and culturally responsive approaches to schooling. Borrowing from the work of Crawford (2007) she explores the notion of ‘authentic accountability’, arguing that Indigenous families and communities should be at the centre of school accountability and curriculum reform; i.e., that federal and state authorities should hold schools and communities accountable for providing high quality instruction and assessment. This can be achieved, as Crawford (2007) advocates, via

5 Parent – includes caregiver, guardian.
authentic accountability, which he defines as a coordinated plan based on local values and needs. In particular, authentic accountability should be:

- **Accurate, reliable and valid**: schools should adopt multiple measures and alternative assessments using locally developed indicators and student portfolios.
- **Reasonable**: schools need to be judged on academic growth over time, not on arbitrary proficiency measures, and over sufficient long periods to achieve longer-term goals.
- **Equitable**: accountability should be tailored to the unique needs and characteristics of diverse learners.
- **Balanced**: accountability should include both ‘outputs’ (test scores) and ‘inputs’ (curriculum content and process).
- **Flexible**: pedagogical judgments should be left to educators in consultation with parents, and based on local knowledge and needs.
- **Constructive**: there should be an emphasis on capacity building to better serve the needs of students and parents.
- **Decentralised**: accountability should be locally designed, incorporating qualitative and quantitative measures.

To this list, McCarty (2008) adds:

- **Culturally based**: the revitalisation of local languages and cultures should be paramount, via the systematic teaching and assessment of Indigenous languages and cultures in schools (see also McCarty et al, 2006).

Writing from an Australian perspective, Klenowski (2009) takes a broadly similar approach, arguing in favour of accountability measures that are equitable and culture-fair. She theorises assessment as a sociocultural issue rather than a technical matter, with learning viewed as socially negotiated and embedded within a cultural community:

> A sociocultural view of knowing accepts that there are cultural differences in the nature of learning, differences in what is viewed as valued knowledge and the way individuals connect with previous generations and draw on cultural legacies… To enable learners to develop new insights teachers have to distinguish the funds of knowledge that students draw on and adopt a culturally responsive pedagogy that opens up the curriculum and assessment, and in so doing allows for different ways of knowing and being. (Klenowski, 2009: 90)

Hughes, More and Williams (2004) say that Indigenous students may see this as initiation and manipulation of their learning, and teachers as impolite and pushy.

It is clear that ‘more of the same’ is unlikely to improve Indigenous schooling outcomes in Australia. A new policy framework is required, based on the spirit and intent of the recently signed United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (2007). The key theme of the Declaration is Indigenous self-determination. Article 14 specifically enunciates the rights of Indigenous peoples to establish and control their educational systems and to deliver education in their own languages, in a manner appropriate to their cultural methods of teaching and learning.
Recent research evidence from New Zealand and North America is beginning to show that Indigenous self-determination and empowerment in education can yield improved education outcomes. A key theme of current initiatives is cultural safety, generally promoted through the idea of culturally responsive schooling; i.e., the creation of a teaching/learning environment that is responsive to the culture of the child.

In 1994, Damien Howard discussed the concept of culturally responsive classrooms in urban schools as a way to assist Aboriginal students who have a hearing loss. Howard suggests two aspects of culturally responsive pedagogy:

1. teaching that utilises Indigenous students’ culturally derived learning skills by teaching in ways Indigenous students can best learn; and
2. consciously teaching how to learn from Western schooling, in order that students’ access to the educational opportunities available in Western schooling is enhanced (1994: 43).

To teach in this way is a model of self-determination, and steers what happens in the classroom away from the mutual disengagement of teacher and student that both Harrison (2008) and Howard (1994) discuss.

In a ‘top-down’ Australian public policy environment that is moving increasingly to curriculum standardisation and test-driven accountability in education, the idea of self-determination might seem contradictory. Yet the current research evidence, especially from New Zealand, is suggesting that Indigenous student learning can be enhanced using a culturally responsive model based on principles of self-determination in mainstream settings operating within a national accountability framework.

From a US perspective, McCarty (2008, 2009) provides evidence that public accountability can be adapted to the cultural contexts of Indigenous learners using an approach based on Crawford’s (2007) notion of ‘authentic accountability’, arguing that Indigenous families and communities should be at the centre of school accountability, curriculum reform and local language revitalisation. Klenowski (2009) agrees, advocating a view of learning and assessment as socially negotiated and embedded within local cultural communities. Ah Sam and Ackland in an earlier work (2005), emphasise the absolute necessity of schools building relationships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, their families and communities. So too does Karen Martin, who is an advocate for the essential theme of relatedness (2005: 27).
REFERENCES


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The Independent School Council of Australia  
National Catholic Education Commission  
Australian Curriculum Studies Association  
Christian Independent School Association  
Australian Education Union  
Australian College of Education  
National Aboriginal Community Control Health Organisation  
The Indigenous Higher Education Advisory Council  
MCEECDYA Reference Group on Indigenous Education  
Indigenous Workforce Subgroup of the MCEECDYA Quality Sustainable Teacher Workforce Working Group  
MCEECDYA National Pre-Service Teacher Accreditation Working Group  
COAG Working Group on Indigenous Reform  
COAG Senior Officials Working Group on Jobs and Young People Federation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Languages  
Secretariat of National Aboriginal and Islander Child Care Organisation  
National meeting of Indigenous Education Consultative Bodies  
Principals Australia – Dare to Lead  
What Works  
Curriculum Corporation: The Le@rning Federation |
|---|---|
| NSW | NSW Department of Education and Training  
Catholic Education Office  
Independent Schools Association  
NSW Aboriginal Education Consultative Group  
Vocational Education and Training Accreditation Board  
Board of Studies  
NSW Teachers Federation  
Principals Australia  NSW Branch – Dare to Lead Program NSW |
| VIC | Victorian Department of Education and Early Childhood Development  
The Office of Training and Tertiary Education  
Catholic Education Office  
Independent Schools Association  
Victorian Branch Australian Education Union  
Victorian Aboriginal Education Association  
Australian Principals Association – Dare to Lead Program VIC  
National Curriculum Services  
Curriculum Corporation: The Le@rning Federation |
QLD
QLD Department of Education, Training and the Arts
Catholic Education Office
Independent Schools Association
Qld Indigenous Education Consultative Committee
QLD Teachers Union
Training and Employment Recognition Council
Principals Australia – Qld Branch – Dare to Lead Program QLD
Stronger Smarter Inc and Associates

SA
SA Department of Education and Children’s Services
Catholic Education Office
Independent Schools Association
SA Indigenous Education Consultative Committee
Secondary Schools Assessment Board, SA
Australian Education Union SA Branch
Training and Skills Commission
Australian Principals Association SA Branch – Dare to Lead Program SA
Principals Australia – Leaders Lead National Coordinator, APAPDC
Aboriginal Child Health Organisation

WA
WA Department of Education and Training
Catholic Education Office
Independent Schools Association
Curriculum Council
WA Aboriginal Education and Training Council
State School Teachers Union WA
Training Accreditation Council
Telethon Institute
WA Primary Principals Association – Dare to Lead Program
WA Primary Principals Association, Leading From the Front Program

TAS
Tasmania Department of Education
Catholic Education Office
Independent Schools Association
Tasmanian Aboriginal Education Association
Australian Education Union Tasmanian Branch
Tasmanian Qualifications Authority
Principals Australia Tasmanian Branch – Dare to Lead Program TAS
| NT                          | NT Department of Employment, Education and Training  
|                            | Catholic Education Office  
|                            | Independent Schools Association  
|                            | NT Indigenous Education Council  
|                            | Australian Education Union NT Branch  
|                            | Principals Australia Territory Branch – Dare to Lead Program NT |
| ACT                        | ACT Department of Education and Training  
|                            | Catholic Education Office  
|                            | Independent Schools Association  
|                            | ACT Indigenous Education Consultative Body  
|                            | Australian Education Union ACT  
|                            | ACT Accreditation and Registration Council  
|                            | Principals Australia ACT Branch – Dare to Lead Program ACT |
## ATTACHMENT D – INTERVIEWS

### Jurisdiction

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Jurisdiction</th>
<th>Organizations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| National     | Australian Government Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations  
               | National Catholic Education Commission Canberra  
               | Australian Education Union  
               | Principals Australia – Dare to Lead  
               | Indigenous Education Consultative Bodies – National Meeting  
               | Australian Information and Communications Technology in Education Committee |
| NSW          | NSW Department of Education and Training  
               | Catholic Education Office  
               | Association of Independent Schools  
               | Abbotsleigh, a K-12 Anglican and Boarding School  
               | NSW Aboriginal Education Consultative Group  
               | Board of Studies  
               | NSW Teachers Federation  
               | NSW TAFE |
| VIC          | Victorian Department of Education and Early Childhood Development  
               | (Central Office and Northern Metropolitan Region)  
               | TAFE, Victoria. |
| QLD          | QLD Department of Education, Training and the Arts  
               | Catholic Education Commission  
               | Independent Schools, Queensland  
               | Qld Indigenous Education Consultative Body  
               | QLD Teachers Union  
               | Queensland College of Teachers |
| SA           | SA Department of Education and Children’s Services  
               | Catholic Education Office  
               | Independent Schools Authority  
               | Secondary Schools Assessment Board, SA  
               | Australian Education Union SA Branch  
               | Dare to Lead Program, SA base for national organisation |
| WA           | WA Department of Education and Training  
               | Catholic Education Office  
               | Independent Schools Association  
               | WA Aboriginal Education and Training Council |
TAS
Tasmania Department of Education
Catholic Education Office
Association of Independent Schools
Tasmanian Aboriginal Education Association
Australian Education Union Tasmanian Branch
Tasmanian Qualifications Authority
Principals Australia Tasmanian Branch – Dare to Lead
Tasmanian Principals Association, President

NT
NT Department of Employment, Education and Training
Catholic Education Office
Association of Independent Schools
NT Indigenous Education Council

ACT
ACT Department of Education and Training
Catholic Education Office
Australian Education Union ACT Branch
ATTACHMENT E – SURVEY INSTRUMENTS

University of South Australia

REVIEW OF AUSTRALIAN DIRECTIONS IN INDIGENOUS EDUCATION 2005–2008

Conducted by the David Unaipon College of Indigenous Education and Research, University of South Australia for the Western Australian Department of Education and Training

To Respondent as addressed

Dear...........................................

STAKEHOLDER CONSULTATIONS

PURPOSE

The purpose of our research is to provide a report for MCEECDYA on the effectiveness of Australian Directions in improving outcomes in Indigenous education. The report will include recommendations on priorities for future collaborative work to be undertaken by education authorities in the government, Catholic and independent school sectors to maintain a strategic approach and reduce duplication of effort and to meet targets set by the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) to ‘close the gap’ between the educational outcomes of Indigenous students and their peers.

The educational targets are:

• All Indigenous four year olds, including those living in remote communities, will have access to a quality early childhood education program within five years.
• Halve the gap in reading, writing and numeracy for Indigenous children within a decade.
• Halve the gap for Indigenous students in attainment at Year 12 schooling (or equivalent level) by 2020.

WHY HAVE YOU BEEN SELECTED?

Your organisation is one of several that have been identified by our researchers as having an important role to play in the effective delivery of Indigenous education.

Your participation is entirely voluntary and we appreciate time is valuable. We have endeavoured to limit our questions in the attached survey instrument accordingly. We invite your confidential written response around these questions by.....(insert date).............in the first instance. Our researchers may follow up by asking for a meeting, in which case you will be contacted directly.

Please email your response to peter.buckskin@unisa.edu.au using "Review of Australian Directions in Indigenous Education 2005–2008" in the title box, or mail to:

**Professor Peter Buckskin**  
David Unaipon College of Indigenous Education and Research  
GPO Box 2471  
ADELAIDE SA 5001

Further information can be obtained by contacting members of the research team assigned to your jurisdiction, viz:

NNNNNNNNNNNN, contact details

and

MMMMMMMMMMM, contact details

I look forward to receiving your response.

Yours faithfully

Professor Peter Buckskin
Consent Form

REVIEW OF AUSTRALIAN DIRECTIONS IN INDIGENOUS EDUCATION 2005–2008

Conducted by the David Unaipon College of Indigenous Education and Research, University of South Australia for the Western Australian Department of Education and Training

• I have read the Participant Information Sheet and the nature and purpose of the research project has been explained to me. I understand and agree to take part.

• I understand the purpose of the research project and my involvement in it.

• I understand that I may withdraw from the research project at any stage and that this will not affect my status now or in the future.

• I understand that while information gained during the study may be published, I will not be identified and my personal input will remain confidential.

• I understand that I will be audio-taped during the interview.

• I understand that the recording will be stored for University audit purposes at the David Unaipon College of Indigenous Education and Research for a period of five years. It will remain confidential to the research team. Auditors may access the recording to verify that it occurred, but I will not be identified and my personal input will remain confidential.

Participants under the age of 18 require parental consent to be involved in research.

Name of participant .................................................................

Signed .................................................................Date ................................

I have provided information about the research to the research participant and believe that he/she understands what is involved.

Researcher’s name .................................................................

Researcher’s signature and date .................................................................
SURVEY INSTRUMENT FOR STAKEHOLDER CONSULTATIONS

Participant’s Name: _____________________________________________________

Organisation: __________________________________________________________

Participant’s role within the organisation: _________________________________

Time and date: _________________________________________________________

Researcher’s Name: _____________________________________________________

Researcher Notes:
(1) Researcher to seek consent from participant for interview to be recorded.

(2) Where possible, discussion and responses to questions should be made with consideration to the five Australian Directions critical domain areas:
   · early childhood education;
   · school and community educational partnerships;
   · school leadership;
   · quality teaching; and
   · pathways to training, employment and higher education.

For example, what evidence is there of progress in these areas, how has that been assisted by Australian Directions, and what advice does the agency or organisation have for future directions?
INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. What impact has *Australian Directions* had on policy development?

2. Have any programs been modified as a result of *Australian Directions*?

3. What impact has *Australian Directions* had on Indigenous student outcomes? Are you able to provide any evidence of improved outcomes in the form of key performance indicators? (other than that which already appears in published reports, such as the annual national report on schooling in Australia and INDIGO) eg. Internal data on retention, participation and achievement.

Please respond in relation to the five domain areas:

- Early childhood education:
- School and community educational partnerships:
- School leadership:
- Quality teaching:
- Pathways to training, employment and higher education:

4. What progress has been made in moving from a deficit to an inclusive view of Indigenous education?

5. What factors do you believe are critical to ensuring that Indigenous education is ‘built in’ to core business?

6. Do you have suggestions for case studies in any of the five domains which are suitable illustrations of good practice for inclusion in a national report aimed at improving outcomes for the education of Indigenous children?

7. Can you please describe some of the key supportive or inhibitive factors which impact on improved outcomes in the five domains?

8. Is it desirable to update *Australian Directions*? If Yes, what should be included?

9. What should be the priorities for future collaborative work to be undertaken amongst education authorities in the government, Catholic and Independent sectors to maintain a strategic approach and reduce duplication of effort in improving outcomes in Indigenous education?
SURVEY INSTRUMENT FOR STAKEHOLDER CONSULTATIONS

Participant’s Name: _____________________________________________________

Organisation: __________________________________________________________

Participant’s role within the organisation: __________________________________

Time and date: _________________________________________________________

Researcher’s Name: _____________________________________________________

Researcher Notes:

(1) Researcher to seek consent from participant for interview to be recorded.

(2) Where possible, discussion and responses to questions should be made with consideration to the five Australian Directions critical domain areas:

- early childhood education;
- school and community educational partnerships;
- school leadership;
- quality teaching; and
- pathways to training, employment and higher education.

For example, what evidence is there of progress in these areas, how has that been assisted by Australian Directions, and what advice does the agency or organisation have for future directions?
INTERVIEW QUESTIONS – organisations

This list is a guide only. Some organisations have a very specific role with aspects of Australian Directions, and that will guide responses.

1. What aspects of Australian Directions has your organisation engaged with? Please respond in relation to the major recommendations which impact on five domain areas:
   - Early childhood education:
   - School and community educational partnerships:
   - School leadership:
   - Quality teaching:
   - Pathways to training, employment and higher education:

2. What progress has been made in moving from a deficit to an inclusive view of Indigenous education?

3. What factors do you believe are critical to ensuring that Indigenous education is ‘built in’ to core business?

4. Do you have suggestions for case studies in any of the five domains which are suitable illustrations of good practice for inclusion in a national report aimed at improving outcomes for the education of Indigenous children?

5. Can you please describe some of the key supportive or inhibitive factors which impact on improved outcomes in the five domains?

6. Is it desirable to update Australian Directions? If Yes, what should be included?

7. What should be the priorities for future collaborative work to be undertaken amongst education authorities in the government, Catholic and Independent sectors [to maintain a strategic approach and reduce duplication of effort in improving outcomes in Indigenous education]?
ATTACHMENT F - GOOD PRACTICE EXAMPLES AGAINST THE DOMAINS AND SOME KEY RECOMMENDATIONS OF AUSTRALIAN DIRECTIONS IN INDIGENOUS EDUCATION 2005–2008
KOORIE PRESCHOOL PROGRAM

Australian Directions, Early Childhood Education, Recommendation 2.1

Aim
The Koori Preschool Program aims to provide high quality early childhood education for Aboriginal children and Torres Strait Islander children aged 3-5 years. The program engages parents or caregivers and supports the inclusion of younger siblings.

Description
The program has expanded since 2005 and is now available on five sites across the ACT to increase opportunities for family access. The target group is 3-5 year old children, however, children under three are able to attend when accompanied by a parent or carer.

The program targets three areas of development. These are Standard Australian English literacy, numeracy skills, and capacity to make successful transitions to preschool and other formal school settings. The foundation of success is built on the development of strong and productive relationships between staff and families. The supportive and caring environment provided by the program enables families to build their capacity to advocate for their children and feel valued in a variety of settings.

The program aims to be culturally relevant for each child. Each delivery site has a teacher and an Indigenous Home School Liaison Officer attached to the program. The officer is vitally important in engaging and supporting families in their child’s education.

Key Outputs
- The initial three hours of Koori Preschool per week has been increased to nine hours and access to any other preschools program is available to every age eligible preschool child. This means preschool hours of an additional nine in a second Koori Preschool or a further 15 hours in the mainstream provision.
- Koori Preschool staff provide workshops, visits, resources and advice to local preschool teachers to support the inclusion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and a culturally relevant environment in their program.
- Koori Preschool Program teachers hold transition meetings with teachers and schools from a variety of settings in order to support successful transitions to further preschool or school for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children.
- A range of health services are offered to children and their families.
- Increased capacity from 75 to 100 children to access the Koori Preschool Program.

Key Outcomes
- An increase of 28% from 2007 to 2009 in preschool enrolment for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children.
- An increase from 68% to 77% from 2008 to 2009 in the average rate of attendance.
- Performance indicators in primary school data show that children are entering Kindergarten with a strong foundation upon which to build in their first year of formal schooling. In 2008, 40% of children were assessed at an average preparedness level or above whilst in 2009, 63% of children were assessed at that level or above.

Further Information
Contact: Lyndall Read at lyndall.read@act.gov.au
Website: www.det.act.gov.au
Government Sector, Northern Territory
Department of Education and Training

CLOSING THE GAP MOBILE PRESCHOOLS
Australian Directions, Early Childhood Education, Recommendation 2.1, 2.2

Aim
Closing the Gap aims to provide children with the best possible start to life through preschool and early education programs in preparation for school.

Description
Mobile preschools provide Indigenous 3 and 4 year olds living in small remote communities where the enrolment is not sufficient to attract a dedicated preschool teaching allocation with a preschool program.

Each mobile preschool hub has one Mobile Preschool Teacher who supports and mentors locally recruited assistant teachers in up to five communities. The Mobile Preschool Teacher visits each community regularly where possible, although access is an issue in the northern part of the Territory during the Wet Season.

The Mobile Preschool Teacher and Assistant Teacher liaise with other early childhood programs operating in the community and also raise community awareness of the importance of starting school early in terms of gaining the literacy, numeracy and social skills necessary for school completion.

Key Outputs
- Establishment of mobile preschool sites and employment of local Indigenous assistant teachers.

Key Outcomes
- Improved access to quality early learning programs for 111 Indigenous children in 18 small communities throughout remote Northern Territory, with more sites under consultation or to be determined. The 18 sites are in five mobile preschool hubs.

Further Information
Contact: Bev Liddy at beverley.liddy@nt.gov.au
Aim
The pre-prep in Indigenous communities initiative aims to enhance the quality and consistency of early childhood education across 35 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.

Description
The initiative is a key Queensland Government commitment to ensure 3½ to 4½ year old children living in 35 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities have access to high quality, consistent early childhood education programs.

The Queensland Government is spending more than $40 million over four years (2006–2010) to enhance existing early childhood education programs.

Pre-Prep programs are being delivered in schools, child care centres and communities kindergartens.

At the start of the 2009 school years, some 700 3½ to 4½ year old children were participating in pre-Prep across 35 communities. In 29 of these communities, the pre-Prep program is delivered in state schools; the Department of Education and Training works with non-government providers to deliver a pre-Prep program in the other six communities.

Key Outputs
- A professional guide for teachers titled *Foundations for Success: Guidelines for an early learning program in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities*.
- An established professional learning community.
- Provision of new learning resources and purpose-designed facilities.
- Development of associated departmental policy.

Key Outcomes
The key outcomes for children, educators, families and communities include:

- A teaching resource that encapsulates an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural and language perspective of early childhood education.
- Some 700 young children across 35 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities participating in an early childhood education program in various settings based on *Foundations for Success*.
- Creation of a vibrant professional learning community of 80 participants across 35 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, many of whom are Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, which has increased professional knowledge and skills.
- Inviting learning environments equipped with contemporary and culturally relevant age-appropriate resources to deliver a quality early childhood education program.
- Working partnerships across schools and other community early childhood education providers that increase understanding of each community’s context and needs.

Further Information
Contact: Wayne Ah Boo at wayne.ahboo@deta.qld.gov.au
Government Sector, Tasmania
Department of Education
ABORIGINAL EARLY YEARS PROGRAM
Australian Directions: Early Childhood Education, Recommendations 2.1, 2.2, 3.1, 3.3

Aim
The Aboriginal Early Years Program seeks to engage Aboriginal children and their parents in early childhood education.

Description
The program has been supporting parents/caregivers of Aboriginal children aged 0-5 years since 2005. The program employs four Aboriginal early years liaison officers state wide who have been successful in connecting Aboriginal families with their local early years education services and providing parents with culturally inclusive activities to assist them to nurture and stimulate their children’s learning with emphasis on early literacy, skills, language and auditory development, and school readiness.

Key outputs
- Development of early years literacy and numeracy resources (e.g. visual timetables, clock, nursery rhyme book, puzzles).
- Workshops for parents and their children.
- Provision of early years learning resources for parents.
- School visits with parents connecting them to their local early years services.
- Professional development workshops on early years learning/perceptual development for Aboriginal early years liaison officers.
- Early years cultural awareness training for teachers.
- Production of a DVD on the importance of school readiness for parents. The DVD is also used to provide teachers with an Aboriginal perspective on the early years.

Key outcomes
- Increased participation of Aboriginal children from 0–5 years in educational programs.
- Raised capacity of parents to support their child’s early learning through awareness of early childhood development.
- Increased literacy and numeracy development.
- Increased access to early years educational resources.
- Increased enrolment of Aboriginal children in pre-school – kindergarten.
- Increased participation of parents in early learning.

Further information
Contact: Nigel Brown at nigel.brown@education.tas.gov.au
GOVERNMENT SECTOR, WESTERN AUSTRALIA
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION AND TRAINING

SPEECH AND LANGUAGE SUPPORT FOR ABORIGINAL STUDENTS

AUSTRALIAN DIRECTIONS, EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION, RECOMMENDATION 2.2

Aim
As part of an Indigenous Early Childhood Initiative, enhanced speech and language support is provided across the State to better equip Aboriginal students with early literacy and language skills in readiness for Year 1.

Description
Research conducted in Western Australia shows that many Aboriginal children bring to school cultural and linguistic perspectives that vary in subtle ways from non-Aboriginal children. The research also highlights that many Aboriginal children suffer from Otitis Media, causing language delays and other language development issues.

During 2008 and 2009, the Statewide Speech and Language Service was expanded to increase services to schools with high populations of Aboriginal students. The Service assists schools to more effectively cater for students with speech and language needs within the local school context.

This initiative funded the employment of additional speech and language consultants in each education district to provide culturally appropriate speech and language training and advice to teachers. The consultants support schools to overcome barriers experienced by Aboriginal children in making a good start in literacy in their early years of schooling. The program is designed to benefit Aboriginal students enrolled in kindergarten, pre-primary and Year 1.

As a result of this initiative, a greater number of schools in country locations have access to professional learning and consultancy services to support improved literacy outcomes for Aboriginal students in the early years. The teams within the service have inducted and developed new staff members, resulting in a positive learning community where ideas are extensively explored and shared.

Models of best practice in providing whole school approaches linked to school planning continue to develop. Many schools are forming collaborative partnerships with other schools within and across districts. This has resulted in the development of a core of mainstream expertise that is used by the Service to share with other schools.

Key Outputs
- Professional learning and consultancy is provided to schools to improve language and literacy outcomes for Aboriginal students.

Key Outcomes
Anticipated key outcomes are:
- Increased numbers of teachers with speech, language and literacy expertise to deliver improved outcomes for Aboriginal students in kindergarten, pre-primary and Year 1.
- Increased numbers of Aboriginal students entering Year 1 ready for formal schooling.

Further Information
Contact: Bruce Roper at bruce.roper@det.wa.edu.au
Aim
The What Works initiative aims to build better relationships between schools and the community, engaging parents and community members in the life of the school.

Description
This initiative began because of a request from the Aboriginal Advisory Group for What Works to develop materials for use within Aboriginal communities.

The initiative has involved What Works facilitators working in school communities to create conversations, build relationships and ultimately establish effective and ongoing partnerships between schools, the Indigenous community and the broader community. Based on this work, support materials have been developed.

Whilst activities evolved in different ways in each site, the use of an independent facilitator was a valuable success factor. Indigenous facilitators or those with significant experience working with Indigenous communities were particularly valued by Indigenous community members. Typically, the process commenced with open-ended conversation which generally evolved into conversations on how to best support the learning of Indigenous students in the school. Common goals were established through facilitated conversations between school staff and Indigenous communities. This often resulted in the establishment of agreements and arrangements to sustain ongoing cooperation to achieve common goals.

In the next phase of this project, What Works is building the capacity of other people to take on facilitator roles. In Victoria, What Works is working in partnership with the Victorian Aboriginal Education Association Inc to mentor and support an additional three school and community partnerships. What Works is also supporting the South Australian and Victorian education departments to train and mentor facilitators.

Key Outputs
- To date six schools involved in the trial of school and community partnerships have signed formal agreements.
- Materials have been written for use with the Aboriginal community and school staff.
- A DVD has been produced. This DVD includes a short description of school and community partnerships and what they should look like. It also shares the stories of trial schools in the development of their formal partnerships.
- A draft train the trainer program in the use of and delivery of What Works school and community resources is currently being developed and trialled in South Australia and Victoria.

Key Outcome
- To date six schools have signed school and community partnerships.

Further Information
Contact: Sandra Brogden at sandra.brogden@ncsonline.com.au OR Christine Reid at christine.reid@ncsonline.com.ua
Website: http://whatworks.edu.au/
Aim
The aim of the formal School Community Education Partnership Agreement between the Yungngora Community and the Kulkarriya Community School is best summed up in the preamble to the agreement:

As partners together Yungngora Community and Kulkarriya Community School look to the future and have agreed on objectives and strategies to improve outcomes in the following focus areas to ensure that the school, and hence the community, remains strong.

Description
The agreement was developed in 2008. A similar process was undertaken by 14 Independent Aboriginal Community Schools (AICS) in Western Australia during the same year, facilitated by the AICS Support Unit, Association of Independent Schools of WA.
The focus areas of the Yungngora / Kulkarriya agreement include:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student Attendance</th>
<th>Getting Ready for School</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Numeracy</td>
<td>English literacy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student Well-being and Physical Health</td>
<td>Suitable Education for Upper Secondary Students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leadership</td>
<td>Language and Culture</td>
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<tr>
<td>Student Behaviour</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The focus areas target all phases of schooling from early childhood to upper secondary and endeavour to take a holistic view of education by identifying areas such as student physical and emotional well-being as priorities. They are consistent with the intent and domain of Australian Directions.

Key Outputs
- The publication of a formal School and Community Education Partnership Agreement, which is described by its authors as a working document.

Key Outcomes
The School Community Education Partnership Agreement:
- Defines the relationship between the Yungngora Community and Kulkarriya Community School.
- Assists new teachers to understand the priorities of the school community.
- Reinforces the Yungngora Community’s commitment to Kulkarriya Community School and its students.

Further Information
Contact: Principals, Nicole Dwan and Luke Royes at administration@kulkarriya.wa.edu.au
Website: [http://www.aics.wa.edu.au/content/theschools/info/kulkarriya_community_school.shtm](http://www.aics.wa.edu.au/content/theschools/info/kulkarriya_community_school.shtm)
Remote Learning Partnership Project

Aim
The Remote Learning Partnership Project seeks to address the Northern Territory Government’s commitment to achieving quantum improvement in education and training outcomes for Indigenous Territorians. The project involves working with remote Indigenous communities to develop local school and community partnership agreements. The agreement is called a Remote Learning Partnership Agreement (RLPA).

Description
The project facilitates closer working relationships between the Department of Education and Training and Indigenous schools, students, families and community stakeholders with the objective of improving educational outcomes and enabling Indigenous people to fully influence and participate in the social and economic future of the Northern Territory and the wider Australian community.

The project began in 2006 when 15 large remote Indigenous communities were identified for engagement and the development of RLPAs. The RLPA is a five year agreement that commits the Northern Territory Government to six mutually agreed education and training outcomes:

- Valuing school – Improved community and school partnerships.
- Coming to school – Increased enrolment and attendance.
- Learning and achieving at school – Increased achievement at all levels of schooling, with a strong focus on literacy and numeracy.
- Staying at school – Increased retention of Indigenous students through the critical stages of schooling.
- Choosing opportunities after school.
- Accessing effective training and employment.

The RLPA is a living document that is regularly reviewed through the Department’s Accountability Performance Indicator Framework.

Key Outputs
- The communities of Yirrkala, Ramingining, Gunbalanya, Ngukurr and Milingimbi have completed negotiations and signed RLPAs with the Department.
- The communities of Borroloola, Warlpiri Triangle (Yuendumu, Lajamanu, Willowra and Nyirripi), Maningrida, Alekarenge, Galiwin’ku, Gapuwiyak, Kalkaringi and Numbulwar have completed negotiations and are in the process of finalising agreements. The community of Angurugu chose to enter into an Australian Government Regional Partnership Agreement.

Key Outcomes
- All communities are expected to have agreements in place by December 2009. The agreements will inform service provision to remote communities under the Northern Territory Government’s Working Future or 20 Towns agenda.

Further Information
Contact: Joe Brown at joe.brown@nt.gov.au
ABORIGINAL SCHOOL AND COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIP AGREEMENTS

Australian Directions: School and Community Educational Partnerships, Recommendation 5.1

Aim
To develop formal agreements between schools, parents and the community to improve the educational outcomes of Aboriginal students.

Description
A school and community partnership agreement is a formal written commitment negotiated between the school, parents and the local community that outlines expectations, targets, roles and responsibilities of the key stakeholders. Partnership agreements provide the opportunity to maximise the attendance, engagement and achievement of Aboriginal students and better involve parents in their children’s education.

In Western Australia, the school and community partnerships process began as a trial in 2007 involving six schools and their communities. A trained independent facilitator worked with these schools and communities and recorded the process by which the agreements were developed. Four of these schools finalised and signed their agreements.

In 2008, the trial was expanded to include more schools. Professional development in facilitating the partnership process was provided to district managers of Aboriginal education and other departmental staff who have gone on to provide training to designated school communities. A further workshop was held in 2009 to continue to train more staff as facilitators who are now skilled to assist schools and communities in the development of their agreements. The workshops have been delivered in conjunction with the What Works team.

Feedback from the trials has informed the development of a resource package which was completed in April 2009 and includes a DVD, planning tools and guidelines. The package was developed with the support of an external organisation and experienced educators who have been working with schools to develop formal agreements.

By 2010, it is intended that all Western Australian public schools with 50 per cent or more Aboriginal student enrolments will have partnership agreements in place. Other schools may also elect to produce an agreement. To date, five schools have completed their written partnership agreements and 24 are currently under development.

Key Outputs
- Formal agreements between schools, parents and community members that address mutual commitments are completed.
- Staff are trained as facilitators to support schools and communities.

Key Outcomes
Successful implementation of school and community partnerships will result in:
- Stronger partnerships and commitment between the school, parents and community to improving the educational outcomes of Aboriginal students at the school.
- Increased involvement of Aboriginal parents and caregivers in their children’s education.
- Improved attendance and educational outcomes for Aboriginal students.

Further Information
Contact: Bruce Roper at bruce.roper@det.wa.edu.au
PERSONALISED LEARNING AT GOODOGA CENTRAL SCHOOL

Aim
To improve student achievement outcomes for Aboriginal students at Goodooga Central School using focused programs and initiatives.

Description
Goodooga Central School is located in the north west of NSW as part of the Bourke School Education Group. The high school and primary departments are located on one site. Goodooga Central School had an enrolment of 54 at February 2009. Approximately 94% of the enrolment identified as Aboriginal.

2008 NAPLAN results demonstrate the school has improved results in writing and language conventions. However there remains a need to strengthen reading approaches and also aspects in numeracy.

Personalised learning plans have been developed for all students from Kindergarten to Year 10. The plans are detailed and are linked to syllabus outcomes. Parental involvement has been established in the plans with support from the Aboriginal Education Officer, classroom teachers and school executive.

To support student achievement, the school focused on selected programs and initiatives including:

- **Journey to Respect** Program, which deals with issues such as family, power and relationships, violence in the family and bullying, assertive communication, drug education, self-esteem and health. The program is seen to be effective in addressing issues of respect, responsibility and resilience.

- **Aboriginal Early Learning Development Program**, which enhances the educational experiences and improves literacy standards of Aboriginal students. It also provides critical support for learning in the early years, developing community and cultural links, provision of culturally appropriate curriculum and transition from home to school.

- **Yuwaalaraay Community Language Program**, which enables culture and language to be developed and enhanced while improving student understanding of their own heritage and family.

Key Outputs
- Development of personalised learning plans for all students from Kindergarten to Year 10.
- Increased number of parents/community involved in the school.
- Enrolment by all students in stages 5 & 6 in two TVET courses including Automotive, Indigenous Health, Technology, Business Services, Shearing and Animal Care.

Key Outcomes
- Increase in rates of student attendance.
- An increase from 65% in 2006 to 83% in 2008.
- Improvement in students who met National or State benchmark for Literacy. In 2006 results were 65% and in 2008 results were 83%.
- Improvement in students who met National or State benchmark for Numeracy. In 2006 results were 47% and in 2008 results were 78%.

Further Information
Contact: Ron Ritchie, Principal, Goodooga Central School at ron.ritchie@det.nsw.edu.au
SCHOOL BASED LEADERSHIP

Australian Directions, School Leadership, Recommendation 6

Aim
Richardson Primary School seeks to model strong, proactive and informed leadership to improve outcomes for Indigenous students from Preschool to Year 6.

Description
Richardson Primary School attracts a significant number of students from low socio-economic backgrounds and has a current enrolment of 242. At February 2009, 31 Indigenous students were enrolled.

Leadership is based on building strong relationships and partnerships between all students, staff, parents and the wider community. The principal, Vivien Palmer, has been at the school for three years and transfers her passion and leadership in improving Indigenous outcomes to all staff. She is diligent in ensuring that strategic planning aligns Indigenous education into all aspects of school life. The leadership team works alongside staff and community members to develop and share expertise. Professional learning is resourced so that staff can participate in programs that increase cultural understanding and teaching expertise. Opportunities are provided for staff to present successful practices at Richardson to other schools and systems.

As a leader, Ms Palmer models life long learning and commitment. She is the Dare to Lead Action Coordinator and an active participant in conferences and school-based action research under the Department of Education and Training initiative Accepting The Challenge–Improving Outcomes of Indigenous Students. Ms Palmer says ‘As principal I lead the acknowledgement of the strength, spirit, endurance and diversity of Australia’s Indigenous people at our school … I lead the team to actively participate in the process of Reconciliation through a wide range of teaching and learning activities based on respectful and inclusive relationships’. Staff attest that the leadership provided results in a school where the engagement of Indigenous students in learning, and meaningful community partnerships, are the only way of operating.

Key Outputs
- Comprehensive data on Indigenous student attendance and achievements.
- School plans document attendance.
- Clearly documented Indigenous focus in curriculum design, teaching and learning.
- Parents, Schools Partnership Initiative Report for six schools in cluster on how to strengthen partnerships and improve Indigenous student attendance and literacy and numeracy outcomes.
- Dare to Lead collegial snapshot completed and outcomes shared with community.
- Reconciliation Action Plan developed and actioned.

Key Outcomes
- 4.2% increase in Indigenous student attendance from Term 2, 2008 to Term 2, 2009.
- Personalised learning plans for all Indigenous students.
- Stronger connections with the local Indigenous community and agencies.
- Celebrations of attendance and learning involving parents and community members.
- Opportunities for Indigenous students, staff and community members to showcase culture, talents and knowledge.
- National Dare to Lead Award for Leadership in Indigenous Education 2008.

Further Information
Contact: Phill Nean, ACT Department of Education and Training at phill.nean@act.gov.au
Vivien Palmer, Principal, Richardson Primary School at vivien.palmere@ed.act.edu.au
Catholic Sector, Western Australia
Catholic Education Office of WA
CULTURAL IMMERSION PROGRAM
*Australian Directions: Quality Teaching, Recommendation 9.1(a)*

**Aim**
The Cultural Immersion Program aims to ensure that educators in the Western Australian catholic sector have the cultural understandings to significantly improve outcomes for Indigenous students.

**Description**
The program was designed in late 2008 and is targeted towards school-based and education office-based staff. The program was designed and is delivered by the Aboriginal Education K-12 Team at the Catholic Education Office of WA.

Based on the understanding that *all cultures need order to survive*, the program is an interactive experience that opens a window into what is known as *Aboriginal order*. This follows on by looking at the impact on that order by outside influences and the subsequent effect that flowed through to future generations. The effects that are visible today across all aspects of the Aboriginal experience in Australia, including education, are explored (this is where the learning becomes contextualised). Participants engage in processes that are both reflective (Looking Back) and visionary (Looking Forward). A thorough analysis of *Australian Directions* is incorporated into the program and provides participants with a foundation for further growth. The learning provides support to the school to build Aboriginal education within the culture of the school in sustainable ways. This helps to form a solid base from which the workplace can aspire to *walking the talk* by becoming more action focussed.

The program also encourages participants to examine themselves as citizens of Australia. Seamlessly interwoven through the fabric of the program is a portal for participants to examine the national effort with respect to developing a culture of acceptance (e.g. reconciliation) for all citizens at different levels (e.g. system, schools/communities, individual). It invites participants to answer their own questions in relation to reconciliation. The program is evolutionary and has the flexibility to accommodate other fields (including outside agencies such as health and the private sector) where understanding of the Aboriginal experience is an imperative.

**Key Outputs**
- The program (as a resource in itself) is a means of growing enriched cultural knowledge in Catholic schools. The program guides schools on ways of making the whole school environment more inclusive.

**Key Outcomes**
- Schools will develop an Aboriginal education plan or strategy. This formalisation process will ‘anchor’ the school’s commitment to Aboriginal education. In view of making the school more inclusive of Aboriginal students and families, the plan or strategy will comprise goals and targets that are local to the school community such as pedagogy, parent-school partnerships, enrolments, student personalised learning plans, attendance and anti-racism policies.

**Further Information**
Contact: Aboriginal Education K-12 Team, Catholic Education Office of WA on (08) 6380 529
Aim
The Connecting Community, Country and Culture Program aims to increase students’ knowledge and understanding of what it is to be Aboriginal in the 21st century, how the passing on of knowledge and maintenance of culture continues, and how these issues relate to Tasmanian Aborigines and the wider community.

Description
The program supports Aboriginal students in making and/or maintaining cultural connections by providing meaningful and relevant learning opportunities within a cultural context. It also enables teachers and non-Aboriginal students to gain a respectful understanding of Aboriginal culture, particularly Tasmanian, through high quality resources and learning sequences that enhance the capacity of teachers to be supported and extended to ensure inclusive classroom practices.

From 2005–08, projects implemented as part of the program included:

- Regional mutton bird rookery excursions
- Aboriginal site access trips
- Big Dog Island mutton bird and canoe and bush foods camps for boys
- Shell collecting and necklace-making camp for girls
- Off campus cultural education camps
- Development of curriculum resources for teachers
- Pedagogical understandings of Aboriginal perspectives

Key Outputs
- DVD: Big Dog Connection Cultural Education Resource Package
- DVD: Cultural Jewels - Tasmanian Aboriginal Shell Necklace-making
- Scope and Sequence (Kinder to Year 10) on mutton birding & shell necklace-making
- Learning Sequence – Mutton Birding
- Learning guides and student workbooks
- Leveled readers
- Staff development in cultural understandings
- Posters
- Jigsaw puzzles – early years resources
- Cultural objects including model canoes, kelp water carries, baskets, shell necklaces, shell bracelets and twining

Key Outcomes
- Increased cultural knowledge and understanding for Aboriginal students
- Increased cultural understandings for teachers and non-Aboriginal students
- Development of quality Tasmanian Aboriginal education resources
- Increased participation of Aboriginal students in off campus cultural education
- Increased participation of the Aboriginal community in education programs

Further Information
Contact: Nigel Brown at nigel.brown@education.tas.gov.au
Aim
The Indigenous Student Support System (ISSS) aims to:
- provide a web-based single system that includes all Department of Education and Children’s Services (DECS) Indigenous students;
- assist in monitoring the movements of DECS Indigenous students;
- assist in providing support to students by providing information to regional support services; and
- provide a more reliable basis for reporting on the participation and progress of Indigenous students.

Description
The ISSS enables regions and state office to keep track of DECS Indigenous students’ movements between schools and to monitor student performance outcomes to better support Indigenous students.

The system extracts the Indigenous student details from EDSAS (school based system) through CEDS (Centralised EDSAS System) and displays these details in ISSS. Officers follow up on these details, which include:
- flagging when a student has changed their Indigenous identification (ATSI);
- displaying when an Indigenous student has left a school and not enrolled in another government school within five days;
- flagging when an Indigenous student has enrolled within a district;
- flagging when a student has not attended school for 10 consecutive unexplained days; and
- allowing regional staff to identify that an Indigenous student has been suspended or excluded.

The system also includes student performance outcomes such as:
- attendance;
- behaviour management;
- literacy and numeracy testing results; and
- South Australian Certificate of Education patterns (SACE–SA senior secondary certificate of achievement and completion).

The ISSS was piloted in three regions in 2007 and implemented in all regions in January 2008.

Key Outputs
- An early intervention web-based tool available for regional office service providers to support schools and families with students ‘at risk’ of disengaging.

Key Outcomes
- It is anticipated that the use of this system will allow regions to be aware of ‘at risk’ Indigenous students and provide the necessary support to schools to improve attendance, retention, behaviour, literacy and numeracy and SACE achievement.

Further Information
Contact: Dunya Madi at madi.dunya2@sa.gov.au
REMOTE AREA TEACHER EDUCATION PROGRAM
Australian Directions, Quality Teaching, Recommendation 9.4

Aim
The Remote Area Teacher Education Program (RATEP) aims to increase the pool of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander teachers leading to tangible training and employment opportunities and outcomes and to deliver a teacher training course through approved tertiary institutions: Tropical North Queensland (TNQ) TAFE and James Cook University (JCU) – via on-site delivery.

Description
RATEP began in 1990 in four remote school communities in the Torres Strait and Cape York region and currently operates in 19 schools in rural, remote and urban locations throughout Queensland. It is an initiative of Education Queensland in joint partnership with TNQ TAFE, JCU and local Indigenous communities. TNQ TAFE offers the following programs:

- Certificate III in Education – available to Year 11 and 12 students where a RATEP site exists.
- Certificate IV in Education – which provides an on-the-job training course available to teacher aides.
- Diploma in Education – which equates to coursework of a 1st year university student at JCU.

Following completion of TAFE programs, students articulate into a JCU Bachelor of Education at Diploma level. The Department of Education and Training provides teacher coordinators who are pivotal to the success of RATEP.

RATEP aligns with the Department’s Closing the Gap Education Strategy, the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Employment Framework for Action and Bound for Success education strategies for Cape York and the Torres Strait Islands.

Key Outputs
- Employment of a state coordinator, technical officer and teacher coordinators.
- Continuous review of course development at TNQ TAFE and JCU.
- Establishment of RATEP sites with necessary infrastructure (i.e. furniture, computers, cabling, and telephone lines).
- Establishment of a RATEP website.

Key Outcomes
- In 2009, a total of 158 RATEP students enrolled at TNQ TAFE and JCU, including 18 high school students enrolled in Certificate III in Education; 53 students enrolled in Certificate IV in Education; 38 students enrolled in the Diploma in Education; and 49 students enrolled in a Bachelor of Education.
- In 2008, RATEP graduates totalled 62, including 5 students with Certificate III in Education; 25 students with Certificate IV in Education; 25 students with a Diploma of Education; and 7 students with a Bachelor of Education. At any point along the continuum RATEP students may choose to exit with employment; while many continue on to teacher registration and employment in schools.
- As of 2009, and since the inception of RATEP, approximately 127 students have graduated from JCU, 80 of who are presently teaching in schools.

Further Information
Contact: Leigh Schelks at leigh.schelks@deta.qld.gov.au
Website: http://ratep.eq.edu.au
Government Sector, NSW  
NSW Department of Education and Training  
CERTIFICATE III IN VOCATIONAL AND STUDY PATHWAYS  
_Australian Directions: Pathways to Training, Employment and Higher Education_,  
Recommendation 10

**Aim**
The Certificate 111 in Vocational Study Pathways is designed to provide Aboriginal people with language, literacy, learning and social skills and knowledge for entry into a range of vocational and further study pathways.

**Description**
The Indigenous Police Recruitment Out West Delivery Program is delivered in partnership between TAFE NSW and NSW Police. The program has been operating since 2008.

The program, offered by TAFE NSW Western Institute, Dubbo Campus, runs over eighteen weeks and focuses on the development of skills specific to entry into the NSW Police Academy at Goulburn. The program has so far achieved one hundred percent retention and completion rate and involves students from a variety of backgrounds and locations.

The program provides students with qualifications to gain entry into Charles Sturt University and the Police Academy. The success of the program in the Western Institute has led to a similar model being piloted at New England Institute in 2009.

**Key Outputs**
- A formal working partnership has been established between Charles Sturt University, TAFE NSW, Dubbo Campus, Foundation Studies and NSW Police.
- Fifty-five scholarships funded by NSW Police.

**Key Outcomes**
- 13 students completed the program in 2008.
- The program is designed for Aboriginal people to meet entry requirements for NSW Police, the Department of Corrective Services, the Ambulance Department and employment in other government departments.

**Further Information**
Contact: Rod Towney, Manager, Aboriginal Education and Training, TAFE NSW Western Institute, Dubbo at rod.towney@tafensw.edu.au
Catholic Sector, Queensland
Townsville Catholic Education Office
SPORTS ACADEMY FOR CATHOLIC COLLEGES
Australian Directions: Pathways to Training, Employment and Higher Education,
Recommendations 11.1, 11.2.

Aim
The Sports Academy for Catholic Colleges seeks to provide Indigenous students with incentive and support to complete Year 12 or a vocational equivalent and to develop their potential both physically and academically. Students are selected by participating colleges according to a range of criteria including educational and social disadvantage, sporting ability and potential, parental and community support and preparedness to commit to the program.

Description
The Sports Academy has been operating since 2006 under a cluster arrangement with secondary colleges in the Townsville Diocese. It supports targeted Indigenous students through a partnership between students, families, school, training and sporting organisations to provide sporting talent identification and coaching, academic support and vocational pathways.

Students enter the Academy from a wide variety of sports so athletics strength and conditioning have been selected as the core activities for their physical development. School-based Academy advisers provide coordination of counselling, coaching and act as the central communication point for students and parents. Students participate in the annual ‘Makin Trax’ Camp where the whole Academy comes together to work with staff and role models to develop their sporting, cultural and career aspirations.

Students from Year 10 have the option to undertake traineeships through PASS Australia. This involves working with local primary schools and/or community groups to complete Level 2 and 3 of the Sport and Recreation Administration Certificate. In future years, students will also be able to complete certificates in primary health care, children’s services and education support.

Key Outputs
- Each Academy student receives an Athlete Handbook that contains a detailed guide for both parents and students as to the expectations and the benefits of Academy membership.
- Each Academy student participates in the development of a personalised career plan that is case managed by a school-based Academy Adviser. The career plan integrates the school curriculum and programs of enrichment including goal setting, time management and health and well-being.
- Senior Academy students have the option of undertaking school-based traineeships in coaching, sport and recreation or fitness and related work experience placements are offered during school vacations e.g. through programs in remote communities.

Key Outcomes
- Nine secondary colleges participate in the Academy. Student numbers have increased from 50 in 2006 to 125 in 2008 with a predicted increase to 146 by 2010. At the end of 2008, 26 Academy students had successfully completed Year 12 and two of those graduates are undertaking traineeships in Townsville Catholic schools. Anecdotal evidence from participating schools indicates that the Academy is acting as an incentive for students to remain at school.

Further Information
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Independent Sector, Western Australia
Wongutha CAPS (Christian Aboriginal Parent-Directed School)
STRUCTURED WORKPLACE LEARNING PROGRAM
Australian Directions Domain: Pathways to Training, Employment and Higher Education,
Recommendation 11.1, 11.2, 11.3

Aim
Wongutha CAPS aims to prepare students for work through an intensive Structured Workplace Learning (SWL) Program where students are supported by mentors and have access to Western Australian Curriculum Council courses of study, Australian Quality Training Framework (AQTF) vocational training, and traineeships.

Description
The school is located on a farm approximately 20kms north of Esperance in Western Australia. All enrolments are residential and the target group is Year 11 and 12 (aged 16 to 18) students from remote regions of Western Australia, including the Kimberley, Pilbara, Mid-West and Goldfields. Unique features of the school include:

- Student mentors who provide critical support, particularly for SWL placements.
- Flexible curriculum which is able to respond to the training requirements of changing employment opportunities for the students.
- The staffing mix of trained teachers and qualified trades people, which ensures students are taught by trade teachers with industry experience.

The SWL Program offers students the following courses:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>WA Curriculum Council</th>
<th>AQTF</th>
<th>School-based traineeship</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>English as an Additional Language or Dialect</td>
<td>Automotive</td>
<td>Agriculture</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mathematics</td>
<td>Construction</td>
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<tr>
<td>Aboriginal and Inter-cultural Studies</td>
<td>Metals</td>
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<tr>
<td>Agriculture</td>
<td>Kitchen Operations</td>
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<td>SWL</td>
<td>Business</td>
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<td>Conservation &amp; Land Management</td>
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<td>Plant Operating</td>
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Key Outputs
- School-based Traineeship – Agriculture

Key Outcomes
- In 2008, 63 Year 11 and 12 students collectively completed 136 WA Curriculum Council courses of study, 18 AQTF certificates and 111 other units of competency, and two school-based traineeship certificates.
- 2007 and 2008 graduates have taken up a range of post-school options including employment in clerical positions and the mining industry and training in a range of fields including security, health work, business studies, teacher assistant, and policing.

Further Information
Contact: Principal, Steve Florisson at admin@wonguthacaps.edu.au
Website: http://wonguthacaps.wa.edu.au/