A REVIEW OF SUPPORT FUNDING FOR INDIGENOUS AUSTRALIAN STUDENTS IN HIGHER EDUCATION

Dennis C Ham
Curtin University of Technology

NATIONAL CENTRE FOR VOCATIONAL EDUCATION RESEARCH LTD
A Review of Support Funding for Indigenous Australian Students in Higher Education

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March 1996
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The views expressed in this report do not necessarily reflect the views of the Department of Employment, Education and Training.
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A sincere thank-you is extended to all those who contributed to and helped with this review. In particular, I acknowledge the considerable guidance and advice provided by the Advisory Committee: Mr Bob Morgan from UTS and Ms Jill Milroy from UWA representing the Indigenous Australian Higher Education Association, Assoc Prof Simon Forrest from ECU and Ms Stella Morahan from DEET. In addition, I am indebted to my Research Associate, Mr Jim Duffield, and to Ms Pat Dudgeon, Mr Ricky Osborne and Mr John Mallard from Curtin’s Centre for Aboriginal Studies for their assistance with the review. Thanks also to Mr Peter van Dijk from Curtin’s School of Accounting and Dr Ken Doyle at UTS who provided advice on Activity Based Costing Methodologies, and Dr Raj Sharma from Swinburne who provided advice on the formulation of the questionnaire. And a special thank-you to my staff in Curtin’s Statistics Office who grappled with all the regular work during 1995 while I was pre-occupied with the review.

In a project such as this, unanimous agreement on all issues is but a dream. The advice of all those willing to give it have been gratefully received and listened to carefully. Hopefully, the discussion and findings presented in this report acknowledge and respect that advice. Ultimately, however, responsibility for the report’s contents rests with the author.

Dennis Ham

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Executive Summary

This review of funding provided by the Commonwealth to support Indigenous Australian students' participation in higher education commenced in January 1995 and was concluded in September 1995. The key findings of the review and a recommended funding model as set out in this report were presented to a Special Conference on Indigenous Higher Education held in Canberra on 26–27 October 1995.

During that conference, the Hon Simon Crean MP, delivered a major policy statement on Indigenous higher education which included an announcement that an additional $15.74 million would be allocated over the next four years to provide an impetus for improved Indigenous Australian academic support services in universities. This timely announcement removed one of the major obstacles to the present review, originating from the Government's advice to the reviewers that 'there should be no assumption that the overall levels of support funding will increase as a result of this review'¹. One of the primary concerns expressed by members of the Indigenous Australian community in higher education was that an outcome of the review would be that funds are merely redistributed and for any institution that lost funding, the detrimental impact would directly affect Indigenous Australian students.

The purpose of this review is to investigate the nature, extent and cost of support provided by higher education institutions to Indigenous Australian students to assist the Government in formulating an equitable mechanism for distributing support funds among institutions. The methodology involved gathering information from three different sources so that the nature, extent and cost of support could be examined from different perspectives as well as from both qualitative and quantitative bases. These sources encompassed: written submissions by institutions in response to a questionnaire; institutions' Aboriginal Education Strategy documents submitted to the Department of Employment Education and Training (DEET) as part of their triennial Education Profile plans; and consultations with the Indigenous Australian community in higher education institutions, both staff and students.

Advice and guidance from the Advisory Committee, with representation from the Indigenous Australian community in higher education, was a key to ensuring that an appropriate linkage was maintained between this review and the broader issues relating to Indigenous higher education. Many of the issues have been identified in the National Review of Education for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples and have been re-affirmed by contributors to this review.
One of these issues was the concern that the review was focussing on only one aspect of Indigenous Australian higher education. That the review was not covering the totality of funds allocations to institutions, including the teaching component, was seen as hindering any real progress toward empowerment and self determination. The National Review of Education for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples reported2:

Many Indigenous people believe that control over funding will radically change their bargaining position within universities and will put them in a far more strategic position to negotiate with the administrators. At present there are high levels of dissatisfaction in some universities over the proportion of funding for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students that goes into administrative costs and over which they have no control.

In the review of support funding it was again confirmed that a strong undercurrent of mistrust existed about institutions' internal funds allocations processes with respect to Indigenous Australian students. The preference expressed for DEET to direct the total funds to Indigenous Australian Units/Centres underpinned many of the discussions with participants in the review. Although the terms of reference confined this review to addressing support funding, many of those consulted felt that the review would be incomplete if it did not address the totality of higher education funding for Indigenous Australians. It is noted that following the October 1995 conference, the Hon Simon Crean asked the National Board of Employment, Education and Training to examine the existing arrangements of Commonwealth funding to higher education institutions in respect of Indigenous higher education students and advise on the desirability or otherwise of any changes to those arrangements. Through the recommendations made in this present review, the opportunity exists for the Commonwealth to employ the support funding as a change agent in ways that encourage institutions to work closely in partnership with the Indigenous Australian community and DEET toward embracing Indigenous Australian philosophies and ways.

The Advisory Committee considered that any funding arrangements involving Indigenous Australians, if they are to be credible, must be underpinned by a set of guiding principles, or values. These were identified as:

- self determination;
- social justice;
- cultural affirmation;
- equity;
- cultural inclusivity;
- choice and, together with choice, responsibility;
- equal partnership between the Indigenous Australian community, the universities and DEET, and
- accountability to each of the partners.
Institutions should be committed to a set of guiding principles, such as those proposed above, that underpin the totality of Indigenous higher education. Furthermore, there should be a national vision for Indigenous Australian higher education that provides a clear direction to guide institutions in setting their own specific objectives. To this end it is recommended that the AVCC, in collaboration with the Indigenous Australian community, be asked to develop a Code of Practice for Indigenous Australian higher education.

It was also evident from the consultations that another set of key principles needed to be defined in relation to the support funding model itself to take on board the concerns expressed by participants in the review about funding models. It was considered by the Advisory Committee that any funding model must:

- maintain and enhance outcomes for students;
- provide stability in funding to allow for long term planning;
- require funding arrangements to be planned and negotiated between the three partners (Indigenous Australians in higher education, DEET, and institutions);
- maintain effective Indigenous Australian Unit/Centre operations; and
- ensure institutional commitment, recognising that the support funds provided by the Commonwealth does not represent the limit of institutional commitment to higher education for Indigenous Australians.

There was universal agreement among those contributing to the review that the level of support funding was insufficient to address the continuing difficulties that Indigenous Australian students experience in their quest to improve their educational status. Substantial progress has been made in recent years to improve Indigenous Australians' access to and participation in higher education. Although there is room for further improvement, the emphasis in student support provision needs to shift toward improving educational outcomes for Indigenous Australian students. Outcomes can be defined in many ways. There was considerable discussion during the consultations about the concern that the Government's focus of attention would concentrate on quantitative performance indicators such as Indigenous Australian graduation rates. Although graduates are the primary output of the higher education system, an appropriate outcome could be defined as producing graduates with a strong sense of their cultural identity; where empowerment, self-determination, social justice and cultural affirmation have been the basic principles supporting their total educational experience.

Staff from Indigenous Australian Unit/Centres supported the change in emphasis but indicated serious concerns that this may lead to an expectation that yet more effort will be required from the same inadequate level of resources. It has been argued by some respondents that not only has the larger level of participation increased the difficulty in maintaining and improving retention and success but they also reported having to work even harder to ensure that the participation levels themselves are maintained.

While respondents could not place a value on the present funding inadequacy and the funding needed to take the next steps to improving the successful outcomes for
Indigenous Australian students, it is clear in the minds of those having to provide the support at the coal-face that it would require substantial extra funding. These resources should not only come from Government but also from within the institutions as a joint demonstration of commitment to the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Policy and the key principles outlined above.

The capacity of Government to monitor and review improvements in achieving successful outcomes would be a logical expectation if such an increase in aggregate funding were provided. Such outcomes must also include demonstrated progress on the part of institutions, and not just their Indigenous Australian Units/Centres, to the objectives of empowerment, self determination, cultural affirmation and social justice for Indigenous Australians. It is recommended that the increase in funding announced by the Commonwealth ($4.248m more in 1996) be directed to institutions able to demonstrate progress in these areas.

A number of institution specific factors have been cited as influencing the cost of providing support. These include:

- institutions with small numbers of Indigenous Australian students;
- institutions providing direct support services across more than one campus;
- discipline group mix;
- course levels;
- institutions that provide on-site course delivery or external studies programs to students in remote areas;
- institutions that offer culturally inclusive courses, other than bridging or enabling programs; and
- the mix of full time and part time students, or whether headcount enrolments are more appropriate than Equivalent Full Time Student Units (EFTSUs) as a basis for support funding.

Evidence was obtained for each of these factors that pointed to the existence of differential costs. What could not be determined within the time-frame for the review was the extent to which all the factors, when put together into a single funding model, balanced each other out. The difficulties experienced in trying to obtain reliable costing data or even estimates of cost relativities, does not bode well for any attempt to develop a funds allocation formula that incorporates all or some of the factors.

For a funding model to be effective at the system-wide level, it needs to be transparent both in terms of the principles upon which it is based and the mechanisms for its implementation. As such, it cannot be expected that the model will take into account all the complexities of educational access, delivery, and the necessary support systems that exist in higher education. Nevertheless, there is scope for a less complicated approach to funds allocation that allows for different institutional factors to be recognised by linking the necessary inputs, processes and outcomes together.
It is therefore proposed that the funding model includes a substantial component (80%) to be allocated to institutions according to negotiated student load (EFTSU) forecasts and at a flat rate per EFTSU. The remaining funds (20%) to be allocated according to the effectiveness of institutions' support processes and achievement of successful outcomes for Indigenous Australian students.

These funding arrangements must acknowledge and honour the concepts of empowerment and self determination, both of which are embodied in Commonwealth Indigenous Australian policy initiatives. In turn, the model needs to place the onus on institutions to similarly commit themselves to such principles, but without penalising the very people that the funding aims to support. As these principles become integral parts of university operations the funding model can evolve toward one that increasingly rewards appropriate outcomes. In the meantime, a negotiated combination of inputs, processes and outcomes is considered to be the most appropriate basis for a funding model.

Consistent with the partnership principle, the processes and criteria for determining the component of support funding relating to outcomes should be established in consultation with the Indigenous Australian community in higher education through the establishment of a national committee of review. This committee could also oversee the continued evaluation of qualitative and quantitative performance indicators in the context of Indigenous Australian education. The inclusion of qualitative indicators into the performance review process is an area requiring considerably more attention. There is evidence, for example, that increased use is being made of student surveys and exit interviews. However, much work is still needed to bring the qualitative and quantitative evaluation processes together in a manner that would have them accepted within a national review and funding model. It is also proposed that a process equivalent to the 'quality audit' that has been operating within the higher education sector over the last three years be developed to identify and reward best practice in the provision of Indigenous higher education.

The review team is confident that the proposed model addresses the key areas of concern raised by the Indigenous Australian community. Fundamental to the model is the need for the Commonwealth and the institutions to work more in partnership with the Indigenous Australian community to embrace the Commonwealth's stated commitment to self determination, empowerment and social justice.

A model that funds a combination of student load targets, appropriate processes and outcomes readily satisfies the requirements of transparency and equity. It is acknowledged, however, that it will take further work, discussion and negotiation to reach a consensus on the details by which the funds are to be distributed, the arrangements for gathering and reviewing the information necessary for an informed assessment to be made of each institution, and the extent to which each institution's allocation is made public. Nevertheless, there are sufficient elements identified that allow the Commonwealth to begin the process of moving toward funding of outcomes. The proposed national committee of review should be asked to consider the recommendations contained within this report as a basis to
establish the framework for allocating support funds for the 1997–1999 triennium and beyond. By way of initialisation, DEET's immediate priority should be to re-confirm realistic student load forecasts with each institution and verify the accuracy of the actual student load reported by each institution.

Endnotes


Summary of Recommendations

Recommendation 1

☐ That higher education institutions be required to adopt and put into practice the following key principles as a fundamental policy underpinning their educational programs for Indigenous Australians:

- self determination;
- social justice;
- cultural affirmation;
- equity;
- cultural inclusivity;
- choice and, together with choice, responsibility;
- equal partnership between the Indigenous Australian community, the universities and the Commonwealth; and
- accountability to each of the partners.

Recommendation 2

☐ That the AVCC be asked to develop, in collaboration with the Indigenous Australian community in higher education, a Code of Practice for Indigenous Australian higher education.

Recommendation 3

☐ Any approach to the funding of support for Indigenous Australian students must:

- maintain and enhance outcomes for students;
- provide stability in funding to allow for long term planning;
- require funding arrangements to be planned and negotiated between the three partners (Indigenous Australians in higher education, DEET, and institutions);
- maintain effective Indigenous Australian Unit/Centre operations; and
- ensure institutional commitment, recognising that the support funds provided by the Commonwealth does not represent the limit of institutional commitment to higher education for Indigenous Australians.
Recommendation 4

☐ That the increase in support funding provided by the Commonwealth in the October 1995 announcement be directed to institutions that can demonstrate a commitment to the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Policy objectives through the provision of appropriate support infrastructure and services and in achieving successful outcomes for Indigenous Australian students including progress toward achieving the objectives of self determination, cultural affirmation and social justice.

Recommendation 5

☐ For institutions with 20 or less Indigenous Australian EFTSUs, an appropriate base sum be negotiated with DEET in the context of the institution’s Aboriginal Education Plan.

Recommendation 6

☐ That institutions should not only be accountable for implementing appropriate mechanisms to ensure (as much as is practicable) the accuracy of the enrolment statistics for Indigenous Australian students, but also be accountable for ensuring the accuracy of the EFTSU calculation.

Recommendation 7

☐ The various factors cited as influencing support costs be recognised; quantitatively, in the funds allocation model provided sufficient and reliable data exist that clearly link those factors to the implementation of appropriate processes and achievement of successful outcomes for Indigenous Australian students.

Recommendation 8

☐ A Model for Distributing Support Funds to Institutions:

8a 80% of support funds be allocated at a flat rate per EFTSU for negotiated targets of EFTSU on a rolling triennial basis.

8b 20% of support funds be distributed according to institutions’ relative performance comprising both processes and outcomes in achieving institution-specific objectives and national objectives; as assessed from the Aboriginal Education Strategies presented in their Education Profile submission to DEET.
Recommendation 9

□ The definition of appropriate outcomes for Indigenous Australian students, and criteria and performance measures by which they are assessed, should be determined in a collaborative framework by Indigenous Australian peoples, higher education institutions and the Commonwealth.

Recommendation 10

□ Quantitative performance indicators relating to student access, participation, retention and success should be an integral part of the performance review process provided due consideration is given to the qualitative factors that underpin Indigenous Australian higher education.

Recommendation 11

□ That DEET works with the Indigenous Australian community and the institutions to develop a framework for regular Indigenous 'quality audits' that focus on identifying and rewarding strengths in the provision of Indigenous Australian education.

Recommendation 12

□ The Minister establish a nationally constituted committee comprising representatives of Indigenous Australians in higher education, the AVCC, and DEET with terms of reference to review, monitor and advise on matters concerning:
  • the setting of broad parameters for identifying and measuring successful outcomes for Indigenous Australian students;
  • the criteria by which support funds are to be allocated;
  • the mechanisms for reviewing progress toward achieving successful outcomes, including the appropriateness of existing and proposed performance indicators;
  • the process by which institutions measure their progress and performance in meeting Aboriginal Education Objectives and those of the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Policy; and
  • the higher education system's demonstrated commitment to the eight Key Indigenous Public Policy Principles underpinning higher education for Indigenous Australians.
Recommendation 13

☐ That DEET commence implementation of the model in the 1996 funding and at the same time, place on notice to the proposed Committee of Review, that the model be reviewed and refined for progressive implementation over the 1997–1999 triennium.
Introduction

Background to the Review

In 1993, the Department of Employment Education and Training (DEET) foreshadowed that in the area of Indigenous Australian higher education, the 'allocation of support funding will be simplified as from 1995 so that it is based on a system-wide average rate per EFTSU.' In a supplementary report, DEET advised that to address the disparity between the distribution of support funds and student load across institutions, a review of support funding arrangements would be commissioned to make recommendations for changed funding arrangements from 1996.

This review was commissioned by DEET following a call for tenders published in the Commonwealth of Australia Gazette (16 November 1994) for project funding under the Evaluations and Investigations Program.

Through the present triennial funding arrangements, the Commonwealth provides, among other things, funds to institutions for teaching based on agreed targets of student load measured as Equivalent Full Time Student Units, or EFTSU. 'Teaching' collectively describes all the recurrent activities of an institution that go into delivering education, including provision of libraries, computing operations, general administration, maintenance of facilities, student counselling and support, and so on. Within each institution's funded student load, but separately identified as a sub-set, are specified enrolment targets for Indigenous Australian students. Consequently, the 'teaching funds' allocated to institutions contain within them the funding of teaching and other ancillary services for Indigenous Australian students. In addition, institutions are also allocated funds specifically for the support of Indigenous Australian students as a means of improving their access to, and participation and success in higher education. The Commonwealth prescribes that 'these support funds are the minimum that institutions are expected to allocate to support activities for these students.'

The present arrangements with respect to support funding for Indigenous Australian students were introduced following discussions held in 1990 on the implementation of the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Policy (NATSIEP) in the higher education sector. The need and the rationale for
specifically allocating funds to support Indigenous Australians' access to and participation in higher education is explained in the purpose of the NATSIEP.

Aboriginal comment on the provision of education services has long been critical. Aboriginal people have consistently called for greater Aboriginal influence in educational decision-making, with a view to improving the accessibility, relevance, appropriateness, sensitivity and effectiveness of educational services. Aboriginal people generally seek education that is more responsive to the diversity of Aboriginal circumstances and needs, and which recognises and values the cultural backgrounds of students. Education provided according to those criteria, it is argued, is likely to lead to higher levels of Aboriginal participation and greater rates of success.

In a draft statement issued by DEET in March 1991, it was reported that during the 1990 consultations, the level of support funding to be incorporated into the base funding allocations to institutions was discussed. It was acknowledged that historical factors, including the submission based nature of former Aboriginal programs, had led to significant variations in the support funding currently received by institutions. It was agreed that with the shift to mainstream triennial funding the perpetuation of such inequities should be avoided.

Further consultations were undertaken by DEET during 1991...

...with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander representatives and the institutions to reach agreement on a process for achieving a more equitable distribution of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander support funds in higher education. The consultations universally affirmed that support funding should be based, primarily, on the total Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander load at an institution. However, it was also agreed that it would be necessary to incorporate a range of factors which should be considered for an additional level of funding beyond that allocated on the base level of load. The factors identified included:

- costs associated with remote area delivery;
- assistance for the provision of support centres for institutions with small Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander numbers;
- spread and level of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander enrolments;
- provision of unique courses; and
- support for multi-campus institutions.

The factors listed above are influential but not the major determinants for the different levels of support funding per EFTSUs that institutions have received in the ensuing period until 1995. Graph 1 shows wide ranging funds allocations per EFTSU in 1995. Each of the plotted points on the graph represents an institution, and the graph shows the average level of support funding per EFTSU plotted against the institution's planned number of Indigenous Australian EFTSU enrolments. The funding disparity between institutions with similar numbers of Indigenous Australian EFTSU enrolments is evident.
Support funds allocations for the 1994 to 1996 triennium are tabulated for each institution in Appendix 1.

Terms of Reference

The purpose of this review was to investigate the nature, extent and cost of support provided by higher education institutions to Indigenous Australian students to assist the Government in formulating an equitable mechanism for distributing support funds among institutions. Terms of reference provide by DEET for the review were to investigate:

1. the link between support funding and student load;
2. support costs and factors affecting support costs:
   - what is currently being spent on support services;
   - what is the current range of support services; and
   - what is the adequacy of support provided.
3. the link between support funding and successful outcomes for Indigenous Australian students:
   - review of institutional strategies to improve retention and participation of Indigenous Australian students; and
   - measurement of successful participation and outcomes.
4. consideration of support funding alongside other funding for support services through ATAS, ABSTUDY, the Vocational and Educational Guidance for Aboriginals Scheme, etc.
5. options for providing a more equitable distribution of support funding keeping in mind the overall objectives of the Government for support funding.
Graph 1

1995 Support Funding per EFTSUs for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Student Participation in Higher Education

Review Team

The review team from Curtin University of Technology comprised:
Mr Dennis Ham, Director, University Planning and Statistics, Project Director; and
Mr Jim Duffield, Research Associate.

Consulting advice to the review was provided by staff from Curtin’s Centre for Aboriginal Studies, namely:
Ms Pat Dudgeon, Head;
Mr Dennis Eggington, Lecturer;
Mr John Mallard, Assoc Co-ordinator, Aboriginal Health Program; and
Mr Ricky Osborne, Assoc Co-ordinator, Aboriginal Community Management Development Program

*Excludes the Australian Maritime College
Advisory Committee

Guidance for the review has been provided by an Advisory Committee comprising two representatives of the Indigenous Australian Higher Education Association (IAHEA):

Mr Bob Morgan, Director
Jumbunna Centre for Indigenous Studies
University of Technology, Sydney;

Ms Jill Milroy, Director
Centre for Aboriginal Programs
The University of Western Australia;

and

Assoc Prof Simon Forrest, Head of School
Kurongkurl Katitjin School of Indigenous Australian Studies
Edith Cowan University;

Ms Stella Morahan, Director
Innovations Access and Equity Section
Department of Employment, Education and Training

During discussion at the Advisory Committee’s first meeting on 15 March 1995, it was acknowledged that the Advisory Committee members played a key role in ensuring that the interests and concerns of Indigenous Australians were fairly represented in the review. Also, the Committee’s role was to ensure that the conduct of the review and the methodology was consistent with the goals of the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Policy and the recommendations contained in the National Review of Education for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples. These goals underpinned the five terms of reference that the Advisory Committee adopted to provide guidance to and advise the review team on the following items:

1. the scope of the review;
2. the methodology of the review;
3. the range and extent of consultation with relevant institutions, groups and individuals;
4. the interpretation of the findings of the review and the presentation of recommendations; and
5. the draft preliminary and final reports to DEET.
Members of the Advisory Committee also identified a range of issues for consideration in relation to the scope of the review. These included:

- the project objectives were too broad to be adequately addressed within the timeframe and budget;
- the timeframe prevented any real analysis of outcomes, particularly the many qualitative outcomes that could not readily be incorporated into a funding formula;
- the condition imposed by DEET that the redistribution of support funds must occur within existing funding levels meant that there would be winners and losers, and this would inhibit institutions from openly participating in the review;
- the allocation of funds by institutions to Aboriginal Education Units/Centres greatly concerned the Indigenous Australian community and, therefore, the review should address the question of how much support funding actually finds its way to the Units/Centres;
- there was concern that institutions would be able to conceal the real level of funding allocated to support, and it would be difficult to verify the information received in the short time-frame allocated to this review; and
- the funding of Indigenous programs in total, both teaching and support, remains a concern of the Indigenous Australian community, although it was acknowledged that teaching, while linked to support, was outside the scope of the review. Nevertheless, the committee felt that this review could refer to this issue in its findings and identify it as an issue to be resolved by DEET through other means.

**Participation in the Review**

During March 1995 letters were sent to all Vice-Chancellors, Heads of Aboriginal Education Units/Centres within institutions, State Aboriginal Education Consultative Groups and the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Student Network inviting participation in the review in one or more of the following four ways:

1. provide a written submission in answer to a questionnaire;
2. participate in consultation meetings to be held in each State and Territory;
3. participate in a focus group meeting of students and graduates; and/or
4. participate in gathering and analysing detailed costing data on student support activities. This work involved mapping the support processes for Indigenous Australian students within a university in 1994 and determining their costs.

Responses were received from 34 of the 38 institutions to whom letters were sent and two responses were received from the Consultative Groups.
Among these 34 institutional respondents to the initial invitation; 25 institutions indicated a willingness to participate in all four of the listed options while the other ten institutions chose some but not all of the options.

In general, the respondents welcomed the review but a number of them gave guarded comments about their capacity to participate adequately, especially with respect to any detailed collection of costing data.

All 34 institutions responding gave their permission for the review team to examine their Aboriginal Education Strategy documents.

Following the first Advisory Committee meeting, where the review team was asked to consider a range of issues relating to the scope and methodology of the review, and in view of similar observations made by people outside the Advisory Committee in response to the letter to Vice-Chancellors, it was agreed to delay the commencement of consultations until these matters could be discussed in a wider forum. The opportunity to do this occurred at a meeting of Aboriginal Program Directors/Managers convened by the IAHEA and held in Canberra on 19 May 1995. That the Directors in attendance at this meeting re-affirmed their support for the continuation of the review, placed the review on a much firmer footing for proceeding with the consultations.

As a result of the delayed start to the data gathering, the primary sources of information for this review were confined to: responses to a written questionnaire, institutions’ Aboriginal Education Strategy documents, and direct consultations with selected institutions and students. The basis for selection was to allow information to be gathered from institutions across States and Territories, and so that multi-campus institutions, institutions in rural and remote locations, and small and large institutions could be represented. The 14 institutions visited are listed in Appendix 2. A significant factor in the selection of institutions was also the logistics of visiting such a cross section of institutions in the much narrowed time-frame for the review and within the constraints of the travel budget.

The review was completed at the end of September, in time for the preliminary findings and recommendations to be presented at a Special Conference on Indigenous Higher Education held in Canberra on 26–27 October 1995. The basis of the findings presented in this report emanate from the following response rates to the Questionnaire and the number of institutions consulted:

- 16 out of 38 institutions responded to the Questionnaire and two institutions made written submissions;
- 14 institutions were visited by the review team;
- therefore, allowing for overlap (six institutions submitted Questionnaires and were visited by the review team), 26 out of 38 institutions (68%) provided an input to the review; and
a teleconference was also held with members of the Higher Education Sub-
committee of the Victorian Aboriginal Education Association (Inc) (VAEAI). At the request of the Sub-committee, this teleconference was not considered as a formal input to the review. Notwithstanding this, many of the issues raised during the teleconference reinforced statements and issues covered in other consultations and, therefore, deserves acknowledgement.

Definition of Support

The National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Policy includes goals to ‘ensure equitable access for Aboriginal people’ [Goal 9] and raise the level of participation [Goal 12] and graduation rates [Goal 16] of Indigenous Australians in higher education to the same as that which currently exists for all Australians. It is acknowledged that the concept of a successful outcome for an Indigenous Australian student may not be measured solely by such quantitative indicators. Accordingly, it is proposed that support services be defined to include activities undertaken within an institution to improve the participation, retention and completion rates, and other qualitative outcomes of Indigenous Australian students. The fundamental purposes for which the support services are provided, as quoted earlier from the NATSIEP, are the need to be responsive to the diversity of Indigenous Australian circumstances and needs, and to recognise and value the cultural backgrounds of students.

These support activities are in addition to, or on top of, the standard forms of support provided by institutions for the benefit of all students. Concern was expressed in the early discussions on the methodology for the review that some institutions may be using a proportion of the support funding for Indigenous Australian students as a means of contributing to the cost of these standard support activities.

Examples of the types of support provided by institutions are given in Appendix 3. These were supplied by two institutions in response to the questionnaire.

Methodology

An undertaking was given to all institutions that any data not already in the public arena or other evidence provided to this review would be kept confidential. This commitment has been honoured in this report. The responses quoted throughout the report and in the appendices have been edited where necessary to remove references to the names of institutions.
The review took both a qualitative and quantitative approach to investigating the various items listed in the terms of reference. With the delayed start and in order to canvas the wide range of qualitative issues affecting support for Indigenous Australian students, less emphasis was placed on detailed analysis of the actual costs of support services.

The review team, through these consultations, sought to define the nature and extent of support provided to Indigenous Australian students as well as identifying gaps in the provision of support. The objective was to define a fundamental level of support needed to optimise the capacity for Indigenous Australian students to progress through, and succeed in, higher education at similar rates as for the Australian population overall. In essence, this component of the study attempted to establish 'what is' and 'what ought to be'. It was also aimed to link the nature and extent of these support services to the various sources of support funding, with an appraisal of how much such services and funding are intertwined.

The review team also examined institutions' Aboriginal Education Plans for increasing Indigenous Australian participation in higher education and, coupled with the consultations, examined how institutions measure achievements in improving retention and successful educational outcomes. The objective was to assess whether, in their current format, the plans are a useful information source for identifying outcomes for inclusion in a funding 'formula'.

It had been proposed that activity based costing methodologies be used to determine the actual cost of support delivered in an identified strata of institutions covering factors such as State/Territory, numbers of Indigenous Australian students, and funding support provided. The objective was to estimate the fixed and variable components of costs per EFTSUs so that the cost of a fundamental level of support funding could be defined. It was also envisaged that the cost of the identified gaps in support could be estimated using these base data which would then allow options for formula funding of support for Indigenous Australian students to be examined. This aspect of the review was unsuccessful because of the considerable difficulty respondent's experienced in assigning costs, and even estimates of costs, to identifiable support activities. At best, institutions were only able to provide details of overall operating budgets and expenditure (salaries, non-salary items etc) within Indigenous Australian Units/Centres and other operating units.

The review team also evaluated the software developed by Martin (1994) to extract performance indicator data on student progress and performance of equity groups. The appropriateness of using system-wide performance data, such as the indicators developed by Martin and adopted by the Commonwealth, to distribute support funding was examined.

The Questionnaire format, the list of questions for the consultations and the costing methodology were pilot tested within Curtin University of Technology as a precursor to conducting these activities in other institutions. Once tested, the
Questionnaire was circulated to all higher education institutions so that written submissions could be made by individuals or organisations not covered by the consultations.

**The Questionnaire**

The questionnaire (Appendix 3) was designed to complement the consultations so that similar information was gathered through both media. However, whereas the Questionnaire allows institutions to provide a greater amount of quantitative data, it was expected that the consultations would yield more qualitative data.

The purpose of the questionnaire was to construct a picture of how institutions deal with three broad phases of student support-provision:

- planning and resource allocation—what support should be provided and how are resources allocated?
- processes and costs—identification of support activities and their cost of provision; and
- evaluation—how does the institution measure the success of the support activities?

The range and variety of responses submitted confirmed the difficulty institutions were expected to experience in compiling reliable data on the cost of each of the support activities identified. The broad definition of 'support' as outlined in the introduction, caused difficulty to respondents in differentiating support from teaching, for example, where courses were developed specifically for Indigenous Australians.

**Consultations**

The pilot test also indicated that direct consultation with individual institutions rather than with groups of institutions as was originally planned would yield more substantial data that would assist the review team to make inferences as to the factors affecting the cost of the various support services. To achieve this, the review team needed to allocate at least one day with each institution willing to participate and this was not always possible in the time-frame available.

During consultations with institutions the review team sought responses to a range of questions addressing the review's terms of reference. These questions are listed below:

1. What are the current range of support services provided? Where are these services located within the institution? [compile a list of the services and their location(s)]
2. Describe how the funds allocation processes within your institution are linked to your institution's Aboriginal Education Strategy, particularly with respect to the identified support funds provided through the Commonwealth Operating Grant.

3. To what extent do the following factors influence the type of support required and the cost of providing that support? What evidence do you have to support your conclusions, i.e.
   3.1 remote area delivery of education;
   3.2 institutions with small numbers of Indigenous Australian enrolments;
   3.3 differential costs across discipline areas i.e.; relative to supporting students in the Humanities, Social Sciences and Education, does it cost less/same/more to provide support to students in:
     (a) visual and the performing arts;
     (b) business and law;
     (c) health and medicine;
     (d) science, mathematics and computing;
     (e) mining and engineering; and
     (f) agriculture and veterinary science.
   3.4 differential costs across course levels:
     (a) bridging programs;
     (b) undergraduate diploma/degree courses;
     (c) postgraduate coursework; and
     (d) higher degree research.
   3.5 provision of culturally appropriate courses for Indigenous Australians e.g. competency based programs, or specifically tailored courses;
   3.6 multi-campus operations; and
   3.7 any other factors.

4. Taking into account the issues discussed in Question 2, to what extent are the cost of support activities influenced by the number of enrolments?

5. How adequate are the levels of support provided? On what basis is this judgement made? What other types of support would you expect to be provided?

6. What are the identifiers of a 'successful outcome' for Indigenous Australian students? How do you know that the support services provided are leading to these successful outcomes?

7. To what extent do other sources of student support (ATAS, ABSTUDY, VEGAS etc) complement or impact on the support services provided through the Commonwealth Operating Grant?
8. Provide any other comments pertinent to the terms of reference for this review, in particular, indicating a preferred approach to distributing support funds to institutions.

Consultations with Students

Students' perspectives on the support provided by institutions was also seen as vital to broadening the review team's understanding of the importance, adequacy and effectiveness of the support services provided. The review team aimed to evaluate student support both from the providers' and the receivers' perspective, although by necessity, the weight of data was expected to come from the providers of support. Wherever possible, institutions visited were asked to arrange for student representatives to be available for consultation.

The review team sought responses to the following questions from students:

1. What support services are you aware of that are offered by the University and in what ways do you use them?
2. In what ways do you see 'support' being different from 'teaching' and how much are they interdependent?
3. How effective do you consider are these support services?
4. What support services are not provided that you think should be?

The results indicated that a significant level of support was appreciated, especially with gaining admission to a course and in the early stages of a student's course. Another significant acknowledgment of support was given to the Aboriginal Tutorial Assistance Scheme (ATAS) and informal tutorial assistance provided by staff in the Units/Centres. One group of students reported experiencing difficulties in obtaining the right level of support from the ATAS at peak times such as the lead up to examinations because of a limit placed on the number of hours per week of tutorial assistance that students could obtain. It was indicated that more flexibility was needed so that students could average their claim over a period of time to allow access to extra assistance at peak times such as prior to exams. On the more practical level, the students appreciated the Units/Centres providing direct access to computers and photocopy facilities. They also welcomed the back-up support that the Units/Centres were able to provide on University administrative matters when it was needed. Having a mentor in the discipline area of their course was also seen as highly valuable.

The students agreed that the level of support, other than tutorial support, that they needed to draw on was substantial in the first year of their studies but it diminished over time. The validity of this observation by the students, was not always supported by staff responsible for providing support.
**Student Progress and Performance Software**

The development of a funding 'formula' that includes a component relating to outcomes measures needs to draw on both qualitative and quantitative data that are consistent across institutions. The quantitative data contained in the national student datasets are capable of satisfying the consistency criterion and are useful from the viewpoint of providing system-wide trends and comparisons. On the other hand, indicators taken from national datasets are often perceived as too broad to effectively gauge institutional performance. The question then is to what extent can, and should, performance indicators drawn from these datasets influence funding decisions.

Martin (1994) identified four indicators: access, participation, success and retention⁸ and developed the related computer software for institutions to create them from the DEET student statistics datasets. They are defined as:

- **Access** percentage of Australian commencing students who are Indigenous Australian.
- **Participation** ratio of proportion of Indigenous Australian students in the Australian student population to proportion of Indigenous Australians in the general State population aged 15–64.
- **Success** ratio of student progress rate for Indigenous Australian students to student progress rate for other Australian students.
- **Retention** ratio of apparent retention rate for Indigenous Australian students to that for other Australian students.

The evaluation has revealed that the software in its current state of development cannot be run against the system-wide data, which inhibits (but not necessarily prevents) the compilation of national datasets at a central point such as DEET. That means under present planning and reporting arrangements, each institution would need to run the software against its own data and submit the results with its Aboriginal Education Strategy. The benefit of such an arrangement is that it ensures institutions have the opportunity to comment on the indicators and provide other quantitative and qualitative indicators so that an objective evaluator is able to make an informed assessment as to the institution's performance in meeting its objectives.

The consultations regarding this present review highlighted deep concerns among staff within Indigenous Australian Unit/Centres about the application of system-wide performance indicators in a funding model. It was often argued that there was little or no consultation with the Indigenous Australian community in Martin's formulation of the four indicators. Although institutions were given the opportunity to comment on the work undertaken by Martin⁹, it is unclear whether or not Indigenous Australian Units/Centres were directly involved in providing feedback. Respondents to this present review also expressed concern that interpretation of data relating to Indigenous Australian students must be treated with caution by virtue of small number of observations that are often involved. Martin¹⁰ also cautioned the interpretation of data involving small numbers.
Another concern expressed was that despite frequent acknowledgment in discussions about performance indicators to the need for qualitative indicators to support and further explain the quantitative indicators, in the end the focus of attention conveniently remains on the quantitative results with explanatory notes and riders often ignored. A common theme among those participating in the review was that the basis for assessing institutional performance with respect to Indigenous Australian higher education should only be determined with the full involvement of the Indigenous Australian community.

The most serious concern however, was about the impact within an institution if institutional performance with respect to Indigenous Australian higher education was deemed to be unsatisfactory. It was felt that any assessment of unsatisfactory performance would place more pressure on the Indigenous Unit/Centre than on the institution itself. The reason for this, it was argued, was that responsibility and accountability for institutional commitment to Indigenous Australian philosophies and values is not taken up in a real sense by the institution itself, but left to the Unit/Centre. The values underpinning Indigenous Australian higher education are not seen as institutional values. Units/Centres were afraid that their institutions would simply ‘pass the buck’ to them in the event that poor performance was identified. Clearly, any outcomes-based assessment must be seen to be directed at the institution and not at the Indigenous Unit/Centre within the institution. Such assessment would necessarily include an evaluation of the institution’s commitment to ‘recognising and valuing the cultural backgrounds of students’ (NATSIEP 1989).

Endnotes

4. Commonwealth of Australia 1989, National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Policy, AGPS, Section 2.1.4.
9. Ibid Refer Section 2.4 ‘Consultation with Institutions’
10. Ibid Refer Section 3.7 ‘Interpreting the Numerical Results’ and Section 4.2.1 ‘Quantitative Indicators’
Empowerment and Self-Determination

In 1994 Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islanders continue to be the most educationally disadvantaged groups in Australia. While more opportunities to express their views about the policy, programs and practices of education have been created, Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islanders remain concerned that their views are not heard.

(NREATSIP 1994, p. 2.)

For Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islanders, self-determination in education is essential; it creates the framework which allows Indigenous Australians to be themselves and puts them on an equal footing with other national and international communities.

(NREATSIP 1994, p. 3.)

These two quotes, drawn from the summary and recommendations of the National Review of Education for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples, succinctly describe the environment in which this present review of support funding for Indigenous Australian students in higher education was conducted. The findings and recommendations presented in this present review are aimed to advance the progress toward self determination for Indigenous Australians in higher education.

It is evident from the consultations with Indigenous Australian unit/centre staff that there is a strong undercurrent of dissatisfaction and, indeed, mistrust about the relationship between DEET and higher education institutions and the way in which this relationship impacts on and includes the Indigenous Australian community in higher education. The underlying issue that is continuing to frustrate those involved in Indigenous Higher Education relates to a continued lack of empowerment, despite Government affirmations of commitment to empowerment and self determination for Indigenous Australians.

This sense of frustration is not unique to Indigenous Australians. Barnhardt (1991, p. 210) when describing the various qualities that distinguished Indigenous higher education institutions around the world from their mainstream counterparts and the events leading to the creation of independent colleges for Indigenous peoples, observed

In all of these instances of initiatives by Indigenous people to create their own versions of higher education institutions the unmistakable implication is that existing mainstream institutions have not adequately served their needs, so after many generations of frustration and alienation, they are taking matters into their own hands.

The tension that exists relates to the different fundamental philosophies of institutions and Indigenous Australians. Barnhardt (1991) identified the cultural
link between college and community as the 'central ingredient in everything from
the goals and philosophy of the tribal colleges to their curricula.' It is an holistic
approach that does not readily fit the western model of discipline based
educational structures. In the Australian context, higher education for Indigenous
Australians has not yet lead to the creation of independent Indigenous universities.
It can be argued that a paradigm shift needs to occur within existing Australian
institutions toward embracing Indigenous Australian philosophies and ways.

A concern was expressed by some Unit/Centre staff in this present review about
the lack of acceptance by academics and administrators alike that Units/Centres
can develop and teach legitimate yet culturally inclusive higher education
programs. In one Unit/Centre, staff reported a real sense of disempowerment when
some of their teaching programs were transferred to an academic faculty. They felt
that they had been 'put back in their place as a central support unit and therefore,
not academic' after first having been encouraged to establish teaching programs.
'Offering bridging programs was OK but offering a formal degree program was
not OK' and staff felt that the creation of an academic and support 'divide' had
been quite devastating. It is further evidence of the need for the paradigm shift to
occur within institutions.

The onus of change should not only rest with the institutions but also with the
Commonwealth. An opportunity exists for the Commonwealth to employ the
support funding as a change agent. On the one hand, the Commonwealth could set
the example by providing greater scope for the Indigenous Australian community,
in partnership with the institutions, to participate in deciding how the support
funds are to be distributed. On the other hand, the funding model itself can be
constructed to encourage institutions to improve outcomes for Indigenous
Australians without loss of cultural integrity.

It is evident, therefore, that the outcome of this review of support funding needs to
be viewed as transitional, if it is to advance the progress toward self
determination and achieving meaningful outcomes for Indigenous Australians in
higher education. It is expected that enhancements to the funding arrangements
would follow after due consideration of and debate about the totality of higher
education for Indigenous Australians.

Allocation of Support Funding Within Institutions

Within the higher education institutions, the extent to which Indigenous
Australian education and support units/centres are empowered to set their own
agenda and have control of their finances appears to be a significant determinant
of overall satisfaction about funding arrangements. Notwithstanding the
unanimous agreement that the total support funding provided by the
Commonwealth is inadequate, in the centres where the achievement of self
determination was more evident, staff appeared to be better placed to deal with
issues such as those created by the scarcity of resources. In other words, their
concerns about financial matters were, arguably, no different from heads of other
autonomous academic disciplines. Involvement in and understanding of the institutional decision making processes, together with higher levels of rapport with university senior administrators, provided a more positive climate for staff to work toward achieving the higher education objectives of Indigenous Australians.

In the units/centres where responsibility for financial management is limited, there was strong concern that the university was not allocating them the appropriate level of funding. This concern relates not only to support funding but also to the total funding (including teaching) of Indigenous Australian students.

The fact that the internal allocation of resources is a matter for universities to decide has been cited by many respondents as an impediment to self determination for Indigenous Australians in higher education. It is evident that progress toward better outcomes for Indigenous Australian students could be more effective if the resource allocation processes within institutions with respect to the funding of Indigenous Australian students are more open and directly involve Indigenous Australian peoples, through their Centres.

Evidence of this is in the way in which the support funds are allocated within institutions. In answer to the question about resource allocation strategies within institutions, 85% or eleven out of thirteen respondent institutions with 100 or more EFTSU, and 50% or five out of ten respondent institutions with less than 100 EFTSU indicated that all support funds were allocated directly to the Aboriginal Education Unit/Centre. Ten out of sixteen institutions (63%) responding to the Questionnaire indicated that additional support funds were allocated to the Unit/Centre over and above that separately identified in the Commonwealth Operating Grant.

Numbers of Indigenous Australian enrolments, therefore, is a contributing factor to institutions' approaches to internal resource allocations, where institutions with smaller numbers tended only to provide support, were not directly involved with teaching, and drew on the resources of other sectors of the university, such as equity units, to provide an overall level of support. Generally, institutions with a commitment to allocating the entire funding directly to the Aboriginal Education Unit/Centre also assigned responsibility to the Unit/Centre for the support of all Indigenous Australian students within the institution and were also involved to varying extents in the provision of educational programs.

In some institutions where support funding is not fully directed to a Unit/Centre, the funds are subsumed into the total funds allocation process and Unit/Centres receive a proportion of the support funds with the remainder, either directly or indirectly, going to other sectors of the university such as equity units, central administration and overheads. There are examples in such cases, where universities direct the equivalent and more of the 'lost' amount to the Unit/Centre out of general university funds. Unit/Centre staff feel they have to bid for funds from their university that, they justifiably argue, should be allocated directly.
Lack of empowerment and trust was evident in concerns expressed by Unit/Centre staff about restrictive limitations placed on their authority for the expenditure of funds.

The Commonwealth prescribes that these support funds 'are the minimum that institutions are expected to allocate to support activities'1 for Indigenous Australian students. DEET, therefore, has the capacity to be more categorical to institutions about the requirement to account for the allocation and use of support funds within institutions. The frustration expressed by participants in this review indicates a need for DEET to develop more open and communicative processes with the Indigenous Australian community, especially over matters affecting funding.

Key Principles Underpinning Indigenous Australian Participation in Higher Education

Organisational planning processes are generally characterised by the formulation of a vision, a mission and a set of values or guiding principles that underpin the way in which the organisation goes about conducting its business. It is argued that formulating a national vision for Indigenous Australian higher education would provide a clear sense of direction to guide institutions in setting their own specific objectives for Indigenous education. The considerable input given by the Indigenous Australian community to the NATSIEP (1989) and the NREATSIIP (1994) could provide the groundwork for formulating such a national vision. The many general comments and observations made by participants to this present review suggest that this would include a vision of Indigenous Australian culture as an integral feature of every institution's core operations. Or put another way, the affirmation of Indigenous culture in all institutional operations is second nature. Likewise, institutions' involvement in Indigenous Australian higher education should also be underpinned by a set of values or guiding principles.

With respect to this review of support funding, it became evident early in the deliberations that any funding arrangements involving Indigenous Australians, if they are to be credible, must also be underpinned by a set of guiding principles. The Review team worked with the Advisory Committee to identify eight principles that emerged from the views expressed during the consultations, and the conclusions drawn in the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Policy (1989) and the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody (1991). These are embodied in the recommendation below. Funding models that do not incorporate these key principles would be viewed as flawed and inappropriate.
Recommendation 1

☐ That higher education institutions be required to adopt and put into practice the following key principles as a fundamental policy underpinning their educational programs for Indigenous Australians:

1. self determination;
2. social justice;
3. cultural affirmation;
4. equity;
5. cultural inclusivity;
6. choice and, together with choice, responsibility
7. equal partnership between the Indigenous Australian community, the universities and the Commonwealth; and
8. accountability to each of the partners.

The emphasis is on institutional commitment to these principles, not simply that of institutions considering it sufficient for the onus of commitment to be passed to their respective Indigenous units/centres. It is only through a strong sense of institutional commitment that Indigenous Australians will become confident that their vision for higher education can be realised. Furthermore, it is argued that with further refinement, these principles should form the basis for the totality of Indigenous Australian higher education. The most effective way to achieve such an end would be for the AVCC, working with the Indigenous Australian community in higher education, to formulate a Code of Practice such as has already been done in relation to international students. It is, therefore recommended:

Recommendation 2

☐ That the AVCC be asked to develop, in collaboration with the Indigenous Australian community in higher education, a Code of Practice for Indigenous Australian higher education.

It is further proposed that, by their endorsement, institutions are also required to demonstrate that the principles are followed. One approach by which institutional commitments to Indigenous higher education could be checked is through a regular cycle of review as is carried out through various methodologies for quality assessment. Adherence to the eight key principles would also be a necessary condition of these reviews. A desired outcome of these reviews is that, through appropriate involvement of the Indigenous Australian community, examples of institutional 'best practice' relating to each of the principles are identified. A recommendation in this regard is made in the last chapter of this report.
Systemic Principles Underpinning the Allocation of Support Funding in Higher Education

It is also evident from the consultations that another set of key principles needed to be defined in relation to the support funding model itself. These principles are summarised in the recommendation below in recognition of the concerns expressed by participants in the review about the funding model options.

Recommendation 3

☐ Any approach to the funding of support for Indigenous Australian students must:

- maintain and enhance outcomes for students;
- provide stability in funding to allow for long term planning;
- require funding arrangements to be planned and negotiated between the three partners (Indigenous Australians in higher education, DEET, and institutions);
- maintain effective Indigenous Australian Unit/Centre operations; and
- ensure institutional commitment, recognising that the support funds provided by the Commonwealth does not represent the limit of institutional commitment to higher education for Indigenous Australians.
Factors Affecting Support

The Adequacy of Support Funding

A large number of factors have been cited by respondents that influence the nature and cost of support. Illustrations of the types of services that make up support in two of the respondent institutions are given in Appendix 3. The consistency of comments made across the higher education sector as a whole about the impact that many of these have on costs (such as social, cultural and some educational factors) suggest that they are not institution specific. That is, they are the reason for support funding being provided in the first place and therefore, should not cause any funding differentiation between institutions. They do, however, affect the aggregate cost of support. There was universal agreement that the level of funding was insufficient to address the continuing difficulties that Indigenous Australian students experience in their quest to improve their educational status.

The challenges facing the providers of support do not appear to have diminished or changed markedly over time. It is interesting to compare the findings of people who researched Indigenous Australian higher education issues around the time of the establishment of the Unified National System for higher education with more recent commentaries. Bin-Sallik (1989) drew on the findings of the Jordan (1985) report which criticised the ad hoc, competitive funding arrangements of the time as absolving 'institutions from the responsibility of incorporating enclave programs into their own financial and formal academic structures, which would have better ensured that courses were more relevant to Aboriginal needs.' Furthermore, it 'forced enclave programs to operate under conditions of uncertainty and restricted further planning and development.' There has been significant progress since then toward the formation of more appropriate academic and support structures. However, from the submissions made to this present review it is clear that the progress has not been uniform across the sector. More disturbing, even where progress has been made, some institutions were reported as continuing to have their Indigenous Australian Units/Centres operate under the same conditions of uncertainty as previously existed, despite the fact that support funding is now provided to institutions within their triennial operating grants.

Abbott-Chapman et al (1991) illustrated the challenges facing support units with some case studies and commented:

*The case studies were all marked by negative educational experiences, poverty and sometimes ill-health and misfortune. Each sort of disadvantage compounded the other so that it was hard to imagine how anyone could rise above it all sufficiently to make positive educational or career decisions. The bridging course by seeking to develop self confidence, inform about options, and introduce to study skills, aimed to help people do just that.*
The substantial increase in participation by Indigenous Australians in higher education has further compounded these challenges with respondents commenting that the support Units/Centres now have to work even harder to maintain the progress achieved in the earlier years when there were relatively fewer students. Martin (1994) points out that:

... the issue of success of Aboriginal students, which was given a lower priority in A Fair Chance for All than access and participation, has emerged as a critical issue now that strategies for increasing participation rates for commencing and total students are seen to be effective through improving student numbers.

It has been argued by some respondents that not only does the larger level of participation increase the difficulty in maintaining and improving retention and success but also respondents reported having to work harder to ensure that the participation levels themselves are maintained.

While respondents could not place a value on the present funding inadequacy and the funding needed to take the next steps to improving the successful outcomes for Indigenous Australian students, it is clear in the minds of those having to provide the support at the coal-face that it would require substantial extra funding. These resources should not only come from Government but also from within the institutions as a joint demonstration of commitment to the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Policy. The capacity of Government to monitor and review improvements in achieving successful outcomes would be a logical expectation if such an increase in aggregate funding were provided. Such outcomes must also include demonstrated progress on the part of institutions, and not just their Indigenous Australian Units/Centres, to the objectives of self determination, cultural affirmation and social justice for Indigenous Australians.

At a Special Conference on Indigenous Higher Education held in Canberra on 26–27 October 1995, the Hon Simon Crean MP, delivered a major policy statement on Indigenous higher education which included an announcement that an additional $15.74 million would be allocated over the next four years to provide an impetus for improved Indigenous Australian academic support services in universities. The increased allocation of $4.248m for 1996 in the 1996–1998 Supplementary Funding Report2 is a 25% increase on the funding specified in the 1994–1996 Funding Report. Looked at from another angle, this increase makes up 20% of the available support funds for 1996.

Recommendation 4

☐ That the increase in support funding provided by the Commonwealth in the October 1995 announcement be directed to institutions that can demonstrate a commitment to the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Policy objectives through the provision of appropriate support infrastructure and services and in achieving successful outcomes for Indigenous Australian students including progress toward achieving the objectives of self determination, cultural affirmation and social justice.
Institution Specific Factors Affecting Support Costs

Other factors have been cited that can be referred to as institution specific. These include:

- institutions with small numbers of Indigenous Australian students;
- institutions providing direct support services across more than one campus;
- discipline group mix;
- course levels;
- institutions that provide on-site course delivery or external studies programs to students in remote areas;
- institutions that offer culturally inclusive courses, other than bridging or enabling programs; and
- the mix of full time and part time students, or are headcount enrolments more appropriate than EFTSUs as a basis for support funding?

Each of these factors are discussed in the ensuing sections in relation to the responses given in the questionnaire and through consultations with institutions. When considering this report, any interpretation and analysis of data must take into account the response rates to the Questionnaire and the number of institutions consulted:

- 16 out of 38 institutions responded to the Questionnaire and two institutions made written submissions; and
- 14 institutions were visited by the review team. Therefore, allowing for overlap (six institutions submitted Questionnaires and were visited by the review team), 26 out of 38 institutions (68%) have provided an input to the review.

Commentary on the first two factors listed above are based on submissions made during the consultations and from responses to Questions 6(f) and 6(g) of the Questionnaire.

In relation to Factors 3 to 7 listed above, Question 6 of the Questionnaire asked respondents to consider the cost of providing support to a full time student in a mainstream undergraduate course in the humanities, social studies or education disciplines. Then, establishing this as a benchmark of 1.0 they were asked to estimate, for each of the factors, the relativity of the cost of support provision. For example, if it was considered that the cost of supporting a full time student in the science discipline was half as much again as a humanities student, then the estimate would be 1.5. Responses to Questions 6(a) through 6(e) have been aggregated and weighted average relativities taking into account student load are presented in Table 1.
Institutions with Small Numbers of Indigenous Australian Students

In answer to Question 6(g) and during the consultation visits, respondents generally noted that a fixed, base level of support should be provided to institutions with small numbers of Indigenous Australian enrolments. However, estimates as to the size of the base level of funding and the point at which student load became the generator of further funding were somewhat varied. Suggested base levels fell into a range from 'should look at a minimum of 1 staff per 10 students' to $160,000.

It was also observed by two respondents that institutions may appear to have sufficient numbers of enrolments but economies of scale were lost when these enrolments were spread thinly across a range of disciplines, course levels and campuses. It was, therefore, argued that to provide a substantial base level of funds to those institutions with small numbers of Indigenous Australians would be inequitable to other institutions with larger numbers of enrolments but spread across diverse academic and infrastructure profiles.

Two alternative approaches to providing a fixed, base level of funding were raised by respondents and these are addressed in the next two sections before returning to the issue of a base level of funding.

Step-wise Approach to Support Funding

Three respondents argued for a step-wise incremental approach to funding. For example, one respondent stated:

_A funding system based on EFTSUs produces only gradual increases in funding. The costs of providing support, however, increase in large steps when it is necessary to employ additional staff. The result is that Centres are presented with the dilemma of whether to turn away promising applicants or to take additional students knowing that they may not receive adequate support until numbers are large enough to attract the funding necessary to appoint additional staff._

It is recognised that the costs of providing support do not have a clear lineal relationship to student numbers and that the step-wise cost factors are more keenly felt by institutions with relatively small numbers of Indigenous Australian enrolments. Step-wise funding, however, is not favoured because the model creates an area of funding inequity around each of the steps, where an increase or decrease of only one enrolment can bring about a step wise change in funding. In reality, institutions themselves would not make such clear cut decisions to appoint another staff member as soon as a specified level of enrolment is achieved, but the decision would be taken after considering a variety of resource and work load factors._
Rationalisation of Institutions Providing Support

An alternative solution to funding institutions with small numbers of Indigenous Australian enrolments proposed by one respondent is to rationalise the number of institutions providing support so that larger amounts of funding are provided to a smaller number of institutions designated to provide support. Another respondent observed:

There are some obvious disadvantages to this, primarily because it would force Aboriginal students to travel further than might otherwise have been necessary and perhaps (more importantly) offer courses of lesser preference. The major advantage appears to be that the funding available to a single institution would be increased significantly and more could be done with the aggregated dollars.

Although a rationalist approach may make economic sense, it does not make sense on equity grounds. Goal 12 of the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Policy is to, inter alia, achieve participation levels in higher education commensurate with those of all Australians. Equality of choice about, and access to, higher education institutions is fundamental to this goal.

Provision of a Base Level of Funding

As one respondent commented 'the reasons for small numbers need to be examined' and coupled with this is an examination of the existing resources available to an institution to effectively provide support to small numbers. For example, another commented

Costs are relatively higher due to lack of 'economies of scale'. However, in a small institution this is partially offset by the capacity of mainstream support staff to assist in the development and implementation of support strategies.

Taking into account the variability of individual needs of students, it is proposed that as a benchmark, a base level should be the minimum required to provide for essential support needs of students not otherwise provided by the ATAS. If this benchmark were based on the cost of a half time lecturer plus on-costs with a 10% loading for non-salary items, this would amount to a base sum of around $30,000. Alternatively, to follow another respondent's suggestion that it be 1 full time staff member, then the base figure would be $60,000. At the average support funding rate of $2,800 per EFTSU, any institution with 10 students or less would require—this base sum for a half time position or 21 students or less for a full time position.

With only two institutions identified as being in the category of warranting a fixed level of funding, the most expedient recommendation is considered to be for each case to be examined separately on its merits.
Recommendation 5:

☐ For institutions with 20 or less Indigenous Australian EFTSUs, an appropriate base sum be negotiated with DEET in the context of the institution’s Aboriginal Education Plan.

Multi Campus Institutions

Providing student support in multi-campus institutions was identified by respondents as being a major cost factor. These costs were identified as resulting mainly from:

- duplication of support services;
- duplication of resources such as accommodation, computers and reference materials;
- travel and accommodation of staff and students moving between campuses; and
- added telephone and facsimile communication costs.

Those consulted, however, were unable to give clear estimates of the additional costs involved. Responses to the questionnaire are equally unclear although two respondents estimated the extra cost to be in the order of $50,000 per additional campus other than the main or central campus. These estimates related to, in total, four campuses in two institutions where the indicated number of enrolments at each campus ranged from three to sixteen EFTSUs. The estimated costs are similar to those proposed by other respondents in relation to institutions with small numbers of enrolments.

Respondents also pointed to distances between campuses as another variable that created different cost burdens. It was suggested that the funding model should also differentiate between multi-campus operations within a single city as compared to multi-campus operations within and across States and Territories.

It was also evident that enrolments of Indigenous Australians did not occur on all campuses and this circumstance could change from year to year. In the Questionnaire, seven institutions reported multi-campus operations totalling 16 campuses in addition to the main or central campus. Eleven (69%) of these campuses had 20 or less Indigenous Australian EFTSUs. The spread of enrolments in relatively small numbers across campuses and the potential for these to change from year to year, together with the variable geographic location of the campuses relative to the main campus, suggest that a funding formula which allocates a fixed sum of money to institutions for each campus would not be appropriate.
The paucity of conclusive data on the costs of providing support in multi-campus institutions adds weight to adopting an approach whereby funding for multi-campus costs is at best considered on a case by case basis, subject to clear and substantiable evidence of costs being submitted. However, this consideration should not be based on costs alone but should also be balanced against the effectiveness of inter-campus support delivery with respect to institutions’ strategies for achieving its access, participation and successful educational outcomes objectives, and its performance in these areas. The medium by which such cases could be addressed is the Education Profiles process.

**Discipline Group Mix**

Questionnaire data, as summarised in Table 1, points to the existence of differential support costs across disciplines. Higher general cost relativities (greater than 1.5) would appear to have been identified in the law, science, engineering and agriculture/veterinary science disciplines. However, the small sample size and high standard deviations mean that no conclusion can be drawn that the relativities are significantly different to the benchmark relativity.

The absence of a statistically significant result is reinforced by two potential distortions to respondents’ estimates. Despite advice to respondents that they were to estimate relativities in relation to support services and not to the cost of teaching, the possibility of overlap between support costs and perceptions of cost relativity associated with teaching cannot be discounted. On a further cautionary note, the tutorial support provided through ATAS, may well have been a factor that also either consciously or subconsciously, influenced the respondents’ estimates.

On the other hand, in the consultations the responses appeared to be evenly divided between observations that students had equal access to support services and those indicating that in the disciplines cited above, students generally sought greater levels of resource support such as textbooks and computer resources. Obtaining tutorial support for these students was also considered to take more time and effort than for other students. In all instances there was consistent acknowledgment that support requirements were significantly influenced by individual needs more than perhaps by the discipline itself.

When the complexity of incorporating variations in the level of support costs across disciplines into a funding model discipline is also taken into consideration, the lack of conclusive evidence as to the variability over-rides any justification that may be made in favour of its inclusion in the model.
This conclusion does not dismiss any funding recognition being made for institutions improving the levels of participation and progression by Indigenous Australians in disciplines where participation is disproportionately lower than in other disciplines. The funding model would appear to be better placed by rewarding achievements in this area than by attempting to adequately differentiate between the costs of providing support across disciplines.

### Table 1: Summary of Responses to Question 6—Factors Affecting Support Costs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>No. of Respondents</th>
<th>Average Relativity</th>
<th>Standard Deviation</th>
<th>Minimum</th>
<th>Maximum</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Q6 (a) Differential Support Costs Across Disciplines</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Humanities, Social St., Educ</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>1.0</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visual &amp; Perf. Arts</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>1.2</td>
<td>0.4</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>2.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Business, Economics</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>1.4</td>
<td>0.8</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>3.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Law</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2.2</td>
<td>1.6</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>5.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health, Medicine</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>1.4</td>
<td>0.8</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>3.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Science</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>1.6</td>
<td>0.7</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>3.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Math., Computing</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>0.5</td>
<td>0.7</td>
<td>2.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engineering, Built Env.</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>1.7</td>
<td>0.9</td>
<td>0.5</td>
<td>3.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agric., Vet Sc</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2.4</td>
<td>1.7</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>4.0</td>
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<tr>
<td>Q6 (b) Differential Support Costs Across Course Levels</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bridging, Enabling</td>
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<td>1.8</td>
<td>0.7</td>
<td>0.5</td>
<td>2.5</td>
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<tr>
<td>UG Diploma, Degree</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>1.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PG Coursework</td>
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<td>1.8</td>
<td>0.6</td>
<td>0.2</td>
<td>2.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Higher Degree Research</td>
<td>8</td>
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<td>0.9</td>
<td>0.1</td>
<td>3.0</td>
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<tr>
<td>Q6 (c) Remote Area Delivery</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Urban Based Course Delivery</td>
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<td>0.0</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>1.0</td>
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<tr>
<td>Remote Area Course Delivery (on site)</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2.1</td>
<td>0.8</td>
<td>1.2</td>
<td>3.0</td>
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<tr>
<td>Distance Ed, Ext St.</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>2.1</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>4.0</td>
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<tr>
<td>Q6 (d) Culturally Appropriate Courses</td>
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<tr>
<td>Q6 (e) Full Time, Part Time Costs</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Full Time</td>
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<td>1.0</td>
<td>1.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Part Time</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>1.2</td>
<td>0.4</td>
<td>0.5</td>
<td>2.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Course Levels

There was a clear indication from all but one respondent that bridging/enabling course students required a greater level of support than a benchmark, mainstream undergraduate humanities degree student. In Table 1 it can be seen that the
average relativity was 1.8 in a range between 0.5 and 2.5. Comments associated with the responses to the estimates of relativity are given below:

**Enabling course students are paid for entirely from the Aboriginal Program's budget and have high support needs.**

**Bridging course students support costs are much higher than undergraduate support costs due to the fact that the students are taught by the Centre and located at the Centre. Therefore, there is more student contact. The Aboriginal Bridging Course lecturers' focus include attending to individual needs which include academic, personal and vocational counselling.**

**This University's philosophy is to provide substantial support at enabling and 1st year level, with support tapering off at higher levels.**

**Enabling programs need to be rewritten to suit our students' needs. This requires time and expertise as well as cultural appropriateness.**

Opinion was more divided about support for students in postgraduate and higher degree studies. During consultations, some felt that levels of support equal to that of a first year undergraduate student was neither required nor warranted. Others felt that the nature of support, and the way in which support is offered, changed according to the course level of the student and that, overall, the support costs were relatively even over time. This concept also applied to the second and later years of an undergraduate degree. Estimates of relativity (to a mainstream undergraduate degree/diploma) by respondents to the questionnaire as shown in Table 1 averaged 1.8 for postgraduate coursework and 1.3 for higher degree research. Their associated comments are given below:

**Higher degree students demonstrate a desire to have constant guidance available. This is nothing to do with an inability to do the work but relates to security.**

**Postgraduate students and degree/diploma students have equal access to support services and generally there is no difference between the costs of support for these students.**

**The differential costs associated with the provision of support are more related to the individual and particular needs of students rather than their enrolment disciplines. This comment also applies to the differential costs associated with undergraduate and postgraduate enrolments, and full-time and part-time enrolments.**

The aim of enabling courses is to provide a means for aspirants to university to achieve an educational standard, both in knowledge and in study skills, necessary for them to gain entry into higher education courses. Providing students with an opportunity to try to gain entry to university, an opportunity they may not otherwise have, is an important factor in offering enabling courses irrespective of whether or not they continue on to university. It has been cited by many respondents that students who successfully complete an enabling course often move directly into full time employment.
As a means of improving access to higher education, the focus for support funding in relation to bridging or enabling courses should be toward achieving appropriate outcomes such as the transition rate from enabling to degree. More importantly, the definition of an acceptable progress rate and other outcomes need to be established by the institution's Indigenous Australian community through a consultative process with the institution. It is therefore argued that the support funding for enabling students not be set at any higher level than for students in formal higher education courses but that appropriate recognition be given in the funding allocations to those institutions able to demonstrate improvements in the transition rate from enabling to degree/diploma courses. Further consideration needs to be given to what is an 'appropriate' transition rate from enabling to degree program. This should recognise that other avenues exist for successful outcomes such as in securing employment or in proceeding on to a degree program at some later stage.

Remote Area Delivery/External Studies

Remote area delivery, either on site or by external studies, has been acknowledged both in the questionnaire responses and the consultations as a significant factor in student support costs. Questionnaire responses as summarised in Table 1 indicate a weighting in the order of 2:1 in a range between 1.0 and 4.0 against urban-based course delivery.

With respect to supporting external/distance education students, examples of comments by respondents to the questionnaire are as follows:

*The University offers field support services to students enrolled ... in remote areas of Australia.*

*External studies centres have an extra burden in admin., contact, organising tutors at distance, visiting students, bringing students to campus occasionally, providing physical resources.*

*We have some external students who might cost a little more to support (phone, mail etc).*

*On site tutoring or interactive video conferencing is essential and this is expensive. Support for external students plays a significant role in process and therefore progression, retention and success rates, all of which influence funding—CATCH 22.*

*Extra costs especially with remote course delivery (on site) are substantial. Course delivery and support for other external students are more than internal due to the need for extra teaching/support staff, travel and production of course materials.*
Competency based courses run by the Centre combine both remote area course delivery and course delivery via distance education. Due to the very nature of these courses the support costs are considerably higher than urban based course delivery.

The needs of urban students differ greatly from individual to individual. However, despite this it seems reasonable that remote area on-site delivery has a weighting of 3.0 because the remote on-site program are to students from a non-English speaking background and minimal formal education.

The submissions made in respect of costs of supporting students in remote areas are similar to those presented in favour of differential costs for multi-campus institutions. Accordingly, it is argued that the costs of external/remote area delivery should be balanced against its effectiveness with respect to institutions' strategies for achieving its access, participation and successful educational outcomes objectives, and its performance in these areas. The medium by which such cases could be addressed is the Education Profiles process.

Culturally Inclusive and Culturally Specific Courses

The holistic nature of such courses was seen as a significant consumer of both teaching and support resources. Questionnaire responses indicate an average support cost relativity of about 2:1 compared to support provided to students in a mainstream undergraduate humanities course. As with the observations about differential support costs across discipline groups, respondents may have been influenced in their estimates by the high teaching costs identified for such courses.

In addition, it is suggested that the holistic structure of such courses may not necessarily add to the requirement for supplementary support funding.

It was also argued by some respondents that students in mainstream courses might legitimately expect that their entitlement to an holistic education approach should also be honoured.

In DEET’s national statistical data collections on students, courses are not identified as being ‘culturally inclusive’ or ‘culturally specific’. Until a mechanism exists within the statistical collections to identify such courses, institutions would need to use the medium of their Aboriginal Education Plans in the Education Profile to seek any financial recognition for the support costs associated with these courses.

Given that culturally inclusive courses and culturally specific courses are designed to improve Indigenous students’ chances of successful progression as well as ensuring their cultural affirmation, it would be reasonable to expect that institutions providing such courses could demonstrate better success rates than those not offering them. It is submitted that an outcomes based funding model would give appropriate recognition to institutions offering these courses.
Furthermore, this would also lead to recognition being given in the funding allocations to institutions that can demonstrate a commitment to developing a cultural inclusive ethos across the full range of mainstream courses offered.

**Head-count or Student Load (EFTSU)**

A consistent comment made was that support for students was independent of student load. With the exception of one institution responding in the questionnaire, all respondents asked that the support funding be based on estimates of headcount enrolments, not EFTSU.

One of the arguments given in support of the request for funding based on headcount enrolments was that many students undertake a lighter subject load, for example, about 75% of the full time load, to increase their chance of successful progression. This often meant a reduction of only one unit of study which lessened the need for ATAS support but did not diminish the demand placed on the providers of general student support. However, given that such an occurrence is not institution specific, the provision of funds based on either headcount or EFTSU should not materially differ between institutions.

The dispersion in enrolments among institutions and their concomitant student load can be compared by examining the ratio of EFTSU to the number of enrolments. Data drawn from DEET’s 1994 student datasets on Indigenous Australian enrolments by institution and study mode (full time, part time, external) have been used to calculate the ratios of EFTSU to Headcount enrolment. The frequency distribution of these ratios is presented in Table 2 and various measures of their spread are presented in Table 3. Data for each institution are presented in Appendix 5.

**Table 2: Frequency Distribution of Institutions by their 1994, Ratio of Indigenous Australian EFTSU/Headcount Enrolments**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ratio: EFTSU/Headcount</th>
<th>Number of Institutions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0.91:1.00</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0.81:0.90</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0.71:0.80</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0.61:0.70</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total No. of Institutions</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 3: 1994 Ratios of Indigenous Australian EFTSU/Headcount
Enrolments: Minimum, Maximum, Median, Average, Standard Deviation by Mode of Study

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mode of Study</th>
<th>Full Time</th>
<th>Part Time</th>
<th>External</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Minimum</td>
<td>0.88</td>
<td>0.39</td>
<td>0.25</td>
<td>0.60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maximum</td>
<td>1.03</td>
<td>0.67</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>1.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Median</td>
<td>0.99</td>
<td>0.49</td>
<td>0.52</td>
<td>0.82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average</td>
<td>0.98</td>
<td>0.49</td>
<td>0.58</td>
<td>0.79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Standard Deviation</td>
<td>0.03</td>
<td>0.06</td>
<td>0.14</td>
<td>0.09</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The institutions with EFTSU: Enrolment ratios less than the system wide average have proportionately greater numbers of part time and external enrolments. Table 2 shows the system wide average ratio for full time students is 0.98 and for part timers, 0.49 and external students, 0.58, indicating that the practise of undertaking lower than the standard full time load does not appear to be wide spread.

In six institutions, according to the student statistical data provided by institutions to DEET, full time students averaged more than a full time load. While it is quite possible for such cases to occur with individual enrolments, such an outcome for all full time Indigenous students within an institution is more likely to result from inaccurate calculations of EFTSU. If this is the case, students may be incurring HECS liabilities unnecessarily and institutions incorrectly funded.

**Recommendation 6**

- That institutions should not only be accountable for implementing appropriate mechanisms to ensure (as much as is practicable) the accuracy of the enrolment statistics for Indigenous Australian students, but also be accountable for ensuring the accuracy of the EFTSU calculation.

For students studying part time or externally, the evidence was not clear that the demand for support remained the same as for a full time student. For this to occur, it would be expected that the Questionnaire responses to Question 6(e) regarding part time study and 6(c) regarding external study/distance education would indicate average cost relativities of around 2:1. Bearing in mind that the small number of respondents requires that interpretations be made with caution, Table 1 shows the average relativities to be 1.2 for part time and 2.1 for external. The large variability in the responses (between 0.5 and 2.0 for part time and between 1.0 and 4.0 for external) suggests no strong consensus exists across the higher education system, or simply that the difficulties respondents experienced in quantifying relativities is again evident. The average relativity of 2.1 for external study/distance education is discussed in more detail in the section on delivery of education to students in remote areas.
To further illustrate the nature of the cost relativities, a selection of comments provided by respondents to the questionnaire on supporting part time students are presented below:

- **Part time students do not use the centre as frequently as full time ones. ATAS is the major support mechanism for part-timers.**
- **Support for part time students is critical and must be available on demand. This frequently means having staff work outside of 'normal' hours.**
- **Student support needs are very much the same whether students are full or part time. The same counselling and support is likely to be necessary, the only difference being the number of subjects where study skills support is required.**
- **Most of the part time students are distance education enrolments in rural [areas] and interstate. Teleconferencing and support are costly to provide.**

The comments and the estimated relativities provided in the questionnaire point to a conclusion that the real costs of support may correlate to a relativity somewhere between EFTSU and headcount enrolments. Further anecdotal evidence given during the consultations also strongly suggests that the extent of support for all students, full time and part time, is very much dependent upon the individual needs of the student. Not all students seek support while others may draw heavily on the resources of the Unit/Centre. Whether or not these variations in individual demand for support counterbalance the general estimates provided in relation to study load has not been determined.

The arguments for a headcount based funding model also appear to relate to respondents' consistent comments about high staff workloads, a factor that points more to the overall inadequacy of support funding than its present basis in EFTSU.

It is, therefore, concluded that while there are some arguments in favour of a funding model based headcount enrolments, the Commonwealth's requirement for consistency in its approach to the overall funding of enrolments based on EFTSU under the Higher Education Funding Act should be maintained. However, the evidence presented favours the case for an increase in the system-wide level of support funding.

**Conclusions about the Factors Affecting Support Costs**

It was envisaged that from the cost data gathered for this review on the range of different factors affecting student support, it would be possible to compare the totality of these costs per EFTSU for each institution against the system-wide average level of funding per EFTSU. The paucity of reliable quantitative data across the full range of special factors identified as affecting support costs prevents any firm conclusions being drawn about the extent to which such costs, when dealt with in aggregate actually lead to significantly different levels of cost per EFTSU between institutions.
A factor in the responses that impact on the reliability of the quantitative data was the apparent difficulty respondents experienced in distinguishing the costs associated with student support from those of teaching, especially in institutions where the Aboriginal Education Unit/Centre undertook both teaching and support programs. Given the wide ranging practices and activities that could legitimately fall under the definition of 'support' this difficulty is understandable. It is further complicated by the fact that the cost of tutorial support is primarily provided through the ATAS. The outcome, therefore, suggests that an element of overlap in the data exists between estimates of costs covered by the support funds, the ATAS, and teaching funds.

Of the many factors influencing the cost of support, a number results from particular strategies for the provision of support that an institution has chosen, such as those associated with the introduction of culturally inclusive courses. Acknowledging different cost factors in a funding model may provide redress to those institutions that can already cite them as being part of their current portfolio. However, as other institutions develop similar higher cost strategies, the present funding inequities will re-emerge unless the system-wide level of funding continues to increase. Those institutions taking up a particular support strategy at a future date that has been embodied into the funding model would naturally expect that the costs incurred would be covered by an increase in funding. In the absence of a system-wide increase in funds, the funds for the new strategy would either not be forthcoming or would be sourced by reducing the funding to other institutions. Either way, the inequities will be seen to continue.

A consistent theme that has emerged during the review is the tendency for institutional administrators involved with internal resource allocation to view the Commonwealth's identified support funding as the only funds available for Indigenous Australian education programs. This often means that Units/Centres have to draw on support funds to supplement inadequate allocations of teaching funds. To continue with a support funding model that has costs as the primary driver would very likely exacerbate this situation. New programs designed to improve outcomes for Indigenous Australian students may not see the light of day unless institutions can obtain the funding for them from within the identified level of support funds.

A funding model that will focus institutions' energies on the achievement of better outcomes rather than one predicated on operational costs is seen as a better approach if the objectives of the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Policy are to be achieved, especially as they relate to self determination, cultural affirmation and social justice. The evidence in favour of such an approach can be seen in the rapid improvements in institutions’ quality processes brought about by the Commonwealth’s introduction of reward funding. A key success factor in the reward process itself is the way in which outcomes are reviewed and assessed. For support funding, the review and assessment process must itself be seen to honour the commitments to self determination by including Indigenous Australians in the decision making.
It is therefore proposed that the funding model include a substantial component be allocated to institutions according to negotiated student load (EFTSU) forecasts and the remaining funds be allocated in recognition of the effectiveness of institutions' support processes and the achievement of successful outcomes for Indigenous Australian students. With respect to the factors cited as influencing support costs, the following recommendation is made:

**Recommendation 7**

- The various factors cited as influencing support costs be recognised, quantitatively, in the funds allocation model provided sufficient and reliable data exist that clearly link those factors to the implementation of appropriate processes and achievement of successful outcomes for Indigenous Australian students.
A Funding Model Option

Any funding model that is to be effective at the system-wide level needs to be transparent both in terms of the principles upon which it is based and the mechanisms for its implementation. As such, it cannot be expected that the model will take into account all the complexities of educational access, delivery, and the necessary support systems that exist in higher education. Instead, the model should, at the very least, provide an equitable distribution of funds.

To achieve both transparency and equity, the model should encompass two broad components:

- negotiated student load (EFTSU) forecasts as being the major input in the higher education process and the primary cost driver; and
- recognition of appropriate processes and acknowledgment of outcomes.

It is therefore proposed that a funding arrangement be implemented that acknowledges and honours the concepts of empowerment and self determination, both of which are embodied in Commonwealth Indigenous Australian policy initiatives. In turn, the model needs to also place the onus on institutions to similarly commit themselves to such principles, but without penalising the very people that the funding aims to support. As these principles become integral parts of university operations the funding model can evolve toward one that increasingly rewards appropriate outcomes. In the meantime, a negotiated combination of inputs, processes and outcomes is considered to be the most appropriate basis for a funding model.

It has been recommended earlier that the Commonwealth direct the recent increase in support funding to institutions that can demonstrate a commitment to the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Policy objectives through the provision of appropriate support infrastructure and services and in achieving successful outcomes for Indigenous Australian students. This increase represents 20% of available funds in 1996. The remaining funds should be allocated to institutions according to a flat rate per EFTSU.

Recommendation 8a

☐ 80% of support funds be allocated at a flat rate per EFTSU for negotiated targets of EFTSU on a rolling triennial basis.

Any review of performance in meeting the targets should acknowledge a buffer zone of around +/- 10% variation (actual minus target) that does not cause a funding alteration. Such reviews of targets and funding should consider performance over a 3 year timeframe, with particular emphasis on achieving
targets in undergraduate degree and postgraduate programs. Funding and student load target reductions should only be made after consultation and negotiation with institutions and their Indigenous Australian representatives. This negotiation and consultation process also applies where over-enrolments occur although any funding increases would be subject to funds availability.

**Recommendation 8b**

☐ 20% of support funds be distributed according to institutions’ relative performance comprising both processes and outcomes in achieving institution-specific objectives and national objectives, as assessed from the Aboriginal Education Strategies presented in their Education Profile submission to DEET.

Each institution’s Aboriginal Education Strategy submitted to DEET as part of the rolling triennial Education Profile negotiations is an essential ingredient in the development of a support funding model.

The Aboriginal Education Strategy should contain a self-assessment of the institution’s commitment to the 8 Key Indigenous Public Policy Principles outlined in the previous chapter, evidence of the quality of its support processes, and a statement of the outcomes achieved, both qualitative and quantitative.

Recognising that there may be institution specific factors that influence the cost of support, institutions may also present a case for recognition of such costs within this component of the model, provided that such costs can be substantiated and linked to the achievement of successful outcomes.

Consistent with the partnership principle, the processes and criteria for determining this component of support funding should be established in consultation with the Indigenous Australian community in higher education. Examples include: access and participation rates achieved with appropriate progress toward improved retention and success rates; the mix of participation by course level and discipline area; and transition rates from bridging and enabling courses to degree programs.

**Recommendation 9**

☐ The definition of appropriate outcomes for Indigenous Australian students, and criteria and performance measures by which they are assessed, should be determined in a collaborative framework by Indigenous Australian peoples, higher education institutions and the Commonwealth.

The equity performance indicators proposed by Martin (1994) relating to access, participation, retention and success were required of institutions for the first time in the Education Profile for the 1995–1997 triennium. At the same time as proposing the use of these quantitative indicators Martin clearly acknowledged that they were insufficient in themselves. ‘However, there is not yet general agreement of what may be suitable qualitative equity measures.’ Responses to Questions 8 and 9 of the Questionnaire relating to the use of quantitative and
qualitative indicators are summarised in Appendices 4 and 5 respectively, and indicate that general attention is already paid to quantitative indicators similar if not identical to those proposed by Martin. It is further evident that the qualitative evaluation processes are institution specific and often relate to aspects that are difficult to measure such as increased trust, and the positive effects of having participated in higher education. There is evidence that increased use is being made of student surveys and exit interviews. However, much work is still needed to bring the qualitative and quantitative evaluation processes together in a manner that would have them accepted within a national review and funding model. The continuation of this work in developing the indicators in the context of identifying ‘best practice’ examples needs to be done in full collaboration with the Indigenous Australian community.

Recommendation 10

- Quantitative performance indicators relating to student access, participation, retention and success should be an integral part of the performance review process provided due consideration is given to the qualitative factors that underpin Indigenous Australian higher education.

Recommendation 11

- That DEET works with the Indigenous Australian community and the institutions to develop a framework for regular Indigenous ‘quality audits’ that focus on identifying and rewarding strengths in the provision of Indigenous Australian education.

Clearly, the Commonwealth can prescribe the guidelines with respect to financial accountability but assessment of performance must honour the spirit of self determination and partnership. For example, there is no argument that increasing the number of graduates is a critical success factor, yet achievement of increased numbers of graduates must be balanced against the cultural affirmation goal as defined by the Indigenous Australian community.

Therefore, it is proposed that the support funds be allocated to institutions according to a range of criteria that are established in collaboration with the Indigenous Australian community in higher education and reviewed annually by a nationally constituted committee.
Recommendation 12

☐ The Minister establish a nationally constituted committee comprising representatives of Indigenous Australians in higher education, the AVCC, and DEET with terms of reference to review, monitor and advise on matters concerning:

- the setting of broad parameters for identifying and measuring successful outcomes for Indigenous Australian students;
- the criteria by which support funds are to be allocated;
- the mechanisms for reviewing progress toward achieving successful outcomes, including the appropriateness of existing and proposed performance indicators;
- the process by which institutions measure their progress and performance in meeting Aboriginal Education Objectives and those of the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Policy; and
- the higher education system’s demonstrated commitment to the eight Key Indigenous Public Policy Principles underpinning higher education for Indigenous Australians.

Implementation of the Model

The review team is confident that the proposed model addresses the key areas of concern raised by the Indigenous Australian community. Fundamental to the model is the need for the Commonwealth and the institutions to work more in partnership with the Indigenous Australian community to embrace the Commonwealth’s stated commitment to self determination, empowerment and social justice.

A model that funds a combination of student load targets, appropriate processes and outcomes readily satisfies the requirements of transparency and equity. It is acknowledged, however, that it will take further work, discussion and negotiation to reach a consensus on the details by which the funds are to be distributed, the arrangements for gathering and reviewing the information necessary for an informed assessment to be made of each institution, and the extent to which each institution’s allocation is made public. Nevertheless, there are sufficient elements identified that allow DEET to begin the process of moving toward funding of outcomes. By way of initialisation, DEET’s immediate priority should be to re-confirm realistic student load forecasts with each institution and verify the accuracy of the actual student load reported by each institution.

Recommendation 13

☐ That DEET commence implementation of the model in the 1996 funding and at the same time, place on notice to the proposed Committee of Review, that the model be reviewed and refined for progressive implementation over the 1997–1999 triennium.
Bibliography


Bin-Sallik, M. A. 1990, *Aboriginal Tertiary Education in Australia—how well is it serving the needs of Aborigines?*, SACAE Publications Unit.


### Acronyms

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<td>EFTSU</td>
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## Appendix 1

### Distribution of Support Funding for Indigenous Australian Students in Higher Education, 1994–96

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Sources: 1. Higher Education Funding for the 1994 - 96 Triennium DEET, 21 December 1993, Table 5.4 upgraded to 1994 price levels.

2. Supplementary Higher Education Funding Report for the 1994 - 96 Triennium DEET, 9 December 1994, Table 3.9
Appendix 2

Institutions Visited by the Review Team

New South Wales
Charles Sturt University
University of Western Sydney

Queensland
Central Queensland University
Queensland University of Technology
University of Southern Queensland

Western Australia
Curtin University of Technology
Edith Cowan University
Murdoch University
University of Western Australia

South Australia
University of South Australia

Tasmania
University of Tasmania

Northern Territory
Northern Territory University
Batchelor College

Australian Capital Territory
Australian National University
Appendix 3

Questionnaire (distributed to all institutions in the higher education sector)

Background and Guidelines

Evaluations and Investigations Program

A Review of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Support Funding in Higher Education

Return to: Mr Dennis Ham, University Statistician
Curtin University of Technology
GPO Box U1987, Perth WA 6001
Phone: (09) 351 2240
Fax: (09) 351 2084
Email: d.ham@admin.curtin.edu.au

Due Date: 28 July 1995

Who Should Complete This Questionnaire?

Questions 1, 2 and 3 we would expect to be answered by the University's Planning or Financial staff; Question 4 to be answered by the Aboriginal Unit/Centre staff and/or the University’s Financial staff; and Questions 5 to 10 to be answered by the Aboriginal Unit/Centre staff and/or other areas of the University as appropriate.

Basic Ground-rules

When actual data is not readily available, use your best estimates. Only answer questions that are pertinent to your institution. Feel free to contact us to discuss or clarify any aspect of the questionnaire or the review itself. If you are telephoning, either reverse the charge or ring and ask us to call you back. Remember that the questions relate to supporting students, not teaching students, although we recognise that it is often difficult to draw a distinction when support activities relate to academic progress.

Confidentiality

Responses to this questionnaire will be kept confidential to the review team. Individual institutions will not be identified in any of the data or commentary presented in the report to DEET except where such data are already publicly available.
The review will be examining support funding for Indigenous Australian students from a system-wide perspective. The data gathered from this questionnaire will only be used in the context of constructing a system-wide picture of the nature of support provided and its cost. It is not the intention in this review to single out individual institutions as examples of either best practice or otherwise.

**Purpose of the Review**

The purpose of this review is to investigate the nature, extent and cost of support provided by higher education institutions to Indigenous Australian students to assist the Government in formulating an equitable mechanism for distributing support funds among institutions. DEET has specified terms of reference for the review to investigate:

1. The link between support funding and student load.
2. Support costs and factors affecting support costs:
   - what is currently being spent on support services;
   - what is the current range of support services; and
   - what is the adequacy of support provided.
3. The link between support funding and successful outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students:
   - review of institutional strategies to improve retention and participation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students; and
   - measurement of successful participation and outcomes.
4. Consideration of support funding alongside other funding for support services through ATAS, ABSTUDY, the Vocational and Educational Guidance for Aboriginals Scheme, etc.
5. Options for providing a more equitable distribution of support funding keeping in mind the overall objectives of the Government for support funding.

**Definition of Support**

The National Aboriginal Education Policy includes goals to ‘ensure equitable access for Aboriginal people’ [Goal 9] and raise the level of participation [Goal 12] and graduation rates [Goal 16] of Indigenous Australians in higher education to the same as that which currently exists for all Australians1. The review team acknowledges that the concept of a successful outcome for an Indigenous Australian student may not be measured solely by such quantitative indicators. Accordingly, the review team proposes that support services be defined as any activity undertaken within an institution to improve the participation, retention and completion rates, and other qualitative outcomes of Indigenous Australian students.
Review Methodology

The methodology for the review involves gathering information from five different sources so that the nature, extent and cost of support can be examined from different perspectives as well as from both qualitative and quantitative bases. These sources encompass: consultations with institutions, the Indigenous Australian community in higher education, and State/Territory Aboriginal Education Advisory Groups; focus groups of Indigenous Australian students and graduates; written submissions in response to this questionnaire; institutions’ Aboriginal Education Strategy documents; performance indicators from the Equity Software produced for DEET under the directorship of Ms Lin Martin; and detailed data on support costs gathered using Activity Based Costing methodologies.

The Questionnaire

The questionnaire has been designed to complement the consultations so that similar information is gathered through both media. However, whereas the questionnaire allows institutions to provide a greater amount of quantitative data, it is expected that the consultations will yield more qualitative information. The support funds provided through the Commonwealth Operating Grant are given on the cover page as a point of reference. The questionnaire aims to construct a picture of how institutions deal with three broad phases of student support provision: planning and resource allocation (Qs 1–4), processes, costs and cost relativities (Qs 5–7), and evaluation (Qs 8–9). Question 10 invites institutions to provide comments in relation to the review’s terms of reference, either in general or pertinent to the institution, and to offer comment about the future approach to distributing the support funds.

Q1. Describe the University’s strategies, or budget allocation formula, for the allocation of Aboriginal Support Funding to university operational units.

The purpose of this question is look at the way that institutions incorporate support for Indigenous Australian students in their planning and resource allocation processes.

Q2. Where were the Aboriginal Support Funds provided within the Commonwealth Operating Grant (as detailed on the cover page to this questionnaire) allocated in the 1994 and 1995 University Operating Budgets?

This question deals only with support funds specifically provided by DEET in the Operating Grant. DEET has indicated that these support funds are the minimum that institutions are expected to allocate to support activities for Indigenous Australian students. If the University allocates more than this amount, then report this extra amount in Q3.
Q3. In the 1994 and 1995 University Operating Budgets, were general university funds other than the Aboriginal Support Funds reported in Q2 allocated for the specific support of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students? If yes, where were these funds allocated?

This question deals only with budgets allocated by the University to support Indigenous Australian students over and above that specifically provided by DEET in the Operating Grant. Do not include support services that are available to the general student population.

Q4. What other sources of funding for the support of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders did the University receive in 1994? e.g. ATAS, VEGAS, NPRF etc.

These sources may be from Commonwealth, State, industry or private donation/bequest. The purpose of this question is to complete the picture of the amount of resources committed to supporting Indigenous Australian students. The data obtained will not be used to recommend variations to the levels of support funding allocated through the Commonwealth Operating Grant.

Q5. List the types of support provided for Indigenous Australian students in 1994 by the University out of its operating funds under each of subheadings below, and estimate the expenditure on providing the support in 1994. Note the expenditure given below should relate to (but not necessarily equal) the sum of funds detailed in Questions 2 and 3.

Please provide answers on the actual support provided in 1994. The majority, if not all, of institutions’ financial systems are not able to directly provide expenditure by activity. Therefore, the review team asks that the best estimate of expenditure is given where such information is not readily available from the financial records.

Although core elements of support will be common to most institutions, it is expected that other forms of support will vary from institution to institution depending on the way that University’s themselves define support. It is suggested that respondents group support into various categories eg: tutorial support; welfare/counselling; student, community and educational advisory/consultative groups; consumables such as photocopying; infrastructure such as computing equipment/software, resource/materials, common meeting/study areas etc; and so on.

Q6. What special factors influence the cost of providing support for Indigenous Australian students at the University? Give a brief description of the factors relevant to your University, the number of students (EFTSUs) affected, and an estimate of its cost relativity in 1994.

Note that in this question we are interested in the relative cost of supporting students, not the relative cost of teaching students. i.e. Does it cost more/same/less to support a student undertaking for example, a science course compared to a humanities course; or to support students in different
course levels; or students in urban versus remote areas; or mainstream courses versus courses specifically for Indigenous Australian students; or full time versus part time students? Please only provide answers where they are relevant to your institution. It is expected that your responses will represent the best estimate of persons qualified to form an assessment of relative costs, unless specific data are available that would support your response.

Take as a base, the cost of supporting Indigenous Australian students at an urban campus undertaking an undergraduate diploma/degree course in the disciplines of Humanities, Social Studies or Education. Make this base cost equal to 1.0. Then, compared to this base of 1.0, estimate the relative support cost of other factors listed in the questionnaire. e.g. if it is a lower cost, your answer will be a fraction of 1 (e.g. 0.9 or 90%), if it is the same, the answer is 1.0, and if it is a greater cost the answer is a number greater than 1 (e.g. 1.5 means that the cost is 50% greater).

Parts (f) and (g) seek the actual or estimated costs of supporting students in multi-campus institutions and in institutions with small numbers of Indigenous Australian enrollments respectively.

Part (h) allows for anything not already covered in the preceding sections that is pertinent to your university to be included.

Q7. **What other forms of support for Indigenous Australian students would have been provided in 1994 if resources beyond what has been stated in Q5 had been available? Identify the type of support and estimate its cost.**

This question addresses, in part, the adequacy of support provided. It provides an opportunity for institutions to indicate the dollar value of support that would have been provided in 1994 to achieve the educational goals contained in your institution’s Aboriginal Education Strategy, if resources had been available.

It is stated that this question addresses the adequacy ‘in part’ because the full answer comes also from the evaluation process (Qs 8 & 9). i.e., the use of qualitative and quantitative measures to assess how well the support that is provided brings about successful outcomes for Indigenous Australian students.

Please answer this question with respect to 1994 so that it can be linked with your answer to Q5. Please do not treat it as a ‘wish-list’. It is important that you link the activities and costs with achievable outcomes.
Q8. What qualitative and quantitative measures does the University & Q9 use to evaluate how well the support provided for Indigenous Australian students is bringing about successful outcomes? Describe the outcomes, how they are measured and the results (if available) for 1994.

The review team would like to know how your institution evaluates the success of its support programs. Again, please relate these questions specifically to 1994 and your Aboriginal Education Strategy. What are the outcomes that your institution is aiming for and how are they measured? If any changes to the evaluation process are planned for 1995 please also indicate these.

If the answers to these questions are already covered in your Aboriginal Education Strategy (as submitted to DEET along with the Education Profile submission) please indicate 'refer to Aboriginal Education Strategy'. However, you are encouraged to add further detail as appropriate.

Q10. Other comments. Please provide any other comments that are pertinent to the terms of reference for this review, in particular, indicating a preferred approach to distributing the support funds to universities.

Self explanatory.

Your participation in this review is sincerely appreciated. Thank you for taking the time to complete this questionnaire.

Endnotes:


Questionnaire
Evaluations and Investigations Program
A Review of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Support Funding in Higher Education

Return to: Mr Dennis Ham, University Statistician
Curtin University of Technology
GPO Box U1987, Perth WA 6001
Phone: (09) 351 2240
Fax: (09) 351 2084
Email: d.ham@admin.curtin.edu.au

Due Date: 28 July 1995

Institution:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Institution</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>53</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Planned EFTSU *

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Actual EFTSU as at 31 March</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>$</th>
<th>$</th>
<th>$</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Support funds provided within the Commonwealth Operating Grant

* Source: 1994 data: 'Higher Education Funding for the 1994-96 Triennium' DEET, 21 December 1993, Table 5.4
1995-96 data: 'Supplementary Higher Education Funding Report for the 1994-96 Triennium' DEET, 9 December 1994, Table 3.9
Q1. Describe the University's strategies, or budget allocation formula, for the allocation of Aboriginal Support Funding to university operational units.
Q2. Where were the Aboriginal Support Funds provided within the Commonwealth Operating Grant (as detailed on the cover page to this questionnaire) allocated in the 1994 and 1995 University Operating Budgets?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1994 $</th>
<th>1995 $</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(a) To support providers located in Aboriginal Education units or centres</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(b) To support providers located in other academic organisation units of the university</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(c) To support providers located in university service units; e.g. counselling, health services, equity office</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(d) To central university operations; e.g. registrarial, accounting services, human resources etc</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(e) To Library</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(f) To Computing</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(g) To university overheads; e.g. rent, energy, insurance etc</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(h) Other (please specify)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Q3. In the 1994 and 1995 University Operating Budgets, were general university funds other than the Aboriginal Support Funds reported in Q2 allocated for the specific support of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students?

Yes: [ ]  No: [ ] Go to Q4

Where were these funds allocated?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1994 $</th>
<th>1995 $</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(a) To support providers located in Aboriginal Education units or centres</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(b) To support providers located in other academic organisation units of the university</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(c) To support providers located in university service units; e.g. counselling, health services, equity office</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(d) To central University operations; e.g. registrarial, accounting services, human resources etc</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(e) To Library</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(f) To Computing</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(g) To university overheads; e.g. rent, energy, insurance etc</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(h) Other (please specify)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Q4. What other sources of funding for the support of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders did the University receive in 1994?

- ATAS: Aboriginal Tutorial Assistance Scheme
- VEGAS: Vocational Education and Guidance for Aboriginals Scheme
- National Priority Reserve Funds
- Other, please identify the source(s) and value

Q5. List the types of support provided for Indigenous Australian students in 1994 by the University out of its operating funds under each of sub-headings below, and estimate the expenditure on providing the support in 1994. Note the expenditure given below should relate to the sum of funds detailed in Questions 2 and 3:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Support Provided:</th>
<th>Estimated 1994 Expenditure</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(a) Provided by Aboriginal Education Unit/Centre</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sub-total</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(b) Provided by Other Academic Organisational Units</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sub-total</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(c) Provided by Central University Services areas *</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sub-total</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* e.g. Central Admin, Library, Computing, Counselling, etc
Q6. What special factors influence the cost of providing support for Indigenous Australian students at the University? Give a brief description of the factors relevant to your University, the number of students (EFTSU) affected, and an estimate of its cost relativity in 1994. ie. Take as a base, the cost of supporting Indigenous Australian students at an urban campus undertaking an undergraduate diploma/degree course in the disciplines of Humanities, Social Studies or Education. Make this base cost equal to 1.0. Compared to this base of 1.0, estimate the relative cost of other factors identified below. eg. if it is a lower cost, your answer will be a fraction of 1 (eg. 0.9 or 90%), if it is the same, the answer is 1.0, and if it is a greater cost the answer is a number greater than 1 (eg. 1.5 means that the cost is 50% greater).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>EFTSU</th>
<th>Estimated Cost Relativity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(a)</td>
<td>Differential support costs across discipline areas ie. relative to supporting students in the Humanities, Social Studies or Education, what is the estimated relative cost of providing support to students in:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Humanities, Social Studies, Education</td>
<td>1.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visual and Performing Arts</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Business, Economics</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Law</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health, Medicine</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Science</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mathematics, Computing</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engineering, Built Environment</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agriculture, Veterinary Science</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comments:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


(b) Differential support costs across course levels relative to a base of 1.0 for an undergraduate diploma/degree course:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Bridging/Enabling Programs:</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Undergraduate Diploma/Degree:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Postgraduate coursework:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Higher degree research:</td>
<td>1.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Comments

(c) Costs associated with supporting students in remote areas relative to a base of 1.0 for an urban student:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Urban based course delivery</th>
<th>1.0</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Remote area course delivery (on site)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Course delivery via distance education/external studies</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Comments

(d) Provision of culturally appropriate courses for Indigenous Australians eg. competency based programs, or specifically tailored courses, relative to a base of 1.0 for a mainstream course eg. Bachelor of Arts

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mainstream Bachelor of Arts</th>
<th>1.0</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Culturally appropriate courses for Indigenous Australians</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Comments
(e) Differential costs of supporting full time and part time students, relative to a base of 1.0 for a full time student:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>EFTSU</th>
<th>Estimated Cost Relativity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Full time students</td>
<td>Part time students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comments</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(f) Multi-campus institutions. Describe the types of cost and estimate the extra cost associated with each campus:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>EFTSU on Each Campus</th>
<th>Extra cost per campus</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Institutions with small numbers of Indigenous Australian enrolments:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comments</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(h) Other factors (please specify)
Q7. What other forms of support for Indigenous Australian students would have been provided in 1994 if resources beyond what has been stated in Q5 had been available? Identify the type of support and estimate its cost.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Support Provided:</th>
<th>$ Estimated 1994 Expenditure</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><em>(a)</em> Provided by Aboriginal Education Unit/Centre</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Sub-total</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>(b)</em> Provided by Other Academic Organisational Units</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Sub-total</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>(c)</em> Provided by Central University Services areas *</td>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Sub-total</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* e.g. Central Admin, Library, Computing, Counselling, etc
Q8. What quantitative measures does the University use to evaluate how well the support provided for Indigenous Australian students is bringing about successful outcomes?

Describe the outcomes, how they are measured and the quantitative results (if available) for 1994.
Q9. What qualitative measures does the University use to evaluate how well the support provided Indigenous Australian students is bringing about successful outcomes?

Describe the outcomes (if different to Q8) how they are measured and the qualitative results for 1994 if available.
Q10. Other comments. Please provide any other comments that are pertinent to the terms of reference for this review, in particular, indicating a preferred approach to distributing the support funds to universities.

Your participation in this review is sincerely appreciated. Thank you for taking the time to complete this questionnaire.
Appendix 4

Examples of Types of Support Provided by Institutions

Institution 1

The Centre provides support for students in a wide variety of areas. These areas can be broadly categorised as follows:

Counselling
- Academic
  - cross campus negotiations
  - assessing tutors
  - mediating conflicts with lecturers
  - assistance with enrolment, deferrals, appeals and applications for supplementing exams
  - negotiating places in courses with Schools
  - orientation Program for mainstream students
  - teaching study and writing skills
  - providing computer training
  - providing tuition above normal teaching duties
  - assistance with Applications for Scholarships, cadetships etc
  - assistance with recognition of prior learning
- Personal
  - conflict resolution
  - substance abuse
  - assistance with accommodation
  - grievance counselling
  - family support
  - child care assistance
  - financial guidance
  - providing referrals to specialised support services
  - providing assistance with Rental Subsidy scheme
  - provision of mentors
  - relationship counselling
• Counselling
  – exit Counselling.
  – developing career paths
  – assistance with resume writing and job applications
  – coordinate information sessions regard career options
  – preparing references for students to support them in employment applications

• Other support
  – social support (ie running social functions; establishing peer support groups)
  – cultural support (ie referring students to Aboriginal mentors)
  – support and liaison with the Aboriginal Students Association
  – negotiations with TAFE for course information and places
  – development of student peer networks
  – organise and participate in seminars and workshops to enhance students cultural identity, empowerment and Aboriginality

• Infrastructure
  – provision of student computer laboratory for student use (computers, printers, software furniture)
  – provision of a resource room (study areas, books, journals, copier, furniture, staff television, videos etc)
  – student common room
  – resourcing of state-wide learning centres.

**Institution 2**

*Academic Support and Tutoring*

– course advice
– student administration
– organising extra tutorial support [ATAS]
– academic tutoring with individuals and groups
– providing resources and resource materials
– monitoring of progression and retention of students
– liaising with faculties in terms of inclusive curriculum, negotiation regarding student performance, representing students for academic purposes eg on faculty academic boards and exclusion boards
– developing peer support [group study]
**Personal Support**
- counselling and referral for individuals and groups
- facilitating peer support through social events
- assist with accommodation
- supporting and liaising with families

**Cultural Affirmation**
- cultural awareness celebrations [annually]
- adherence to appropriate cultural protocols [eg assisting students to meet cultural obligations such as funerals, stone openings, family commitments]
- establishing a cultural ethos and presence within the university
- provide cultural resources
- recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander participation at graduation ceremonies [academic gown sashes and separate function for Indigenous students]
- indigenous staff

**Financial Advice And Support**
- rental subsidy
- counselling
- arranging for student loans
- liaising with DEET [ABSTUDY, ATAS, VEGAS]

**Student Associations**
- affiliated with university student union
- organise social activities for students staff and families
- student representative on student union board of management
- representation on Centre and university committees

**Enabling (Introductory Tertiary Skills)**
- study skills/library skills
- assignment writing
- time management skills
- computer literacy
- stress management
- note taking
- seminar compilation and delivery
- thinking skills
- research and research report writing skills
- genre applications
- mathematical processes and concepts
Research

- business/centre research
- science group
- retention and progression rates of students studying in the Arts faculty
- cross cultural awareness training for university staff
- investigation into the access and participation of Indigenous Australian students
- appointment of an Access and Participation Officer
- Uni-rural Link Project [appointment of a coordinator]
- rural Access Project [establishing electronic communication links with Indigenous secondary students in rural and remote areas]
Appendix 5

Enrolments and Ratios of EFTSU: Headcount Enrolments by Institution, 1994

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>STATE/INSTITUTIONS</th>
<th>1994 Enrolments</th>
<th>Ratio of EFTSU: Enrolments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Full Time</td>
<td>Part Time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NEW SOUTH WALES</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Charles Sturt University</td>
<td>106</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Macquarie University</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Southern Cross University</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University of New England</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University of New South Wales</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University of Newcastle</td>
<td>117</td>
<td>28</td>
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<tr>
<td>University of Sydney</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University of Technology, Sydney</td>
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<td>106</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University of Western Sydney</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University of Wollongong</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>883</td>
<td>362</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VICTORIA</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deakin University</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>La Trobe University</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monash University</td>
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<tr>
<td>Royal Melbourne Institute of</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Technology</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Swinburne University of Technology</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>University of Ballarat</td>
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<td>2</td>
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<td>University of Melbourne</td>
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<td>Victoria University of Technology</td>
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<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>350</td>
<td>162</td>
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<tr>
<td>QUEENSLAND</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Central Queensland University</td>
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<tr>
<td>University of Southern Queensland</td>
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Enrolments and Ratios of EFTSU: Headcount Enrolments by Institution, 1994 (continued)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>STATE/INSTITUTIONS</th>
<th>1994 Enrolments</th>
<th>Ratio of EFTSU:Enrolments</th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Full Time</td>
<td>Part Time</td>
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<td>WESTERN AUSTRALIA</td>
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<td>Edith Cowan University</td>
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<td>0</td>
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<td>76</td>
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<tr>
<td>Batchelor College</td>
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<td>TOTAL AUSTRALIA</td>
<td>3530</td>
<td>1592</td>
</tr>
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</table>
Appendix 6

Responses to Question 8—Quantitative Measures of Evaluation

Response 1

Staff members as part of their teaching evaluations are able to include specific questions about the support given to ATSI students in their classes. Those responses are rated on a 6-point Likert scale. The results are confidential to the individual staff member but may be used to improve support facilities in future years. Grade point averages of students in different categories are collated by the university statisticians. ATSI students can be identified and tracked by Aboriginal support staff. Completion rates are also monitored.

Response 2

The Centre continually scrutinises all aspects of its operations and does so via: enrolment/attendance checks; tutorial assessment and participation; direct interaction with students; and feedback from academic staff and the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Community. The Centre Convenor is responsible for the production of formal progress reports to the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Advisory Committee at least once per semester.

The Centre will monitor the grade point averages of individual students enabling early identification of any student requiring additional academic support. Staff of the Centre provide tutorial support to those students requiring additional assistance in their studies. Students requiring specialist support will be linked into the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Tutorial Assistance Scheme. Centre staff receive feedback from University lecturers about students' progress. Staff of the Centre counsel students who are identified as experiencing difficulties to reduce course loads as appropriate. Records of the students who withdraw or take leave of absence from their studies are maintained by the Centre to enable identification of contributing factors and assist with developing strategies to decrease attrition. The Centre Convenor will include progression statistics in the Centre's annual report to the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Advisory Committee. The University has not to date produced attrition statistics for its student population. While the Centre does record attrition statistics for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, this information is difficult to evaluate without reference to the wider community and has not been included.

Response 3

Quantitative Measures Include:

1. Ongoing monitoring of enrolment numbers and trends;
2. Monitoring of outcomes -
   - successful course completions;
• articulations and progressions to higher level courses at the institution and elsewhere;
• transition to employment;
  (where? in industry? in community development? in education? in ATSI policy areas?)

3. Use of surveys to gauge student satisfaction with academic and support delivery;

4. Analysis and number and nature of Indigenous Australian student contacts with Student Support Unit. (or pre - 1995 equivalent).

Response 4

Outcomes are listed as per Aboriginal Education Strategy. Some of the objectives listed in the strategy are quantitative, such as increasing enrolments and graduation numbers/rates and results are used as an indicator not necessarily as a successful or non successful outcome. Participation and graduation rates cannot be the major method to evaluate support, there may well be some correlation but numerous factors affect why an Indigenous student studies, continues to study, discontinues study, withdraws or completes; support is only one of those factors.

The following table is used as an indicator to show patterns of participation. The withdrawn rate in the table is misleading, as some students who complete a section of the bridging course and decide not to continue onto the next section, are actual completions and are awarded a certificate but show as withdrawn.

1995 Status of Students who were official commencements in 1994 in all faculties at course level as at 31 March 1995

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Status:</th>
<th>%</th>
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<tr>
<td>Still enrolled</td>
<td>39.2</td>
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<tr>
<td>Completed</td>
<td>2.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Completed 1+&amp; enrol other</td>
<td>1.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Changed course &amp; still enrol.</td>
<td>2.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deferred</td>
<td>5.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Terminated or Excluded</td>
<td>5.2</td>
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<tr>
<td>Withdrawn</td>
<td>41.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Changed &amp; deferred</td>
<td>0.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Changed &amp; withdrew</td>
<td>2.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A review of Aboriginal students access at the University was conducted in 1994 and found in terms of completion rates, many Aboriginal students would be judged not to have succeeded.
In educational terms, however, and in terms of increasing employment opportunities many students may be succeeding in their own terms.

Response 5

Quantitative Data:
1. Counts by modes of entry;
2. Probability of passing 75% of credit points attempted in:
   (a) first year;
   (b) all years combined showing trends annually over 4 years for locals/non locals, males/females;
3. Mean weighted average mark annually over 4 years for Males/Females, Locals/non locals;
4. Progression rates from one stage to next compared to;
5. Completion of degree rates University;
6. Subject pass rates average.

Aboriginal students are identified by self declaration on enrolment form. Data is taken from the University’s student records system and analysed using SAS and in Excel. Employment statistics are taken from the GCCA survey.

Response 6

(i) A student tracking project is being developed to evaluate the quality of the services provided - this involves the development of a database on students which contains general and specific information:
   (a) **general**—numbers of enquiries, applicants, enrolments, withdrawals, graduations, employment;
   (b) **specific** - files on individual students containing information on programmes, hours of tutoring received, semester results progress with ongoing assessment, interviews, - this is also used to review the provision of ATAS for reporting to DEET.

(ii) This project will help us to develop a model of Indigenous student participation as well a identifying factors affecting attrition and retention rates and help us to develop a model of acceptable attrition and retention rates.

(iii) Data is available to the advisory committee, staff of the university, to DEET regional/state/national to NATSIEP committees, AECG.

Response 7

We quantitatively monitor enrolment, retention, performance and graduation rates, and undertake quantitative research into factors affecting these variables. The research involves standard social-scientific procedures and makes use of statistical packages such as SPSS.
Response 8

Methods of quantitative measures and evaluation vary between units within the Centre. For example the Tertiary Support Unit is responsible for supporting approximately 70 mainstream students. Additionally, staff are also available to counsel students enrolled in the Health, Management, Sci tech and Bridging Course. This covers personal and academic counselling and support for 300+ students.

Outcomes are measured in terms of the number of students who continue to study (retention rates) and indeed graduation numbers. However it is not uncommon for students to take a Leave of Absence from studies or for students to transfer to another tertiary institution. This is also seen as a positive outcome. It is difficult to measure 'success' (eg if a student withdraws from study because they have been offered employment because of their partial completion of study, is this deemed a 'failure'?).

Student statistics are kept in this office and files are maintained on all mainstream ATSI students. Attrition rates of mainstream students are monitored and the reasons for withdrawals/failures are noted on file. Tertiary Support staff attempt to continue contact with students who leave University via letters and phone calls and through family members to encourage their return to study at a more suitable date. In addition to the above the two competency based programs receive feedback from student via questionnaires.

Other methods of qualitative measurement and evaluation of student support from students and the Aboriginal community include;

- the Aboriginal Advisory Committee (formal feedback);
- the regionally based staff members monthly reports (formal feedback);
- the students via meetings;
- formal evaluating sheets; and
- informed feedback from individuals, community representatives, employers and Aboriginal organisations.

Response 9

The quantitative measures used by the University to evaluate outcomes are the performance indicators outlined in the Martin report *Equity and General Performance Indicators in Higher Education*.

In terms of access in 1994, commencing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students were 1.52% of all commencing students. This is higher than the State reference value of 1%. It is important to note that the commencing students were not spread across faculties at the same rate as non Aboriginal students, but were concentrated in the enabling and other (Associate Diploma) category. Improving the spread of commencing students remains an important goal.
In terms of participation, the University has set a target of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander student participation of at least 1.5% of its student population. The participation rate for 1994 was 1.13%, which is above the state relativty, but has not reached the university’s own target. Participation figures also show the concentration of students in a narrow range of courses at the enabling and other levels. However it should be noted that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students are also participating in higher degrees by research, higher degrees by coursework and other postgraduate awards.

In terms of success, in 1994 the proportion of load undertaken which was passed by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students was 0.593. This progression rate compared with the progression rate of non-Aboriginal student is 0.7. The small numbers of students in most courses or subjects make conclusions hard to draw, but in areas where numbers are sufficient for comment, there are clearly major variations. Clearly, however, most Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students do not succeed in passing subjects at the same rate as non-Aboriginal students, and this is an area where much more needs to be done to identify and meet support needs.

In terms of apparent retention rates, the rate for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students is markedly below that of other students. Combined with the relatively low progression rates, it is clear that supporting students already in the University is the major task of the Unit for the planning period.

Response 10

The University Planning Unit maps:  
(1) retention rates - year by year basis;  
(2) completion rates (graduates) by course.

Support staff monitor:  
(1) numbers of students using tutorial support services;  
(2) student evaluation of tutorial support;  
(3) tutor evaluation of tutorial support services.

Outcomes show:  
- increasing pass rates;  
- increasing rates of retention;  
- increasing numbers of graduates.

Each component of Faculty Support undertakes a review of student progress during the semester and at the end of each semester. For example, Semester 1 results are checked for each student - provision of individualised support strategies for Semester 2 subjects. Therefore support staff provide statistical information to the School on student pass rates in each semester.

Support staff also monitor enquiries by Aboriginal students about availability of courses - admissions. They also provide advice and conduct special entry ‘testing’. They recommend students for special entry into courses, and follow through the admissions process to check that students eligible for courses get offers.
Support staff also keep records of contact with students (use of diaries, card systems).

There is a folder for each student which includes:

- student details;
- student results;
- correspondence (individual).

These records have been partly aggregated by the schools and formed part of the overall school report on its activities. However, the quantification of activity has been rather spasmodic and individual support staff records have not lent themselves to quantification. This is one of the reasons for the introduction of a new set of support forms to record the services provided to students in such a way that they can be meaningfully aggregated to record support activity across the University.

Response 11

This is effectively unknown. Our below 'standard' progression and retention rate are often quoted in a negative context, and our high attrition rates are used against us, particularly where new initiatives are discussed (this applies expectedly where additional funding is being sought).

Response 12

Significant efforts have been made by the Unit to develop a database from the Student Records system in order to provide accurate information on Aboriginal student enrolments both in terms of load and enrolment numbers. There still remain difficulties in ensuring accuracy in the responses to the Aboriginality question on the enrolment from which is the basis for the identification of Aboriginal students in the Student records system. The Unit's database enables the tracking of withdrawals, results and course completions and graduations of Aboriginal students.

The DEET Equity Performance Indicators software has been used to produce indicators for Access, Participation, Success and Retention for each year since 1992. These indicators show that Aboriginal people are represented in the University at a rate close to the rate of representation in the State population and their rates of success and retention, whilst less than the rates of other students, are improving and are generally greater than 80% of other students.

Furthermore, the Unit, as a Unit within Student Services, is implementing quality assurance mechanisms which involve the enhancement of databases, the development of performance indicators, and the implementation of client satisfaction surveys and leadership effectiveness indicators.
Response 13

Internal Evaluation and Monitoring

The University annually reviews its performance against equity goals and targets as part of its Strategic Planning process, including the course based projections and expected success outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students. Each year a report on recruitment, enrolment levels and a profile on the admission background of all students enrolled is prepared by Centre staff and presented to the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Policy Advisory Committee, and Academic Senate.

The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Policy Advisory Committee has endorsed this strategy document.

The Centre is required to report to DEET on the process of administration and on student progress through the dispersal of Aboriginal Tutorial Assistance Scheme funds to the University.

The University’s Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Program is still developing and enrolments are still not large. However, with the exception of the retention rate, progress over the last three years has been good. With small enrolments it is often difficult to find reliable performance indicators which eliminate statistical fluctuations between years. Indicators such as retention rates are meaningless for a program as small as the one at the University, and the loss of only a few students creates an unfair impression on unduly high attrition rates compared with larger programs.

The quantitative measure used by DEET regarding student’s success should be questioned for first year students enrolling through access entry.

Response 14

Subject Pass Rates - \( \frac{\text{\% number of subjects passed}}{\text{the number sat.}} \)

Student Pass Rates - \( \frac{\text{number of students passing 50\% or more of their subjects}}{\text{total number of students}} \)

Graduation Rates - \( \frac{\text{number of students that successfully completed their course}}{\text{the number of who should have completed that year}} \)
Appendix 7

Responses to Question 9—Qualitative Measures of Evaluation

Response 1

Recruitment into the programs is generally by ‘word of mouth’. Application rates by students suggest that the programs are viewed favourably by the Aboriginal community. The University conducts a course evaluation focus group with students which feeds back into the support services. Student feedback is obtained by questionnaire. There is also feedback from employers which seems to indicate that the support services provided by the university are successful.

Response 2

The Centre maintains a register of all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander enrolment enquiries.

Cross-checking and consideration of the State’s Admissions Centre data on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander applications and enrolments are undertaken. A register is maintained of all schools visited which have substantial Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander populations and of visits from groups of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students on Career and Vocational Guidance Camps.

Records are kept of the number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people admitted under the alternate entry and standard admissions categories.

Through informal channels such as student contact and direct mail outs from the Centre, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students not previously known to the Centre are encouraged to participate in its activities and to use its support services.

The University’s academic elements are required to report to the University equity and equal opportunity committees on their achievements with regard to meeting projected targets under their equity profiles.

Response 3

Qualitative Measures Include:

1. interview with individual students on an informal and ‘ad hoc’ basis;
2. formal and informal comment from academic and support staff, as with the Training for Aboriginal (TAP) program of 1994;
3. exit interviews and surveys with departing students prior to course completion;
4. consultations with Aboriginal community representatives;
5. consultation with CES staff;
6. consultations with industry representatives, particularly those involved with vocational training, and

7. consultations with other education and funding providers, such as staff of DEET and TAFE Colleges.

Response 4

No formal qualitative measures are used but it needs to be recognised that students who do not complete a course have had access and participation (at whatever level) in a formal process of framing in skills relevant to Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal societies.

Graduates in mainstream courses are tracked and surveyed and as a consequence we can track Aboriginal graduates into areas of employment or other activities since graduation.

The review of Aboriginal student access at the University that was conducted during 1994 concluded that from the qualitative data gathered, it was evident that many Aboriginal students at the University are mature age students with many family and community obligations outside their study commitments. It was also evident that many come to university after an interrupted and incomplete secondary education. Socio-economic and education factors, therefore, create extra burdens and complications for students studying at tertiary level.

In addition, the review found that:

(i) Aboriginal students' outcomes vary according to the course they enrol in.

(ii) the evidence suggests that many Aboriginal students who change course do not leave the university, but transfer their enrolment to another course. In other words they persist in their studies over many semesters.

The data from this 1994 review will assist in developing further qualitative measures for Aboriginal student support.

Response 5

Liaison with Aboriginal Students' Collective.

Input from AEC Visiting Committee members.

Working Party established in 1995 to explore ways to improve the interaction between Faculties and AEC in provision of support for students and culturally appropriate academic programs.

Most input suggests that we have considerable improvements to make in liaison with local communities, and with faculties and in providing the type and level of support students need and request.
Response 6

(i) as part of student tracking project mentioned in Q8, students are interviewed at start of their course, during, and when they graduate, if they withdraw, and later when they are employed. The results of this project will be used to help evaluate the success of the centre.

(ii) students are also asked to fill in evaluation forms on the centre, courses, subjects, staff and resources.

(iii) because of this lack of sufficient resources ($) it has been difficult to do anything but collect the data described in Q8 and Q9. Staff are full-time dealing with students to be able to spend time analysing data. When we are successful with further support funding or research $’s we will be able to analyse data.

Response 7

Our staff monitor the effectiveness of our activities in the course of their counselling, teaching and research support activities.

Response 8

In qualitative terms, successful outcomes can only be measured in anecdotal assessments provided by students either during or at the end of the year, through reporting to ATAS tutors and Centre staff and through the feedback of parents, family and friends. Certainly in some instances interventions have been instrumental in ensuring that some students stayed with their study programme. In past years, the graduation ceremonies have allowed and encouraged many students to reveal that without assistance from staff with personal and social issues they could not have stayed at the University.

Some examples of interventions are as follows: The success of these interventions was adjudged according to student’s ability to proceed with studies and their anecdotal assurances that the problems had been or were being alleviated.

(i) student J sought help with psychological counselling following involvement with drugs.

(ii) student N sought assistance following a family bereavement.

(iii) student I required assistance following an altercation with other students.

(iv) student P requested legal assistance with relationship problems.

(v) students H required counselling to assist with resolution of family conflict.

(vi) student S sought help with an identity crisis.

(vii) student G needed help following incident of physical abuse.
student H needed assistance to deal with episodes of paranoid schizophrenia.

students N and P sought advice on ways of dealing with problems of dislocation and loneliness.

student P required counselling on inter-family conflict situations.

Response 9

The Centre is able to measure in a number of qualitative ways the degree to which it is achieving successful outcomes. These include discussion with students, student requests for assistance, the degree of trust shown by students and the numbers of students who consistently use the services and facilities provided. It should be noted that successful student support does not always result in increased student access, success or retention, but in a result that is the best for the student. Such outcomes are individual and therefore hard to measure.

The formal responsibility for evaluating the outcome of support provided lies with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education and Employment Advisory Board. The Board has already conducted two major program reviews as an important part of its evaluation role. This involves discussion with students about their view of the success of the programs.

The Centre also monitors its own performance for report to the Board. This includes reports on the success of recruitment and orientation programs, publicity planning, resource allocation etc. Increasingly, the Centre is building evaluation into all its activities, particularly using student feedback as a measure of student satisfaction.

It should be noted that the Martin report suggested that qualitative indicators were not yet sufficiently developed to be applied systematically in the equity area.

Response 10

- All staff keep records on the interaction/support provided for students.
- All staff provide quarterly reports on their cohort of students. These reports cover a wide range of issues that relate to and impact on the students' progress. They are discussed at Support staff meetings, and lead to changes in process where applicable.
- Student feedback is also gained on tutorial support; strengths, weaknesses, etc.
- Support staff maintain contact with academic teaching staff re subject requirements, student needs and progress.

Outcomes

- closer contact with students;
- clearer identification of student needs; and
- increased ability to provide for the individual support needs of students.
As indicated earlier the qualitative measures have not been satisfactory in respect to recording the support program's activity. Support staff can supply anecdotal evidence of successful outcomes from providing support to Indigenous Australian students.

The Centre has undertaken two major reviews concerning Indigenous students during the past two years. One has looked at attrition rates and the other the structure required for provision of support.

The attrition rates project became bogged down in technical statistical argument regarding the absurdities that the then statistical system promulgated eg rates of 120% etc. The support provision recommendations are just now being implemented and will be accompanied by the establishment of a series of qualitative measures.

**Response 11**

- Each student is contacted in writing for comments but only one reply received, which was positive.
- Most of the emphasis in 1994 was on building relationships with the Aboriginal Community and establishing an Aboriginal Consultative Committee - both strategies have been extremely successful.

**Response 12**

1. Student progress is monitored by individual interviews with all students. Learning goals are established at the start of the semester, and evaluated by results at the end of the semester. The interview gains general information about the students' experience in study in relation to family responsibilities etc.

2. The evaluation of the 'support' programme by individuals and organisations in the Aboriginal communities rests on the measure of consultation with appropriate individuals and organisations and the commitment made by the University to:
   - developing inclusive curriculum;
   - increasing the numbers of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people employed at all levels in the University; and
   - the location of the Programme in relation to the University decision making processes.
Appendix 8

Responses to Question 10—Other Comments Pertinent to the Review

Response 1

The University is unable to suggest any fair way of distributing funds across institutions from the amount available in the total pool. However, those institutions which adopt a quality approach to their programs could be rewarded. For example, this University is having its Community Management Program reviewed by external consultants and commissioning an external review of its mainstream program in Aboriginal Studies.

Response 2

The institution acknowledges that it has been in a developmental mode in 1994 and 1995. This process has been a costly one involving large ‘in kind’ contributions from the institution to supplement Commonwealth government funding. The role which all College staff must play has been emphasised, particularly in the provision of social and tutorial support. The institution is committed to a continued effort directed towards the achievement of successful outcomes for increasing numbers of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students.

Response 3

There should be a formula developed taking into consideration the following factors:

- aboriginal enrolments;
- outcomes as developed by the institution;
- programmes that are offered eg; enabling courses;
- number of external enrolments;
- multi-campus institutions;
- institutions with small number of enrolments;
- remote area delivery and support (this is particularly important where demand is dispersed and transient centres have to be established); and
- growth.

In addition all support funds allocated to a university should be directed to the Aboriginal support unit.

A capital component should be added to support funding.
The negotiation procedure for profiles is appropriate but Aboriginal support units should be involved throughout the whole profile process. There should be a mirrored Aboriginal involvement within the Higher Education Division of DEET in the allocation process.

If it is that an Aboriginal Relative Funding Model is to be developed for distribution and allocation of support funds, the results and data from this questionnaire should not be the basis for developing such a model. A specific project needs to be initiated to develop that model with negotiation and input by universities and Aboriginal people specifically on the development of a model.

This is particularly important where demand is dispersed and transient centres have to be established.

Response 4

Tying support fund distribution to achieved enrolment figures at this stage will 'lock-in' a level of current failure in some institutions.

An appropriate phase-in period should be allowed and AEC strategies and plans should pay specific attention to an analysis of the regional needs of the ATSI population and likely demand level for HE to assist setting realistic targets and funding levels.

Alternative methods where institutions' block grants are adjusted annually in relation to actual enrolments would create an instability in staffing and resourcing Aboriginal education support which would necessarily be deleterious.

Alternatives which concentrate resources for Aboriginal education in a few institutions would run counter to objectives for inclusion of appropriate cultural awareness in the curricula and processes of all universities.

Response 5

(i) There should be a minimum centre size re: staff numbers required to provide support ie a coordinator, tutor, admin assist and secretary approximately $160,000 including $80,000 NSI.

(ii) Our centre receives approximately $1,800/student EFTSU to deliver support services. This compares to $2,700 as a national average (some universities receive $3,000+) whether the support units receive all of this is another matter. Certainly the Centre receives all of the support funds plus some. However I would say that this funding inequity equates with 3 positions that we could use in our centre. When one considers that we are rural, multi campus and delivering specific programmes for Indigenous people this inequity is even more difficult to justify.
(iii) Factors that need to be considered include:

(a) numbers of student and growth (i.e., interest being shown by students);
(b) all funds are being directed into Indigenous controlled support units;
(c) whether services and courses are culturally appropriate;
(d) the professionalism of support unit i.e., Quality Assurance;
(e) location; rural versus urban;
(f) structure; single versus multi campus; and
(g) the vision held by the university for overall Indigenous participation and runs on the board.

Response 6

We have defined 'support' as all the work the ATSI Unit undertakes, in accordance with our mission statement, but have not included research and consultancy income (other than NPRF money) in our figures as it does not constitute Commonwealth Operating Grant money (and, re: Q4, we received none in 1994).

It should be noted we include many non-Indigenous students in our research and teaching activities, which means support funds are used for the benefit of the wider University community as well as Indigenous students. In addition, most of our Indigenous students are enrolled in courses other than the ATSI Studies Major in our BA, which means most are supported by 'mainstream money' to a far greater degree than by dedicated support funds, except with regard to personal counselling and perhaps academic tutoring/counselling, when they use our counsellors and teaching staff.

We also have a degree in Indigenous Primary Health Care which is run by Indigenous people and has mostly Indigenous enrolments but which receives no dedicated funding for Indigenous students.

Response 7

The Centre suggests that support funds to universities could be distributed more equitably if the distribution was based on the number of EFTSU Indigenous Australian students in conjunction with the teaching methods used by the organisation. (For example remote area course delivery distance education etc).

The support funding distribution process should use an Indigenous Australian student, studying a full time undergraduate mainstream course at an urban University as a base, then factor the additional costs of other modes of teaching to the base, to arrive at an equitable distribution.
Response 8

While it is clear that the distribution of support funding should be based to some extent on student access, participation, success and retention rates, it must also take account of the following:

- the need for some stability in funding. Continued variable and temporary funding means staff can only be employed on short-term contracts, which lowers morale and makes long term planning difficult;
- the need to be able to offer a range of services, whether or not student participation rates and other indicators fluctuate. A smaller number of students need the same range of support services, and often the same number of staff as a larger number of students;
- staff need appropriate support to do their jobs, in terms of access to staff development, and an adequate physical environment. The questionnaire does not take account of such costs, which are an integral part of student support;
- programs need appropriate leadership, specialist support workers and administrative support, even if they are relatively small;
- the funding formula needs to take account of the difficulties Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students have in adjusting to university culture and expectations, and to the lifestyle changes that go with entry into tertiary study, especially when students move interstate or from country areas to study. It may be many years before success and retention rates of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students reach those of non Aboriginal students;
- the funding formula needs to take account of the range of educational backgrounds of students, as this will affect their preparedness for tertiary study, and the amount of support they will need. This factor is more important than the course the student is undertaking; and,
- the funding formula needs to take account of whether students are entering a course designed for Aboriginal students, or whether they are entering mainstream courses where there are relatively few Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander students, as this will affect the amount of support they need.

Response 9

The provision of support is hard to measure in qualitative terms.

The distribution of support funds to universities should take into consideration factors such as level of educational attainment before entry, ie special entry students would be expected to require more support than those who obtain entry through their previous academic achievement.

The location of students such as multi-campus implementation, off-campus study centres, distance education centres and on-site course provision are variables which affect the effectiveness and cost of support provision.
The socio-economic, cultural, linguistic and family educational backgrounds are additional variables.

Response 10

Factors impacting on support costs:
- national programme provider versus local provider;
- satellite campus - enabling courses for low socio economic status areas eg encouraging Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students to satellite campus; and
- smaller institutions require a critical mass of staff to provide the minimal level of support.

Response 11
- The University only recently established an Aboriginal Strategy. Consequently much of the support funding has been used to establish systems; network with the Aboriginal Community; to promote the University's courses.
- The University would support the continuation of the present system of Government funding as we believe it provides flexibility of choice for Aboriginal Students.

Response 12

Accurate information is difficult to get. Even processes (formulae) are obscure and tend to vary from the norm, whenever the Centre is involved.

Our University Council is currently pushing the Centre to provide a case for receipt of total funding. Likewise, central administration has been asked to provide a case against this move.

The timing of your recommendation/comments would seem to be important at this juncture for this Centre at least.

Response 13

There has been considerable concern within the Centre regarding the scope of this investigation as defined in the terms of reference.

1. The link between funding and student load (EFTSUs) does not take account of the current operations of the Programme in relation to the accountability objectives required by DEET, and the objectives established by the Centre to support the recruitment, participation, retention and success of students.

2. In linking support funding with successful outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students it has been recognised that powerful factors in retention and success are the development and review of curriculum and establishing staff development programmes to ensure that the teaching
context supports the participation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students.

3. ATAS funds have been issued with draft guidelines. The process of accountability for DEET is complex and inappropriately inflexible to meet the educational requirements of students in the tertiary sector.

Any changes in the funding which decreases the present level, or in fact does not allow for the continuing development of the Programme will curtail developments which have recently been established: The programme has wide ranging functions to appropriately support the education of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students.

The present funding covers the substantive salaries of the staff, even though there has not been a full staffing complement due to the difficulty of locating suitable personnel. There is still not an established infrastructure; therefore experienced and highly qualified staff are likely to move to alternative employment.