National review of education for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples: final report.

Australia. Dept of Employment, Education and Training.


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NATIONAL REVIEW OF EDUCATION FOR ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER PEOPLES

Final Report
The centre of our original country:
The yanangu of long ago, before the walypala came, are living in their land. The children learn about their dreamings, their language, their ceremonies, their country - all this is passed on to them from their grandmothers and grandfathers.

To the north-west:
In the 'ration times' [up to and including the 1960s], the yanangu are sitting, not knowing. The walypala are teaching the yanangu children about their [non-indigenous] language and [non-indigenous] culture. The other yanangu people are sitting 'behind', at the back [and not involved].

To the north-east:
[In the 1970s], although the others continue in ignorance of walypala ways, a few yanangu eventually learn about walypala language and culture and [start to work in] schools. At the same time some of the children and the adults together learn about grog and petrol sniffing.

To the south-east:
Today, yanangu and walypala have joined, living and working together.

To the south-west:
[In the future] our grandmothers and grandfathers are holding on to [and not forgetting] the land. They are telling us how to teach in school. They are saying that yanangu schoolteachers should instruct the children. The yanangu and walypala teachers are together working out [how to operate the school]. The boss [or the government] is sending other walypala teachers to work in the school with yanangu people.

Conclusion:
At Walungurru the yanangu people now know about schools - they are going to control their own school. With yanangu people in charge the children will be able to come to school and learn properly, learn both walypala language and culture, and yanangu culture and tradition. If the walypala remain solely in charge, our children will not learn properly at all.
NATIONAL REVIEW OF EDUCATION FOR ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER PEOPLES

Final Report
REFERENCE GROUP OVERSEEING THE NATIONAL REVIEW OF EDUCATION
FOR ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER PEOPLES

The Hon Simon Crean, MP
Minister for Employment, Education
and Training
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600

The Hon Ross Free, MP
Minister for Schools, Vocational
Education and Training
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Dear Ministers

In October 1993 your predecessor, Mr Beazley appointed a Reference Group to oversee a
National Review of Education for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples.

In February 1994 I forwarded to you, on behalf of the Reference Group, the Discussion Paper
that marked the end of the first stage of the Review. The Discussion Paper set out the statistical
and other evidence on the current state of education for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander
peoples and made some suggestions to encourage debate in this area.

The Review received over 180 written submissions and met with hundreds of Aboriginal and
 Torres Strait Islander people across Australia. This evidence has been a rich source of ideas and
has much assisted our own deliberations.

It gives me great pleasure to transmit to you the Final Report of the National Review of
Education for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples.

The Reference Group looks forward to an early response to the Report from the
Commonwealth, States and Territories and others, and to the achievement of equity and
reconciliation in and through education for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

Yours sincerely

Mundawuy Yunupingu
Chair

on behalf of
Romina Fujii
Frank Coolahan
Colleen Hayward
Gerry Moore
Roger Scott
Lionel Bamblett
Stephen Harris
Hilda Kickett
Henry Reynolds
Des Williams
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The Reference Group overseeing the National Review of Education for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples thanks the many people who have been generous with their time and their expertise over the course of the Review.

In particular we would like to thank for their assistance the many people and organisations who provided the data from which our statistics are derived, and the people who have worked as consultants and advisers to the Review on particular projects:

- John Ainley
- Mary Ann Bin-Sallik
- Noel Blomeley
- Anne Daly
- Rick Flowers
- Paul Hughes
- Stephen Kemmis
- Lyn Robinson

We would also like to thank the staff of the Commonwealth Department of Employment, Education and Training portfolio who have worked directly with us.

Our work has been possible only because of the contributions of many Aboriginal people and Torres Strait Islanders who wrote to or met with us over the last two years. Their contributions have been a continuing source of inspiration to us.
Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islanders are the First Nations of this continent and have inalienable rights as the Indigenous peoples of Australia. Education is one of these rights.
2. INTRODUCTION

This is the Final Report of the Reference Group which has undertaken the National Review of Education for Aboriginal Peoples and Torres Strait Islanders. The Review was announced by the Federal Minister for Aboriginal Affairs, the Hon. Robert Tickner, in January 1993, with the following Terms of Reference:

Against the goals of the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Policy (AEP), examine the effectiveness of the strategies developed through the first triennium of the Policy, the outcomes achieved and the extent of unmet need; and develop subsequent strategies in terms of:

- ensuring Aboriginal involvement in educational decision making;
- providing equality of access for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to education services;
- raising the rates of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander participation in education to those for all Australians;
- achieving equitable and appropriate educational outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people while acknowledging traditional and contemporary cultural differences, including gender issues;
- ensuring appropriate reporting, monitoring and evaluation procedures for the use of funds provided in support of the AEP, and
- examining allocations, distribution and management of resources for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander education and compatibility of these resource allocations with needs.

He indicated that the Review would be undertaken in two stages - the first being a rigorous analysis of current statistical data followed by an evaluation of the progress made towards achievement of the AEP goals.

The 1993 Australian of the Year, Mandawuy Yunupingu, accepted Minister Tickner's offer to chair the Reference Group which would oversee the progress of the Review.

A Taskforce was established within the Commonwealth Department of Employment, Education and Training to undertake work associated with the Review. During 1993 it collected and analysed data from many sources which provided comprehensive information on areas such as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' educational participation and attainment at all levels of education, financial data, and information on other matters associated with the AEP goals such as employment in the education industry of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. Much of this information can be found in this Report and its Appendixes.

During 1993 responsibility for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander education at the Commonwealth level shifted from the Aboriginal Affairs portfolio to the Ministry of Employment, Education and Training. In October 1993, the responsible Minister, the Hon. Kim Beazley, announced the members of the Reference Group:

- Mr Mandawuy Yunupingu - Chair
- Ms Romina Fujii - Deputy Chair
- Ms Hilda Kickett - Community representative
- Ms Colleen Hayward - Australian Education Union
Mr Gerry Moore - Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission
Professor Roger Scott - Department of Education, Queensland
Dr Stephen Harris - Northern Territory University
Professor Henry Reynolds - James Cook University
Monsignor Francis Coolahan - Catholic Education Commission
Dr Helen Verran - Melbourne University.

Dr Verran served until June 1994 and during the course of the Review two further appointments were made:

Mr Lionel Bamblett - Federation of Aboriginal Education Consultative Groups
Mr Des Williams - Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission.

We, the Reference Group, met regularly during the course of the Review.

In September 1993 advertisements were placed in national newspapers and other outlets such as Koori Mail, inviting interested people to make written submissions to the Review. Guidelines were provided which focussed submissions towards specific areas of interest (see Appendix 3). A toll free telephone number service was provided for people who preferred to make verbal comment.

In February 1994, a Discussion Paper¹ was published and distributed widely. Some 8,000 copies of the Paper were sent to education providers, to Aboriginal Student Support and Parent Awareness program (ASSPA) committees and to individuals across the country for the purpose of stimulating debate and providing people with a basis for informed discussion that would assist the written submission process. The Discussion Paper identified some broad changes that have had an impact on education for Indigenous peoples, and suggestions on how education might be further improved. It included statistical and other evidence which provided an overview of educational progress in recent years from the preschool level through to higher education and the transition to the labour market.

We received some 180 written submissions from a wide variety of organisations and individuals. The subject matter covered all issues identified in the Discussion Paper together with many other areas of specific interest to the writers. Submissions are quoted in this Report without specific identification of the author because we have not been able to approach all submission writers to seek publication permission. Initial analysis of the data identified some recurring themes which were to become the basis for much of the discussion which followed in the public consultations - the next stage of the Review.

We considered it important that a wide consultation process be conducted to further explore those themes and to give an opportunity to contribute to people who had not so far provided written or telephoned comment. Meetings were conducted by an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander member of the Reference Group, assisted by a member of the Taskforce, and in some locations, by a non-Indigenous member of the Reference Group. Meetings were held in locations based on the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission (ATSIC) Regions:

¹ National Review of Education for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People: a discussion paper; AGPS, Canberra, 1994
The views and aspirations of many hundreds of people heard during this process provided invaluable insights into the operation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander education at the grass roots level.

In addition to these public meetings we, either as a group or as individuals, met privately with representatives of many peak organisations and major providers of education. Among them were senior officers of State Departments of Education, the Australian Education Union, the National Catholic Education Commission, TAFE Commissions, Boards of Studies and Aboriginal Education Consultative Groups. We also had meetings with relevant Ministers of the Commonwealth Government.

This broad consultation process provided the Review with a wealth of information and allowed it to hear the voices of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and their supporters. This Report attempts to discuss, analyse and make recommendations based on these written and spoken words.

In summary the Review has done two things. Looking back, it has examined what has happened up to the present and has assessed what has and has not worked in education for Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islanders. Looking forward, it suggests ways to improve how things are done, and new action to further improve Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples’ experience of education.

We have been profoundly impressed by the vigour and creativity of Indigenous Australians in their endeavours to improve education for Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islanders and in their pursuit of ways to educate non-indigenous Australians about the Indigenous peoples, their knowledge, cultures and communities. We hope that, in this Report, we have faithfully represented what people have said or written to us.
A Consultation

During the course of the Review, visits were made to a number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities around the country. This is an account of one of those visits.

It’s the second last day of school before the mid year holidays. We have been invited to lunch with the teaching staff who were going to have a celebratory lunch ‘anyway’ and our visit fitted in with it. Some elders have been invited as well. They have gone to a lot of trouble to prepare lunch - beef, chicken, salads, dessert. Someone had driven the six hours into town and back to buy fresh fruit and other things.

We eat in the library, a converted space underneath a school building, and sit on chairs designed for six year olds. The old men sit in one area, women in another. There’s not much conversation. Then without any announcement people stand up and leave the room. Lunch is over.

Outside they take up positions on the red earth in three concentric half circles - the old men sitting cross legged in the front, women in the middle row, white staff at the back. Some younger people sit on a side wall.

I look around the school grounds and remember back twenty years when I had last visited the school. Then it had an impoverished, third world look and now in 1994 very little had changed, it was perhaps even worse. It was difficult not to think that a government school anywhere else in Australia in this condition would have been bulldozed. Who in the towns would allow their children to work in such conditions?

The meeting begins. An adviser in a stockman’s hat, an employee of the local Land Council, speaks for the people. He tells us the story of the recent history of the school. He speaks in English but frequently refers back to the old people in ‘language’.

We are shown a painting - ‘to hold our earth firmly’ that tells a story of education and of bodies of knowledge in this place. In a series of lines and dots the painting emphasises the holistic importance of family, of country, dreaming, learning and understanding and the relationships between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people in the education process.

A second picture is presented which shows two hands - one black, one white holding a sphere which symbolises an education system of knowledge, skills and power. This is the ‘two ways’ system that recognises the value and importance of both mainstream Australian culture and of Aboriginal culture and learning.

We are told that the ‘two ways’ metaphor embodies both strategies - ways of seeing and doing things, and appropriate outcomes. It recognises, for example, that there is a place for white teachers in an Aboriginal education system as they are
experts in their own culture and are usually the best equipped to teach that culture effectively.

Similarly, it recognises that Aboriginal teachers in schools have, at the very least, an equal part to play and that their contribution must be seen as being at least equal. Acceptance of that principle means that Aboriginal teachers should have the same benefits and entitlements given to non-Aboriginal teachers.

The people had written a document based on a two ways philosophy that reflects their aspirations. It argues that in the education system that they want, their culture, knowledge and skills are given equal value and respect. They write that their aspirations are based on three premises:

- that Aboriginal people want control within their daily lives;
- that Aboriginal people want control over decision making processes which affect their daily lives, and
- that Aboriginal people want adequate resources and control of those resources to effect their decisions.

Current education provision is failing on both sides of the two ways system, they say. Their children are at best achieving at Year 3 level and many young people are not involved in the education system at all, or involved only in a casual way. Despite all the money and resources that have been spent, little has changed. The education system does not support Aboriginal people to maintain their culture.

We are told that the document argues that the entitlements given to non-Aboriginal teachers - housing, power and rent subsidies, airfares - should also be given to Aboriginal teachers; it says that it is vital that the community has control over people who come to work and live on Aboriginal land and that the selection of the teaching staff should be in their hands; it argues for the provision of post-primary education which had been suspended; for the provision of adult education; for greater emphasis on bilingual education; for smaller class sizes to meet the special needs of their children; for upgrading of facilities to comply with government health and safety regulations.

We listen intently. Were these demands so radical? Aren’t many of these already part of the everyday operation of Australian schools?

Mandawuy speaks. He talks about the importance of the teaching of Aboriginal culture in the education program where white ideas can dominate and alienate children. ‘We must connect with old people’ he says, ‘we need to tap into their wisdom. The hearts of Aboriginal women are crying for their culture.’

He continues on this theme of the great external pressures on Aboriginal culture and languages and the importance of keeping them alive through the education
process. ‘We must tell Australia that we mean serious business,’ he says, ‘we must reinforce the traditional methods of learning in our schools. The community spirit must drive the education policy - tell the school what you want from education - it’s your school!’ He talks about the erosion of Aboriginal languages so that in some places the language is disappearing at a rapid rate. ‘Language is part of what we are - we must have strong bilingual programs in our schools to save our culture.’

People nod in agreement - this is what they are talking about. They tell us about the need for more Aboriginal staff in schools and the need to recognise the special qualities and extra value that they bring to the education process. They talk about the need for more resources in the school, of how so little of the supplementary Commonwealth money gets through to the local level, of how there is a need for some form of direct funding that will allow schools to develop their own initiatives to meet their special needs. We continue on in this vein until eventually someone says ‘finish now’ and the meeting is over. The group quickly disperses.

This meeting took place in a remote community in outback Australia. We had been listening to the voices of custodians of ancient traditions who were fighting to preserve their culture, knowledge, spirituality and language, under increasingly difficult circumstances. The education system that ought to be working to help maintain these priceless, irreplaceable traditions has too often been working against them. They desperately need the system to be with and for them.

These are people of courage, determination and great patience, and their story is worth telling. However in many ways this is the story of all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people’s aspirations. In cities and towns across the country we consistently heard the same calls for the recognition of the importance and value of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture, for the need to gain increasing control and influence over education processes, to be involved in the decision making processes, and to take increasing control over resources allocation.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people everywhere speak in similar terms about the alienation and exclusion from mainstream educational processes and the lack of relevance of much of what is taught. Many are telling us that the system has failed them and now is the time for them to show Australia the way forward.
3. BACKGROUND

Setting the Scene: The International Context

Any discussion of the future for education for Indigenous peoples in Australia is caught up in wider discussions at national and international level about general constitutional and administrative arrangements. In the following sections we discuss some of the pertinent issues and describe significant events.

In September 1993 a Taskforce with members drawn from the Indigenous nations of America, Canada, Aotearoa (New Zealand) and Australia prepared a document known as the Coolangatta Statement on Indigenous Rights in Education. The statement points to a proliferation of international charters, conventions and other instruments that recognise the basic human rights of all people, including the right to education, and which collectively provide some basis for recognising the rights of Indigenous people. Article 26 of the United Nations Declaration of Human Rights and Article 27 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights are particularly relevant.

The UNESCO Convention against Discrimination in Education was adopted by the General Conference in December 1960 and ratified by Australia in November 1966. Under Article 3 the parties agree to take immediate measures with a view to eliminating and preventing any discrimination within the meaning of the Convention, preventing differences of treatment and forbidding preferences and restrictions in various fields.

In many countries, the actions to be taken to ensure equality of educational opportunity require a complex effort which is not confined to education, together with a large budgetary outlay which must be spread over a period of time. The Convention therefore stipulates that parties must formulate, develop and apply a national policy which, by methods appropriate to the circumstances and to national usage, will tend to promote equality of opportunity and of treatment in education and, in particular:

• to make primary education free and compulsory; make secondary education in its different forms generally available and accessible to all; make higher education equally accessible to all on the basis of individual capacity, and assure compliance by all with the obligation to attend school prescribed by law;

• to ensure that the standards of education are equivalent in all public education institutions of the same level, and that the conditions relating to the quality of the education provided are also equivalent;

• to encourage and intensify by appropriate methods the education of persons who have not received any primary education or who have not completed the entire primary education course, and the continuation of their education on the basis of individual capacity, and

• to provide training for the teaching profession without discrimination.

Article 5(c) of the UNESCO convention provides for the rights of national minorities, both indigenous and non-indigenous. It recognises the right of members of national minorities to carry on their own education activities, including the maintenance of schools and, depending on the educational policy of each State, the use or the teaching of their own language, provided that:

this right is not exercised in a manner which prevents the members of these national minorities from having the same rights and obligations in the field of education as other citizens.
minorities from understanding the culture and language of the community as a whole and from participating in its activities, or which prejudices national sovereignty;

• the standard of education is not lower than the general standard laid down or approved by the competent authorities, and

• that attendance at such schools is optional.

The Coolangatta Statement also notes the development of statements on rights specific to indigenous people, including the Kari-Oca Declaration formulated in Brazil in May 1993 and reinforced at the Second World Indigenous Youth Conference held in Darwin two months later. Concerns relating to education were further identified at the World Indigenous People’s Conference on Education at Wollongong at the end of 1993.

In *Justice and indigenous minorities: a new province for international and national law*[^nettheim], Garth Nettheim writes:

> Most of these human rights conventions are concerned with the rights of individuals rather than with the rights of entire peoples. Of course, some of these individual rights will accrue to the individual as a member of a group, particularly rights to equality of treatment without discrimination on grounds of race, sex, colour and the like. Members of an indigenous minority would presumably be entitled to invoke such conventions when they allege discrimination on the basis of their membership of that minority. Indeed, in the Australian context, the greatest volume of complaints under the Racial Discrimination Act 1975 (enacted to fulfil Australia’s obligations under the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination) has come from Aboriginals. The Commissioner for Community Relations established under the Act reported in 1980 that complaints from Aboriginals constituted some 36 per cent of complaints his office had received, although they comprise approximately one per cent of the total population.

Other countries have given a lead to Australia, including states in northern Europe, New Zealand, Canada and the USA. The notion of a special place being accorded ‘First Nations’ has taken on particular significance in North America. The creation of a separate Canadian province is the most important constitutional symbol of this recognition, along with New Zealand’s Treaty of Waitangi with its Maori people.

**Setting the Scene - The Australian Context**

When education systems were created in each of the States of Australia in the second half of the nineteenth century, a major concern of the reformers establishing these systems was that access to education should extend to the whole population. Initially this occurred in primary education and then in the twentieth century, it was extended to secondary education. We sometimes forget just how long it took to achieve ‘universal’ primary education (at least for non-indigenous children) in Australia - until the period between the First and Second World Wars, and how recently ‘universal’ secondary education was achieved - not until after the Second World War.

One of the key principles informing the establishment of Government school systems in the first century of public schooling in Australia was the principle of equity. This principle meant that as far as possible, students should, regardless of their location, have access to uniformly good schools, teachers and curricula. However early childhood services, including preschool education, were given relatively little priority by governments (although until the mid-1980s

children as young as three or four years could go to school). Initially preschool services were provided by the churches, with indirect government support, and later by private or philanthropic organisations.

The education systems established in the colonies were based on particular views about the role of education in developing skilled workers and forming citizenship and an Australian identity. These views were the expression of a particular kind of colonial identity. Education, like other cultural forms, was an instrument to maintain the British Empire even if by the time of Federation, it aimed to distil and transmit something essentially Australian in addition to British ideas and ideals.

The education systems which developed in the States came to be characterised by uniformity and, by the second half of this century, that uniformity was experienced by some (and especially by teachers) as stifling. The major shift from the 1970s onwards towards school-based curriculum and decision making and towards making schools and curricula more responsive to local needs and circumstances was driven by a desire to throw off that uniformity.

A new movement developed through the 1980s. It was a movement for the development of inclusive curricula which would recognise and engage the experience, background, and aspirations of all Australians. This was partly motivated by concerns about social justice, multiculturalism, physical and intellectual disadvantage and gender in education. At the same time a massive restructuring of Australian education saw education once again subjected to centralised policy control (despite protestations about devolution).

As the 1980s rolled into the 1990s, there were signs that for the first time Australian education would be focussed upon achieving national educational goals (set out in the April 1989 Hobart Declaration on Common and Agreed National Goals for Schooling) and under the framework of an emerging national curriculum.

Non-government schools have always been a part of the schooling opportunities available in Australia. While they operate within the frameworks established by Governments and share many practical concerns with Government schools, their philosophies and value systems differ at significant points from those of schools in the Government sectors.

Constitutional arrangements, responsibilities and practices

Until 1967 the ‘Aboriginal race’ was specifically excluded from the Constitutional head of power giving the Commonwealth authority to legislate about specific races of people. The amendment to the Constitution made as a result of the overwhelming ‘yes’ vote in the 1967 referendum removed any grounds for the belief that the Constitution discriminated against Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. At the same time, it made it possible for the Commonwealth to enact laws for the benefit of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples - for example by providing a special system of social services or assisting land-owning schemes for the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander populations of the States and Territories.

The Aboriginal Affairs (Arrangements with the States) Act 1973 provided for the Commonwealth to become responsible by arrangement with a State and Territory or States/Territories for administering Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander matters which were otherwise the responsibility of State and Territory departments and authorities. Most, but not all, States and Territories made arrangements to transfer responsibility to the Commonwealth after the Act came into force.

\*This document was issued after a meeting of the then Commonwealth Minister for Employment, Education and Training, the Hon. John Dawkins and the State and Territory Ministers of Education. The document lists statements about goals of education for Australian schools.\*
Such responsibilities were exercised through the Commonwealth’s Department of Aboriginal Affairs and the Aboriginal Development Corporation (established in 1980) until 1990 when responsibility for these matters was transferred to the newly established Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission (ATSIC), an organisation designed to put into effect the principle of self-determination for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

On 1 July 1994 the Torres Strait Regional Authority came into being under the **Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission Act 1989**. Recommending the creation of the new Authority, the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission (ATSIC) saw its creation as a transitional arrangement providing a basis for a progressive negotiated movement towards greater regional autonomy in the delivery of programs for the Torres Strait. In accordance with its vision to empower its people, the Authority will develop proposals to achieve self-determination in stages, with steps agreed to by the people of the Torres Strait area and the Commonwealth and Queensland State Governments. The long term goal is to secure indigenous self-determination in the Torres Strait through political negotiation. As a step in the transition, the Authority will seek to have funding that is currently administered by other Commonwealth and State Government departments devolved to it. This will almost certainly involve education. The Authority is examining models for self-government, taking account of similar arrangements that exist between the Commonwealth and Norfolk Island and with Cocos and Christmas Islands.

Constitutional responsibility for education rests clearly with State and Territory governments. The vast bulk of funding for school and TAFE education comes from States and Territories who are responsible for policies and processes in the areas of school and teacher registration, teacher employment, student enrolment, curriculum content, course accreditation and student assessment. Higher education is largely funded by the Commonwealth.

However, the Commonwealth also plays a role in school education by providing supplementary finance, considering the broad purposes and structures of schooling, promoting national consistency and coherence in the provision of schooling across Australia, and exercising its responsibility for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander affairs in the area of education. Commonwealth responsibility for setting educational policy for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples is shared between ATSIC and the Department of Employment, Education and Training (DEET). All Commonwealth programs relating to education for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples are administered by DEET.

Early childhood provisions cover a wide range of services from long-day care to preschool education programs. Preschool education programs provide an education program for children in the year (or in some cases Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children may attend for two years) before the commencement of formal schooling. State and Territory Governments are responsible for preschool education. The Commonwealth had a role in preschool education until the 1970s through block grants to the States and Territories. In the 1960s it had also become involved in preschool education for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children largely in places where such services would otherwise not be available. In the 1980s responsibility for delivery of preschool education was passed to the States and Territories and the Commonwealth’s direct role in early childhood services was limited to childcare; a sector marked by considerable variation in policies and although funding for preschool education is a State and Territory responsibility, it falls outside the definition of compulsory schooling and therefore outside the constitutional responsibility for education. Preschool education is in some States and Territories services delivered through education bureaucracies, in others through children’s services agencies, community-based systems and private providers.
The intersection of responsibilities for school education on the one hand and for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander affairs on the other can be ambiguous and problematic and has yet to be tested. The problem has been most recently referred to by Queensland’s Premier Goss:

Services to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are in major confusion in terms of roles and accountability. There would be great merit in proposing that the overall responsibility for policy design and service delivery be clearly assigned to the Commonwealth.

Practice among the States and Territories varies and has also changed over time. For example in Queensland, which (along with New South Wales) has the largest total population of Indigenous students, religious missions were historically the main focus for delivering education to Indigenous students. These often served artificial gatherings of Indigenous peoples involuntarily relocated from their traditional lands. In the early 1980s mission schools were taken over by the Education Department and greater attention was given to the education of Indigenous peoples who live in urban and rural non-traditional environments. Responsibility for providing education was located until quite recently under a separate Department of Aboriginal and Islander Affairs.

Practice in other States and Territories has gone through similar policy shifts, although there is a wider variation in the extent to which Indigenous peoples continue to live in traditional environments. The problems of delivering education to remote locations often compounds the disadvantage in service levels provided to Indigenous communities.

Formal and informal links have been forged over the years between State and Territory and Commonwealth public servants and educators concerned with the education of Australia’s Indigenous people. In the government school sector, for example, coordinators of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander education meet regularly under the auspices of the Conference of Directors-General of School Education.

The National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Policy

In 1988 an Aboriginal Education Policy Task Force chaired by Paul Hughes examined a wide range of evidence on education for Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islanders. The Task Force concluded that ‘in 1988 Aborigines remain the most severely educationally disadvantaged people in Australia’. Its recommendations included setting targets for participation in all sectors of education. It advocated the continuation and expansion of programs which had been found to be effective, and the introduction of additional innovative programs and support services, new curriculum and teaching practices to support these targets.

The Task Force also recommended adopting a national policy for the education of Aboriginal people and Torres Strait Islanders, recognising that the key to improving education lay in concerted, cooperative, long term strategies which involved all governments and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people themselves.

The National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Policy (the Joint Policy) was endorsed by all governments in 1989 and came into effect from 1 January 1990. The Joint Policy sets out 21 long term goals under four important themes: involvement, access, participation and outcomes.
**Involvement of Aboriginal people in educational decision-making**

**Goal 1** To establish effective arrangements for the participation of Aboriginal parents and community members in decisions regarding the planning, delivery and evaluation of preschool, primary and secondary education services for their children.

**Goal 2** To increase the number of Aboriginal people employed as educational administrators, teachers, curriculum advisers, teachers assistants, home-school liaison officers and other education workers, including community people engaged in teaching of Aboriginal culture, history and contemporary society, and Aboriginal languages.

**Goal 3** To establish effective arrangements for the participation of Aboriginal students and community members in decisions regarding the planning, delivery and evaluation of post-school education services, including technical and further education colleges and higher education institutions.

**Goal 4** To increase the number of Aboriginal people employed as administrators, teachers, researchers and student services officers in technical and further education colleges and higher education institutions.

**Goal 5** To provide education and training services to develop the skills of Aboriginal people to participate in educational decision-making.

**Goal 6** To develop arrangements for the provision of independent advice for Aboriginal communities regarding educational decisions at regional, State, Territory and National levels.

**Equality of access to educational services**

**Goal 7** To ensure that Aboriginal children of pre-primary school age have access to preschool services on a basis comparable to that available to other Australian children of the same age.

**Goal 8** To ensure that all Aboriginal children have local access to primary and secondary schooling.

**Goal 9** To ensure equitable access for Aboriginal people to post-compulsory secondary schooling, to technical and further education, and higher education.

**Equity of educational participation**

**Goal 10** To achieve the participation of Aboriginal children in preschool education for a period similar to that for all Australian children.

**Goal 11** To achieve the participation of all Aboriginal children in compulsory schooling.

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*The National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Policy use the term 'Aboriginal' throughout to indicate both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.*
Goal 12 To achieve the participation of Aboriginal people in post-compulsory secondary education, in technical and further education, and in higher education, at rates commensurate with those of all Australians in those sectors.

**Equitable and appropriate educational outcomes**

Goal 13 To provide adequate preparation of Aboriginal children through preschool education for the schooling years ahead.

Goal 14 To enable Aboriginal attainment of skills to the same standard as other Australian students throughout the compulsory schooling years.

Goal 15 To enable Aboriginal students to attain the successful completion of Year 12 or equivalent at the same rates as for other Australian students.

Goal 16 To enable Aboriginal students to attain the same graduation rates from award courses in technical and further education, and in higher education, as for other Australians.

Goal 17 To develop programs to support the maintenance and continued use of Aboriginal languages.

Goal 18 To provide community education services which enable Aboriginal people to develop the skills to manage the development of their communities.

Goal 19 To enable the attainment of proficiency in English language and numeracy competencies by Aboriginal adults with limited or no educational experience.

Goal 20 To enable Aboriginal students at all levels of education to have an appreciation of their history, cultures and identity.

Goal 21 To provide all Australian students with an understanding of and respect for Aboriginal traditional and contemporary cultures.

It is nearly five years since the Joint Policy came into effect - a suitable time to reflect on whether or not it has been successful in improving Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' involvement in, access to, participation in, and outcomes from, education.
4. FINDINGS OF THE REVIEW: THEMES AND PRINCIPLES

Education, Equity and Reconciliation

Two principal themes emerge from the evidence presented to the Review - equity and reconciliation.

On the basis of the evidence presented to us we have no doubt that the educational experiences of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have improved over the last five years. More people than ever before are involved in educational decision-making and in the delivery of educational services. More have access to education facilities and participate in education, particularly in the technical and further education (TAFE) and higher education sectors. More use their knowledge and experiences of education to contribute both to their communities and to the wider Australian community.

These improvements are recognised and appreciated by many people who responded to the Review. However a point of concern raised in numerous submissions is the inequity of opportunities and outcomes in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander education. These submissions emphasise that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and communities are not achieving equitable outcomes - culturally, economically, or politically - from their education, and the authors advocate strategies for achieving greater equity in these terms.

Much was written and said about equity and reconciliation during the course of the Review. In the sections that follow, an analysis is presented of differing perspectives of equity and reconciliation that have been drawn from the written submissions and from the public consultations.

Views of Equity - What the Evidence Says

On the issue of equity submissions take different views. Some consider that equity is to be interpreted solely or primarily in terms of the outcomes of ‘mainstream’ education in Australia and assume that these goals and outcomes are self-evidently desirable. Other submissions recognise that the educational inequity suffered by Indigenous people is not merely individual but related to cultural differences. They consider that greater equity can be achieved if educational processes are conducted with greater cultural awareness and sensitivity. A third perspective, which also presses for greater awareness and sensitivity, is that educational outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students can only be equitable if there is a recognition that different outcomes are appropriate.

Each of these perspectives was explored by the Reference Group.

An individualist view of equal opportunities: fitting people to ‘mainstream’ systems

This view asserts that integration will occur by adapting individuals to ‘mainstream’ educational and social policies, procedures and practices. It generally adopts an ‘equal opportunities for individuals’ approach to social justice issues, according to which individuals should be offered a ‘level playing field’ on which to work out their educational and social destinies, although it recognises that special efforts may be needed to create a ‘level playing field’.

Equity is related to comparisons with the non-indigenous communities of Australia. Under most circumstances, these comparisons will point to the systematic and structural disadvantages endured by Indigenous people. Belated recognition of this disadvantage by State and Territory and Commonwealth governments has led to educational initiatives such as programs delivered
under the auspices of the Joint Policy which have led to a measure of improvement. As the Review's Discussion Paper indicated, the gap of disadvantage is narrowing on some indicators. Nevertheless, there is still an unfinished agenda, which will carry through to the end of the century, in terms of the level of resources and services provided to Indigenous communities.

Some advocates of this view believe that it is the responsibility of individuals to adapt themselves to the 'mainstream' system. They believe that the equity question is simply a matter of bringing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander student performances up to the levels of the whole Australian population. This approach suggests that educational institutions can best respond to particular individual needs by offering special compensatory or remedial programs to help students compete more successfully in the 'mainstream'.

A few submissions regarded 'involvement in decision making', 'access', 'participation' and 'outcomes' as culturally-fair or neutral, in the sense that they can be defined in the same terms for Indigenous people and communities as for other Australians. Some are quite explicit in seeing the aim of the Joint Policy as the integration (or assimilation) of Indigenous people and communities into 'mainstream' Australian education and society, aiming at the incorporation of Indigenous people into 'mainstream' Australia without continuing recognition of cultural difference.

At worst this is expressed in integrationist or assimilationist term, in some submissions suggesting that it is the problem of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students and their parents and communities to make the effort to cross the gap between present and equitable levels of performance. They suggest that the obligation of schools and systems goes no further than to make remedial provision available.

Equity for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students as a group: more culturally-aware and sensitive educational processes

Very few submissions are content with this view, however. The great majority of submissions understand the language of the AEP goals - 'involvement in decision making', 'access', 'participation' and 'outcomes' - in a more complex way. They argue that Indigenous Australians should have opportunities for involvement in decision making, access, participation and quality of outcomes from education which are no less favourable than those for other Australians. However, they also argue that to be truly equitable, these things must be defined differently for Indigenous and non-indigenous Australians and differently for the various groups of Indigenous Australians.

Such submissions frequently emphasise cultural awareness and sensitivity as the basis for more equitable approaches to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander education. They discuss the need to reach out to Indigenous students and address cultural and linguistic issues in ways that will allow them to achieve equitable educational outcomes. A great majority of submissions express this view in one way or another. Many describe the forms of special provision that are being made, or might be made, to improve Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander access to and participation in education.

This perspective questions the appropriateness of equity targets conceived simply as statistical comparisons between Indigenous and wider communities. As the Aboriginal Employment Development Policy (AEDP) Review noted in its final report:

...if the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Employment Development Policy is measured only against these targets (income levels, employment rates and welfare
dependency), it can be considered to have already failed. ... the equity objectives do not directly capture the emphasis contained in the AEDP on the economic empowerment of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples... if economic integration is not the desired outcome or the realistic choice of a proportion of Indigenous people, statistical equity is not the appropriate framework against which to measure the success or failure of the AEDP... the imponderable is the extent to which the outcome is in fact desired, or a reflection of lack of choice.

The Reference Group has found that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples are consistently falling behind their non-indigenous peers in terms of educational outcomes. Throughout the submissions and consultations is a constant message - if the kinds of educational experiences available to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders are not perceived as relevant, appropriate or culturally inclusive, this situation will continue.

Equity is not just about the relative parity between Indigenous and non-indigenous Australians, it is also about achieving reasonable outcomes which are relevant to the individual students. In this sense, mainstream education should not be seen as a single goal but as a diverse set of educational options and pathways which can accommodate unique and distinctive educational outcomes.

**Equity and difference: equality of regard in a broader context**

The third perspective that emerges from submissions is one calling for recognition that different outcomes are appropriate. These submissions imply a concern with equality of regard for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, knowledge, communities, culture and aspirations. That is, they see equity in educational outcomes not just in narrow terms of achievement in school, TAFE or higher education, but in a broad historical, cultural, economic and political context which necessarily includes the connections and inter-relationships between Indigenous and non-indigenous Australians. These submissions frequently take views like those about 'both ways' education.

This approach requires continuing attention to equity not just in the interests of the social mobility of individuals, or even in terms of the broad educational achievements of different cultural groups, but also in terms of the diverse needs, circumstances and aspirations of different groups in contemporary Australia. This can provide a basis for thinking about how education can play a role in the process of reconciliation.

**The issue of equity is seen differently according to levels of education**

Most submissions from schools are from ones that are exploring the possibilities of 'both ways' education, and/or the development of innovative approaches to cultural awareness and sensitivity in curriculum and school organisation. In doing so, they tend towards the contextualised view of equity as 'equality of regard'.

Submissions from secondary schools tend towards a view of equity as 'equity for groups' which is concerned with improving the cultural awareness and sensitivity of educational processes. Some make the point that culturally aware and sensitive curricula are needed to serve the interests of Indigenous students and that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies are needed for non-indigenous students to affirm Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students' identity and to raise confidence and pride. Submissions from education systems are generally of this kind.
Submissions from TAFE and higher education institutions, perhaps because they are concerned more directly with preparation for occupations and professions, seem to take either the 'equity for individuals' view or the 'equity for groups' view. Many discuss the kinds of special or remedial provision which might be made, including improvements in cultural awareness and sensitivity in educational processes. Some institutional submissions, especially ones from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander units, go beyond the 'equity for individuals' or 'equity for groups' views towards the more contextualised view of equity.

In submissions from individual academics in higher education institutions (mostly in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander units), the arguments for a more contextualised view of equity as 'equality of regard' are put with great force and clarity. They often recognise that not only must 'equity for individuals' and 'equity for Indigenous students as a group' be achieved, but beyond these aspirations, equity must also be understood in relation to the concerns of Indigenous people generally.

This may entail special provision not merely to make the mainstream curriculum more accessible, but also to offer different and more relevant outcomes directly related to both the specific work circumstances of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander professionals and to the development of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander history and cultural studies. In these submissions, the connection between appropriateness of outcomes and equity as historically, socially, culturally, economically and politically contextualised is made in ways which reflect the concerns with 'both ways' education expressed in submissions from other sources.

Towards Social Justice?: An Issues Paper, a paper issued jointly by ATSIC, the Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation and the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Justice Commissioner, was released towards the end of the writing stage of the Review. It focuses attention on 'getting a fair share' which we see as parallel with our identification of an equity agenda. It calls for new measures to improve educational outcomes for Indigenous people.

It also identifies the importance of 'recognition and empowerment' through greater measures of self-government for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and the creation of regional agreements, which aligns with our emphasis on self-determination. The importance of 'cultural integrity and heritage protection' and of programs for increasing awareness of indigenous cultures and spirituality in the education system and in the community generally accords with our own findings.

Towards Social Justice? identifies a common concern that special funding for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander purposes is being misdirected into mainstream agencies. This is occurring despite the 1992 Council of Australian Governments (COAG) National Commitment to Improved Outcomes in the Delivery of Programs and Services for Aboriginal Peoples and Torres Strait Islanders, which accepts the need for services to be culturally appropriate and to provide 'Aboriginal people and Torres Strait Islanders and communities with the opportunity to negotiate, manage and provide their own services'. We endorse these sentiments strongly, while recognising the diversity between communities and the different policy responses that may be required in the light of this diversity.

The reforms suggested by COAG include the option of greater direct funding bypassing the State and Territory governments to allow communities to provide their own services or contract for their provision. This was considered in the context of education while noting the problems of schools operating with mixtures of Indigenous and non-indigenous student populations. The COAG focus on 'a renewed commitment and specific measures to achieve equitable educational...
outcomes for Indigenous Australians' is strongly supported in the Review's own recommendations relating to improvements in AEP programs.

The tension between equity - the desire for access to an education giving equal capacity to compete for employment, especially acquisition of English literacy - and the preservation of a separate cultural and linguistic identity, may only be resolved by offering an element of choice to local communities. We believe that an extensive consultation process is needed to answer the key educational question posed in the Issues Paper:

Can public educational resources be applied differently to ensure Indigenous peoples have the opportunity both to achieve equitable outcomes and satisfy a right to have education delivered in more culturally appropriate ways?\(^{10}\)

**Views of Reconciliation - What the Evidence Says**

The second major theme emerging from evidence to the Review is that of Reconciliation. The Australian Parliament has unanimously endorsed legislation initiating a reconciliation process between Indigenous and non-indigenous Australia. The preamble to that legislation\(^{11}\) says:

> as a part of the reconciliation process, the Commonwealth will seek an ongoing national commitment from governments at all levels to cooperate and coordinate with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission as appropriate to address progressively Aboriginal disadvantage and aspirations in relation to land, housing, law, justice, cultural heritage, education, employment, health, infrastructure, economic development and other matters in the decade leading to the centenary of Federation, 2001.

Many submissions emphasise the need for mutual recognition of and respect for the aspirations, knowledge, communities and cultures of all Australians. They recognise Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander aspirations, knowledge, communities and cultures as distinctive and as expressed in various ways. Some of the aspirations of Indigenous Australians are parallel to the aspirations of non-indigenous Australians. Others reflect distinctive modes of life which are different from, and sometimes opposed to, the 'dominant', 'mainstream' patterns of cultural, economic, and political life. This point is pressed home forcefully in one submission which argues:

First, that culture is transmitted, it constitutes a heritage or social tradition; secondly, that it is learned, it is not a manifestation, a particular content of main genetic constitution; and third that it is shared. The concept, construction and content of curriculum today is therefore crucial to future generations of Aborigines. The content of education for Aborigines today is generally non-Aboriginal. It is this that will be transmitted, learned and shared. Raising the rates of participation of Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders in a non-Aboriginal education system merely aids the process [of assimilation].

Although wanting to maintain the push for social justice, many submissions take the view that all Australians need to understand it in a more complex way. They want social justice to be understood in terms which entitle all individuals and groups to the same level of respect. They say that giving people equal respect requires acknowledging and respecting what makes them different. This requires thinking not in 'either/or' terms, but in terms of 'both/and'. It means rejecting the notion that equity can be achieved only within existing 'mainstream' ideas about the nature and purpose of education. It requires an acceptance of a broader conception of social

10. op cit. p 10.

justice that can accommodate differences of aspirations, experiences and culture of all Australians.

We have focused on the equity agenda created by previous disadvantage and the self-determination agenda created by future aspirations. Both aspects require urgent action in order to lay the foundations for the process of reconciliation.

Equity and Reconciliation as Complementary Principles

The two key principles underlying this Report can be conceived as compatible legitimate aspirations of Indigenous peoples. Guidance on particular policy options will flow from the exercise of choice on the part of individuals, families or communities. It is only through the opportunities to exercise such choice that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples can achieve control over their political, social and cultural domains.

Despite the many differences of focus and emphasis among the submissions, there is agreement that:

- the task of achieving equity for Indigenous people and communities is still far from completed, and should be completed, and
- the continuing development of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander education, and the continuing development of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies for all Australians, are widely regarded as being necessary and urgent elements of the process of reconciliation.

As our Discussion Paper notes, there may be changes in the way people have come to view the Joint Policy itself. These changes reflect the two trends. First is the achievement of Indigenous communities and organisations in their quest for self-determination, self-management, autonomy and control over their own affairs, particularly in education. The second trend is the major change in educational provision being brought about through the reform programs of the Commonwealth, States and Territories in education and training.

Submissions suggest that there is a groundswell of change in perspectives on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander education, but do not necessarily agree on the most appropriate approaches to be taken. It would also be quite mistaken to suggest that any uniform set of strategies can be applied across all of the different main themes of concern specified in the Terms of Reference of the Review.

Nevertheless, the balance of opinion within and across the submissions does suggest that a surge of change is under way. It is also clear from the submissions that the Discussion Paper has encouraged respondents to offer suggestions about how existing educational policies, procedures and practices might be improved, and suggest how new approaches can be developed to capitalise on developments already under way.

A "progressive" trend in submissions

Submissions suggest that there is a general trend or tendency in views of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander education which might be summarised as follows:

- in line with governments' declared intentions to arrive at a reconciliation between Indigenous and other Australians, there is a strong trend towards approaches to
education which encourage mutual recognition, respect and reconciliation between these groups;

• this strong trend is further evidenced in approaches to education that recognise the need for much greater cultural awareness and cultural sensitivity about all aspects of education concerning Indigenous people, knowledge, communities and cultures, and

• it is further evidenced in an increasingly determined commitment to achieving equality of educational (and employment) opportunities and outcomes for Indigenous people, so that their opportunities and outcomes are no less adequate than those enjoyed by other Australians.

Tensions between equal treatment and distinctive (or special) treatment

Overall these trends appear to be in a ‘progressive’ direction. Conceptually, however, we believe these views can be in tension with one another, especially when there are disagreements over the relative priority of striving for equalisation of opportunities via standardisation of educational aims, processes and outcomes for all Australians, and for improving opportunities for Indigenous people and communities to achieve culturally distinctive educational, social, cultural, economic and political outcomes.

The tensions between these views are not only evident between submissions which advocate different approaches to the issues involved but also within some single submissions, as they address different aspects of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander education.

In some ways, these tensions are at the heart of the issues before the Review - issues concerning the great principles of equity and reconciliation. Some contributors see these two principles as always antagonistic to one another. They see a dualism in which efforts are either made towards promoting equal treatment for all, or are directed towards offering special treatment to some.

However, many submission writers are reaching beyond the perspective in which the relationship between these two views is seen as antagonistic, and towards a view in which both equity and reconciliation are seen as parts of a bigger whole.

Submissions suggest that many Australians, both Indigenous and non-indigenous, are now reaching beyond this dualistic (either/or) conceptualisation of the issue. They see the obligations of equity and the obligations of reconciliation not as antagonistic but as complementary aspects of a more comprehensive framework. It is not a question of either equal or special treatment but both equal and special treatment. Reconciliation requires both that the demands of equity be met, and that the special status, circumstances and needs of Australia’s Indigenous peoples be recognised and respected as a basis for reconciliation.

Nonetheless submissions do reveal tensions between some aspects of the ‘equity’ arguments for improving Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander education, and some aspects of the ‘mutual recognition and respect as a basis for reconciliation’ arguments.

People who believe that existing ‘mainstream’ perspectives on educational goals are adequate, or that existing systems are the only means by which education can be provided and administered, are likely to see the aspirations of Indigenous and non-indigenous Australians as opposed to one another. By contrast, people who believe:

• that ‘mainstream’ views of the goals of education are inadequate because they do not accommodate the educational aspirations of Aboriginal and Torres Strait
Islander peoples, and

- that existing education systems are inadequate because they do not accommodate the aspirations of Indigenous Australians for self-determination,

are likely to see the present situation as one in which there are new opportunities for all Australians - opportunities to develop new and better forms of education and educational administration for both Indigenous and non-indigenous Australians.

Access, outcomes, equity and reconciliation

The question of access is thus seen to relate closely to questions of outcomes and to questions of equity. Many submissions from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and groups are critical of views of education which see outcomes, equity, access and participation as 'neutral', especially where they are used as if measures of these things could be culturally-neutral.

Some systemic submissions treat access in this 'neutral' way. Most, however, avoid this dilemma by recognising that efforts to improve access at the 'margins' of the system increasingly require special provision. They also require greater cultural awareness and sensitivity in curriculum and teaching. This means that beyond these 'margins', what the system actually is and stands for may alter, so that it becomes different.

Many people believe that systems ought to be more frank and realistic about this. They need to create circumstances where distinctiveness - perhaps it would be better to say 'local distinctiveness' - can thrive. Only then, they argue, can access be equitable and reconciliation be achieved. When education systems recognise and respect Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and cultures, and support their continuing maintenance and development, the kind of equality of regard from which reconciliation is possible can be created.

Diversity in the educational 'mainstream' (curriculum and pedagogy)

There is plenty of support for the idea that education should be re-conceptualised and reconstructed to take into account the aspirations of Indigenous Australians. This occurs, for example, in discussion of more culturally-aware and culturally-sensitive forms of curriculum, pedagogy, and assessment. It is also conceded that since Australia is already culturally-pluralist, a special effort must be made to ensure that education is inclusive of the distinctive aspirations, needs, circumstances, knowledges and cultures of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. Moreover, there is strong support from many people for the proposition that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies should be made part of the education of all Australians.

It follows, then, that education should be constructed in ways that value and respect diversity rather than standardisation. It should not require that all students have exactly the same forms of access to education, or participate in education in exactly the same ways. It should recognise that individual students (both Indigenous and non-Indigenous students, who will vary among themselves, not only between these two broad categories) should have opportunities to participate in education in different ways and times.

Both ways' curriculum as a way forward

'Both ways' education involves the development and delivery to non-Indigenous students as well as Indigenous students of curricula which actively support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures and lifestyles. It is broader than 'Aboriginal Studies' courses but is still taught alongside 'general' curricula. Active participation of the indigenous community in management
and decision making processes of the educational organisation, as well as in curriculum design and delivery, is often a feature. An important outcome of community control of education is increased retention rates. ‘Both ways’ education is considered in more detail on pages 85-86. It also requires cultural sensitivity among non-indigenous educators. That issue is further discussed in relation to Recommendation 11.

Advocacies for ‘both ways’ education in the submissions offer one approach by which education might be made more responsive to the concerns and aspirations of Indigenous people, without losing sight of the broad cultural differences in the profusion of individual differences.

**Diversity in existing education systems and arrangements**

At the level of education systems and educational administration, there is also support for taking a more diverse and pluralistic view of how best to provide and administer education. A variety of arrangements is proposed, from support for independent Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander community schools or a National Indigenous University, to better support systems for students in largely ‘mainstream’ schools and institutions.

Submissions argue for the reconstruction of education systems and institutions to include more appropriate forms of curriculum for students, especially in remote communities, for bilingual education programs, better access to residential schools, better access to secondary schooling and TAFE in remote communities, improved ABSTUDY benefits and improvements to ASSPA, ATAS, VEGAS and other programs. Like education itself, Australian educational systems and arrangements are already fairly diverse and pluralistic. The systems serve different sectoral needs and there is great diversity of arrangements for educational provision, including provision for Indigenous Australians, within systems.

Extending thinking about educational systems and administration is largely a question of considering how the aspirations of Indigenous people for self-determination might be better met - for example, by:

- establishing different arrangements for delegation and devolution, including more substantial forms of regional and local control;
- establishing relatively autonomous education regions (as in the case of the Torres Strait Islands) and by giving greater powers and responsibilities to representative and consultative bodies like ASSPA committees and AECGs;
- giving contracts to various different kinds of agencies, groups and organisations for provision or support of educational services, and
- providing increased support for independent education providers.

**Conclusions on Equity and Reconciliation**

The statistics tell us that more Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are involved in education than ever before. But equity is not just a matter of numbers. 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, concerns remain that their views are not heard.

Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islanders continue to have the most limited, and in some cases no, access to education beyond primary school. They do not participate in education to the extent that other Australians participate, particularly in secondary education; in technical
and further education and in higher education their participation is concentrated in particular
and narrow fields of study. They still do not enjoy equitable and appropriate outcomes from
education.

Equity is the yet-to-be-finished business of the twentieth century. Much still needs to be done.
And there is a sense of urgency - both to fulfil Australia’s promise of providing a fair go for all
and to complete the work of this century before the end of the decade. Time is critical.

We are keenly aware that in Australia, as elsewhere, globalised political, economic, cultural and
intellectual power threatens to overwhelm indigenous and local cultures.

Counterbalancing this global trend, the relationship between Australia’s Indigenous peoples,
governments and the wider society is changing rapidly. Change is coming from the process of
reconciliation between Australia’s Indigenous and non-indigenous peoples, from governments’
and others’ responses to the High Court’s decision on Mabo and others vs the State of
Queensland, the implementation of the recommendations of the Royal Commission into
Aboriginal Deaths in Custody and the widely held commitment to social justice. The movement
for indigenous self-determination gathers pace both in Australia and overseas.

We have done our work in the watershed between the twentieth and the twenty first centuries.
We are aware that we are working in a time of rapid change - in the short turbulent period
between the end of the Cold War and the end of the twentieth century. It is a time when
Australia is reconsidering its past and its future - its place in the world, its constitutional
arrangements, its own identity.

The great task ahead is the business of the future - the achievement of
reconciliation through education and the fulfilment of the strongly felt,
frequently expressed, desire of Indigenous Australians to achieve
self-determination.

Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islanders occupy a unique position in Australia - they are
its first inhabitants and not just one of many ethnic minorities. We believe that Aboriginal
peoples and Torres Strait Islanders are the First Nations of this continent and have inalienable
rights as the Indigenous peoples of Australia. The right to education is one of these rights.

The concrete expression of this view as it relates to education is that Indigenous Australians
must have equal opportunities to access and participate in any form of educational provision
available to all Australians and that the education provided must be culturally appropriate.

This is the basis of reconciliation.

Education contributes directly to all people’s quality of cultural, economic and political life.
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.

Education is only one area where Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islanders and other
Australians want equity and reconciliation. Our recommendations are only part of the way
to achieving these goals. Much needs to be done in other areas, such as health, housing,
infrastructure and economic development, to achieve equity and reconciliation. Education is
essential to achieve progress in these areas.
The Joint Policy - What the Evidence Says

We took the Joint Policy as our starting point. Those making submissions and participating in consultations clearly believe that the Joint Policy is having a significant and positive effect. Along with the efforts of many individuals, organisations and education systems, the Joint Policy is helping to build an Australian culture in which there is greater recognition and respect for Aboriginality, together with a greater awareness and sensitivity to the aspirations and concerns of Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islanders.

The submissions express general support for supplementary Commonwealth funding and programs. However, many suggest that the recipients of such funding should have greater control over the distribution and use of resources. Many offer detailed criticisms of particular elements of the supplementary Commonwealth funding programs which we believe should be taken seriously as grounds for continuing improvement.

All submissions, however, also praise the Commonwealth for delivering crucial resources in response to urgent, profound and pressing needs. While the technical problems of each of the programs need to be addressed, the general view is undoubtedly that the programs in general are improving access to and participation in education and are supporting greater success in education for Indigenous Australians.

A review of the literature

As part of the Review process we commissioned a review of the literature about the Joint Policy and its implementation. It is perhaps not surprising that there is only a modest, albeit growing, amount of literature on a policy which is only five years old.

The most significant criticisms which are critical of the Joint Policy revolve around the following assertions. These assertions are made in varied ways by Barlow, Bourke, Burney, Carpenter, Coombs, Crawshaw, Moore, Harrison, Luke et al., Nakata, McCann and Snow:

1. The Joint Policy has lost the perceived intensity of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander educational philosophy contained in the Hughes Report (1988). For example, several authors claim there has been a shift from a commitment to self-determination in the Hughes Report to a notion of self-management or involvement which several authors claim is contained in the Joint Policy.

2. The language of the Joint Policy document has created a picture of Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders as victims of racist oppression and cultural alienation rather than as people actively resisting oppression and as creators of changing cultures. Several authors argue strongly that the Joint Policy reference to an 'erosion' of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture is a reassertion of a paternalistic and romantic idea of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians hankering for some sort of static, 'noble savage' type culture and needing protection from forces causing the 'erosion.'

3. The Joint Policy is more concerned with access, equity and participation for Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders in the mainstream education system and is silent about supporting alternative and community controlled education initiatives. This perception has led authors to argue the Joint Policy is assimilationist.

It is significant that all authors except Moore argue that the Joint Policy has constructed Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders in a significantly different way to the Hughes Report.

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17 These authors are listed in the bibliography arising from the Review of Literature.

Nakata, Snow and Carpenter in particular claim there is significant shift in language and philosophy from the Hughes Report to the Joint Policy. Moore, however, sees a continuum and argues that the Hughes Report and the Joint Policy both have similar constructions of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander groups. However all authors argue a variation of the theme that the Joint Policy is built around a construction of Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders more as victims rather than resisters and creators.

Comparisons between the Hughes Report and the Joint Policy document may be misleading. While the Hughes Report is a more vigorous document that may have more to do with its having originally been written as a narrative report rather than a policy statement. It is questionable whether the difference between the documents is a reflection of the degrees of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander involvement. Authors have over-idealised the Hughes Report and the process involved in its development. For example, Snow suggests that the Task Force Committee considered and purposefully did not mention ‘two-ways education’. She criticises the Joint Policy for including the term. The Task Force did not include the term ‘two ways education’ because at the time they did not know about it. It should also be noted that at least 12 prominent Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander educators were involved, either as paid consultants or Reference Group members, in the development of the Joint Policy document.

Other common themes of criticism include a concern that the Joint Policy is vague about implementation and evaluation. A further concern expressed by several authors relates to how the Joint Policy was written and by whom. Burney, Crawshaw, Harrison, Smith and Snow assert the process of writing the Policy was dominated by non-Aboriginal bureaucrats in a way that excluded and silenced Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander educators.

It should be noted that almost all these authors also highlight the opportunities the Joint Policy presents. They acknowledge that it is the first Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander education policy that has been endorsed by both the Commonwealth and State and Territory Governments. They acknowledge the impetus it has provided for increased funding for Indigenous education activities, for triennial rather than annual funding, for coordination across the various education sectors, and for the development and implementation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies curriculum.

Other writers have been more consistently positive. In comparison to the authors mentioned above, Satour, Heitsmeyer and O’Brien, McConnochie and Tucker, and the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody focus more on the opportunities the Joint Policy provides, such as those outlined above. More pertinent, however, is that these authors do not agree that the Joint Policy is necessarily assimilationist. They are cautious but assert that the Joint Policy does provide a framework in which Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and groups can achieve control over their own education as well as be supported to choose the terms of their participation in mainstream education.

A clear strength of much of the critical literature is its analysis of the values and assumptions that underpin educational policies and decision making. By focusing on the language or discourse employed by the Joint Policy, authors assist us in understanding the extent to which paternalistic and racist values pervade educational thinking and decision making. The attention to language helps us look beyond the ‘glossy policy statements’ to analyse the ideas and concepts driving policy developments.

There is, however, a noticeable absence in the current literature of analysis of how ‘to get things done’. If there is a commitment to community controlled education, what is actually involved
in developing and implementing it? Some writers tend to ascribe the Joint Policy more importance than it may have had in bringing about educational change. Other writers criticise the Joint Policy for not explaining how change will be implemented. In general, policies are not designed to explain how things will be done. They are designed to provide opportunities and support for implementation of programs. Change in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander education will not come about only from ‘dictums on high’. Change will also depend on combined efforts at the local level. There is a need for research and analysis of the immediate and long term complexities of building community controlled education. The literature to date has generally focused on the struggles on a national level to develop an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander educational philosophy. It has been negative rather than positive - positive in the sense of contributing to an analysis of what can be done at the ‘coalface’ of educational change. A positive analysis also means attempting to articulate what is understood as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander educational philosophies. It is significant that there is a rich and vibrant experience of informal debate and discussion about what constitutes Australian Indigenous educational philosophies, but it is unfortunate that so little is written about it.

Another feature of the literature is the absence of analysis of the dependence on government funding and the important implications that has for creating Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander terms of reference. Harrison, for example, calls for change and in the same breath asks Government to pick up the tab. If government is to pick up the tab, there will be a need for government/public accountability and that means regulation. It also means reliance on the goodwill of progressive-minded bureaucrats, administrators and so on if desirable change is to happen. This is a complex dilemma which future literature might usefully address.

Conclusions on the Joint Policy

The literature commends the Joint Policy for its commitment to increased funding for Indigenous education (and for triennial, rather than annual, funding). It also commends the Joint Policy for the State, Territory and Commonwealth government cooperation it seeks to foster. It highlights the role the Joint Policy has played in bringing about more coordination between education sectors and in the development and implementation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander curricula.

The literature criticises the Joint Policy for its perceived concern about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples’ access to, and participation in, ‘mainstream’ education. It also criticises the Joint Policy for its silence about supporting alternative and community controlled education initiatives (which leads some authors to brand the Joint Policy as assimilationist).

Some authors perceive its language as depicting Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islanders as victims of racist oppression and cultural alienation who need protection rather than as peoples who actively resist oppression and create changing cultures. Others maintain the Joint Policy presents a concept of ‘involvement’ rather than the commitment to self-determination of the 1988 Aboriginal Education Policy Task Force Report. There is also some concern that the Joint Policy is vague about implementation and evaluation detail.

Evidence presented to us indicates that the Joint Policy might be a better document if it took the concerns outlined above into account. On a related matter, many people expressed concern that the Joint Policy does not reflect an equal partnership between governments and Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islanders - Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islanders are not signatories to the document.
On balance we consider that the Joint Policy, whilst not without fault, serves a vital purpose and we recommend:

**Recommendation 1**

*That all Australian governments reaffirm their commitment to the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Policy.*

**Principles**

In reflecting upon the evidence in previous chapters, we consider that the work all Australians need to do to achieve equity and reconciliation in and through education for Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islanders must be based on two fundamentals:

- embracing the First Nations’ heritage as part of Australia’s national heritage, and
- respecting equally the culture and values of Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islanders and the cultures and values of non-indigenous Australians.

These attitudes are intangibles which cannot be prescribed by governments. However, there is much that can be done to encourage and support the changes in community attitudes necessary to achieve equity and reconciliation. To achieve these ends we believe that the Joint Policy would be enhanced by governments and others formally adopting the set of principles to underpin the recommendations of this Report and we recommend:

**Recommendation 2**

*That the work of all bodies developing policy and/or providing educational programs or services which impact on Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islanders be based on the following principles:*

- self-determination in education - putting the authority to make decisions in the hands of Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islanders;
- diversity - empowering Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islanders to exercise the maximum degree of choice in education;
- subsidiarity - shifting responsibility for and about education for Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islanders as far ‘down’ administrative systems as possible, given the demands of accountability and the efficient delivery of services;
- affiliation - ensuring coordination between groups as far ‘up’ the administrative system as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and organisations wish, to pursue shared aims and to achieve economies of scale, and
- efficiency - of the available resources, minimising the amount of money spent on administration and maximising the amount of money spent on actually providing educational services for Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islanders.

Explicit action to support the principle of educational self-determination for Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islanders would include developing arrangements for the allocation, distribution and management of resources which permit the direct funding of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander incorporated bodies so these bodies may, as they deem appropriate:
• independently provide education and training services for Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islanders;
• contract with other bodies for the provision of education services, and/or
• otherwise assist in empowering access and participation in education.

Explicit action to support the principle of affiliation could include the development of joint agreements with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander incorporated bodies providing contact for and assisting with the implementation of education services, to enable them to achieve common goals and objectives related to achieving economies of scale through the joint operation of agreed work programs.
5. Principal Findings of the Review: Terms of Reference

Involvement and Self-Determination

Our first Term of Reference has been to review Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' involvement in educational decision-making and in the delivery of education services. Goals 1, 3 and 6 and goals 2, 4 and 5 of the Joint Policy which reflect this are dealt with separately in this section.

National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Policy Goals

Goal 1
To establish effective arrangements for the participation of Aboriginal parents and community members in decisions regarding the planning, delivery and evaluation of preschool, primary and secondary education services for their children.

Goal 3
To establish effective arrangements for the participation of Aboriginal students and community members in decisions regarding the planning, delivery and evaluation of post-school education services, including technical and further education colleges and higher education institutions.

Goal 6
To develop arrangements for the provision of independent advice for Aboriginal communities regarding educational decisions at regional, State, Territory and National levels.

The Review received a great deal of evidence concerning its first Term of Reference - 'ensuring Aboriginal involvement in educational decision making and delivery of educational services.' It is clear from both the public consultations and the written submissions that there is strong support for these three goals both from Indigenous peoples and communities and from education systems and providers.

Indigenous people, communities and organisations are clearly committed to achieving forms of involvement in educational decision making and delivery of services that will realise self-determination. We note that Australian governments also affirm the principles of self-determination and self-management.

Self-determination is defined by the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Aboriginal Affairs in Our Future Our Selves as the intention adopted by the Whitlam Government in which:

self-determination recognised the authenticity of Aboriginal culture as a distinctive part of Australian society. Self-determination was concerned with achieving greater equality and equality of opportunity for Aboriginal people. It also envisaged Aboriginal people deciding the pace and nature of their future development within the broader framework of Australian society.14

As a precursor to the 1993 World Indigenous Peoples Conference on Education, a stimulus document - the Coolongatta Statement was prepared by a taskforce of distinguished indigenous

14 Our Future Our Selves, aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Community Control, Management and Resources: House of Representatives standing Committee on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs, AGPS, Canberra, 1990
scholars from four countries. The Statement was designed to be a forerunner of an International Instrument on Indigenous People's Rights in Education. It states that:

Self determination in indigenous education embodies the right of indigenous peoples to:
- Control/govern indigenous education systems;
- Establish schools and other learning facilities that recognise, respect and promote indigenous values, philosophies and ideologies;
- Develop and implement culturally inclusive curricula;
- Utilise the essential wisdom of indigenous elders in the education process;
- Establish the criterion for educational evaluation and assessment;
- Define and identify standards for the gifted and talented;
- Promote the use of indigenous languages in education;
- Establish the parameters and ethics within which indigenous education research should be conducted;
- Design and deliver culturally appropriate and sensitive teacher training programs;
- Participate in teacher certification and selection;
- Develop criterion for the registration and operation of schools and other learning facilities, and
- Choose the nature and scope of education without prejudice.

The component rights in one form or another were frequently raised in evidence presented to the Review. The most wide-ranging is the first, the assertion of a right 'to control/govern indigenous education systems'.

Policy implications of these component rights in the Statement are examined in the following section.

Self-Determination - What the Evidence Says

Many submissions urge that all Australian educational systems and authorities must recognise the legitimacy of demands for self-determination. They argue that adequate recognition and respect cannot be anything other than 'both ways' and are essential to the process of reconciliation.

They argue that full recognition and respect of Indigenous Australians would be accorded by giving Indigenous people the power to determine, for themselves, what forms of education and educational administration are most appropriate. This might be expressed through independent educational provision or through stronger forms of control over what is offered through existing educational systems. The crucial point is that Indigenous people should be able to exercise a genuine choice over whether and how to participate in existing systems.

These submissions emphasise issues of involvement in various forms and levels of decision making. They draw particular attention to organisations and settings where control of decision making can reasonably be achieved. Significantly, many recommend that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander schools be strengthened by stronger school councils' through ASSPA Committees and/or other arrangements. A special case is evident in the submission of the...
Torres Strait Island Regional Education Committee (TSIREC) which argues for, and has now achieved, an autonomous Torres Strait Island Region education system. At the higher education level, there are also recommendations for a National Indigenous University.

A question to be considered in developing policy on self-determination is the priority given to the preservation of traditional culture. This is especially relevant in educational matters, since education is the key element in the transmission to future generations of traditional or any other culture. Where there may be a clear preference for cultural preservation among Indigenous peoples still living in traditional environments, the issue of choice may be even more important among people living in contemporary or urban settings. This has implications for the resources, including the available learning time in schools, that are needed to sustain traditional cultures while simultaneously pursuing an equity agenda.

Self-determination implies an acceptance of the possibility of pursuing both and the promotion of that possibility within a framework of indigenous influence or control over the mechanisms that deliver such education. Hard choices face Indigenous peoples and we believe that governments need to recognise that their programs and services should be responsive to assist Indigenous peoples to achieve the objectives they have set for themselves.

It is therefore necessary to create a structure within which self-determination can be exercised. A number of options can be identified, with the potential for multiple solutions applying to different policy outcomes.

It could be asserted that the equity agenda can remain the responsibility of existing structures and that added resources and more effort may help to speed the rate of closing the gap. There is strong evidence of significant achievements by existing Joint Policy programs and strong support in evidence to the Review for their continuation, together with a strong desire for stability and continuity in funding and bureaucratic arrangements.

There is, however, an equally strong desire to increase the impact of Indigenous peoples on the policy making process and its implementation at grass roots level. There are a number of levels at which this could occur:

- by changes in the national structure, giving greater Indigenous access to DEET;
- by reforms at State and Territory level to increase input into decision-making;
- by creating more effective and empowered regions within States/Territories;
- by creating new regions, bypassing the States and Territories altogether, or
- by strengthening the Indigenous presence at local community level.

The aim of self-determination might be accomplished by placing more emphasis on communities making choices. The notion of a self-governing community may have more credibility in some areas than in others such as among those Indigenous peoples in widely dispersed urban settings.

The underlying presumption of the policy thrust towards reconciliation would seem to be consistent with greater empowerment of regional and local committees which are currently confined to advisory roles. The trend towards homeland schooling in both Queensland and the Northern Territory is an example of this principle in action, leading to the creation of local communities which are making a real impact on the quality and character of the education of the younger generation.
A stronger interpretation of self-determination involves strengthening Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander decision making. In practice this means more direct control over a higher proportion of funding and at a lower administrative level than has occurred in the past. Further educational reforms need to begin and be controlled more at the community level than has been the practice in the past. We believe that reform is more likely to be effective from the bottom up rather than the top down, although grassroots reforms will continue to need higher levels of infrastructure support.

We note a tension in this debate between general initiatives on behalf of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and specific initiatives which are seen as in line with the particular needs of particular groups. In some submissions, the question of local control raises the issue of varying local perspectives of very different communities. While there are general aspirations and agendas shared by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people across the country, local communities have different priorities, needs and circumstances. Some express the view that these differences, not overarching priorities, should prevail in decisions about the allocation of resources.

We know that more Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people than before are involved in educational decision-making. In addition to State and Territory AECGs, the principal bodies providing advice to their Ministers on education matters, the National Federation of AECGs is a forum for AECG chairs to consider issues at a national level. A local network of AECGs has also evolved in some State/Territories. Local AECGs provide a structure for information to be shared between the local community and their AECG. The ASSPA program has enabled parents, students and community members to help schools respond better to the educational needs and aspirations of their children. These various groups are in a position to influence what happens in education at the school, State and Territory and national levels.

The submissions make clear that more account needs to be taken of the perspectives of Indigenous people in decision making in a wide range of educational settings. By exploring further possibilities for devolution, delegation and contracting of educational and support services, it may be possible for existing education systems and agencies to give Indigenous people greater opportunities to exercise genuine choices in education. Indigenous people could set the parameters for the choices to be made, not just choose among options constructed for them, and so make real progress towards self-determination.

Two complementary principles are relevant here:

- the principle of subsidiarity, according to which decisions should be taken as far 'down' administrative systems as is compatible with the demands of accountability and the efficient delivery of services, and

- the principle of affiliation, where coordination between groups occurs as far 'up' the administrative system as communities and groups themselves wish, in order to pursue common, shared aims and to achieve economies of scale.

These principles are now being realised, and might be better realised, by strengthening arrangements in both the government and non-government education sectors. In deciding how best to be involved in educational decision making, local communities and groups should have the right to affiliate with one another on a district wide, regional, State and Territory or national level in order to pursue shared interests in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander education.
We believe that in supporting the principles of self-determination, subsidiarity and affiliation, we are not proposing anything new. These arrangements already exist in diverse forms and places. What is proposed here is a commitment by governments, education systems and education providers to supporting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in determining for themselves how best the principles of subsidiarity and affiliation might be pursued in the interests of their students and communities.

Involvement - What the Evidence Says

A few submissions consider involvement in decision making simply as a technique that might help to convince Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people of the importance of education and schooling. Others see it as a matter of equal opportunity in employment and in educational administration. Submissions of the latter regard involvement as a matter of good practice in consultation, rather than as a matter of shifting the locus of control in decision making. In other submissions, such views are regarded as integrationist or assimilationist.

Involvement in decision making is regarded by others as a matter of establishing more cooperative relationships in the organisation and management of education. In curriculum matters, this is seen as important to ensure that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives are genuinely taken into account in curriculum development, that teaching of Aboriginal Studies is genuinely informed by these perspectives, or that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander teachers are given priority in teaching about their cultures.

In some submissions there are indications that even self-management is regarded as developing greater cultural awareness and sensitivity in administration, but that self-management as an aspiration may fall short of mutual recognition and respect and a basis for reconciliation. These views of involvement in decision making are perhaps more closely aligned with a cultural pluralist perspective.

The majority of submissions regard involvement as an issue of paramount importance, fundamental to control of education at the national, state and local levels. In curriculum matters, they insist on control by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to ensure the appropriateness of the curriculum and the content and form of Aboriginal Studies curricula. These advocacies are consistent with the view that mutual recognition and respect are necessary as a basis for reconciliation.

Indigenous organisations make a strong case for involvement in decision making as part of more general strategies for self-determination. This includes contexts where Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people seek control over the education of their children in urban and rural settings. Some provide clear evidence that the development of 'separate' schools is seen as a powerful way to establish secure bases for negotiation and reconciliation. Various forms of 'both ways' curriculum are generally favoured for these schools.

Indigenous versus non-indigenous perspectives on control and self-management

Submissions reflect different emphases about the balance of power, relating to the balance between Indigenous and non-Indigenous arrangements for governance and administration, and different views about the relative importance of the levels at which self-determination and autonomy might be achieved. In particular, there are differences about what local control might mean and how it might best be grounded in Indigenous structures and organisations.
We found that while questions of local control from a non-indigenous perspective might suggest issues of devolution within a framework of general accountability to governments and ministers, the issues are very different from an Indigenous perspective. Accountability in these terms is not generally to a distant authority but to a local community. The exceptions are where there is an additional accountability to a representative organisation which has its authority from Indigenous people and communities, or to another agency such as an education department where particular functions are involved, such as the proper use of ASSPA or school funds.

Submissions from non-indigenous organisations generally presuppose the governance and administrative structures as they currently exist and consider involvement in decision making from the perspective of this structure. Given that accountability within such structures is necessarily ultimately to the Crown, such submissions must find a place for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations and groups primarily as additions to this structure, in advisory or consultative roles.

They regard Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander involvement in decision making as being based on self-management rather than self-determination. Decision making options are framed by existing constitutional and administrative frameworks within which Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander control can only be exercised by delegation of particular, pre-defined powers, responsibilities and functions.

When referring to self-determination, such submissions tend to either give rhetorical support to self-determination as an abstract general principle, or re-interpret it to mean something like 'the most extensive form of self-management possible within existing frameworks'. The point is put neatly by one respondent who makes an analysis of the competing discourses of self-determination:

The Aboriginal definition of self-determination is synonymous with control, while the bureaucratic definition is synonymous with involvement.

Submissions from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander sources demonstrate these differences. They frequently argue in favour of their own particular resolution of the tension between influence and control, but it is also clear that they recognise that others might resolve the issues in other ways appropriate to different circumstances.

Indigenous people also emphasised the importance of different levels of decision making on the local-regional-state-national dimension. For example, an isolated community school will emphasise its capacity for greater local control over educational decision making; an AECG will emphasise its capacity to influence state-level educational decision making. These different levels of decision making are presented in Table 1.
### Table 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Government and bureaucratic organisational framework</th>
<th>Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander formal political and organisational framework</th>
<th>Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander educational structures and organisations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Australia (largely defined in non-Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander terms; Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander structures at this level have developed to represent Indigenous people and interests in relation to the activities of (a) Commonwealth and (b) national bodies)</td>
<td>Commonwealth agencies - eg. DEET</td>
<td>eg., National Federation of AECGs, proposed National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Commission</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>States/Territories (defined in non-Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander terms; Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander structures at this level have developed to represent Indigenous people and interests in relation to the activities of states and territories)</td>
<td>State and territory agencies - eg. State and Territory Departments of Education, Aboriginal Affairs</td>
<td>State level consultative groups and organisations - eg. State AECGs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regions (defined differently by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and non-Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and organisations; Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander groupings reflect broadly shared geographical, linguistic, cultural, economic and political identities)</td>
<td>Regional offices (differently, but for both DEET and States)</td>
<td>Consultative and collaborative bodies forming regional views on education and training - eg. via Land Councils, regional AECGs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local</td>
<td>Local schools, education providers</td>
<td>(a) Community schools (b) Local schools</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Each of the locations identified in the table above gives a particular perspective on how the Joint Policy might be strengthened and improved. It indicates how each particular location must be defended (and must defend its own position) if Indigenous voices are not to be silenced in educational decision making. It also indicates how each makes its own particular kind of complementary contribution to the overall web of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander educational practice, provision and policy-making.

There are diverging views about which locations in the table are the key ones from which to influence practical decision making regarding how education can be strengthened and improved. Non-indigenous submissions are more likely to emphasise the importance of institutions and systems, while Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander submissions are more likely to emphasise community groups and organisations.
One possible implication of this table is that resources, programs and provisions need to be directed in support of this whole web of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander involvement in decision making, with great care being given to the consequences of depriving any element of support. Another possible implication is that an overarching body could or should be established (perhaps a National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Commission, as recommended in some submissions) with a continuing and non-partisan responsibility to ensure that the whole web operates adequately in support of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander education.

**Decision making, equity and reconciliation**

There is a sense in which ‘involvement in decision making’ is an end in itself. One important form of equity is that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander individuals and organisations have an equitable say in processes of decision making affecting Indigenous students and communities and their futures.

Many submissions argue that equity for Indigenous peoples must be interpreted in qualitative rather than quantitative terms. Equity requires that Indigenous people and groups have the substantial say over the development of education for Indigenous students and in the education of non-indigenous students, since all have shared lives and futures in contemporary Australia. It is therefore necessary to achieve forms of participation in decision making which will effectively represent the different concerns and interests of all people in decision making.

Submissions unambiguously support the conclusion that Indigenous people and organisations seek modes of involvement in decision making that will establish bases from which they can have genuine control over Indigenous education - both for Indigenous students, and in the case of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies, for non-indigenous students. Such bases for decision making are compatible with achieving the mutual recognition and respect necessary for reconciliation.

In the light of the preceding discussion we recommend the following:

**Recommendation 3**

*That all bodies developing educational policy and/or providing educational programs or services which impact on Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islanders:*

- establish a formal Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander advisory structure to that body, and/or
- appoint an Aboriginal person and/or a Torres Strait Islander to that body;

*to ensure that the decisions of these bodies properly reflect the views of Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islanders.*

We are persuaded that the most effective way for governments to support this commitment to self-determination is by widening the opportunities for choice by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, communities and organisations at all levels from the local to the national, including choice about:

- the degree to which Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, communities and organisations will provide educational services;
- collaborate in partnership with other agencies and organisations (including education systems) in providing educational services;
- contract with other agencies for the provision of educational services, or
- become involved in close consultation about the provision of educational services for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples by institutions and systems, and

• the degree to which Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, communities and organisations will become involved in more general decision making which affects the interests of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and communities.

We are convinced that creating and enhancing the conditions under which Indigenous peoples themselves could make such choices is not just a matter of guaranteeing involvement in decision making by establishing a single central body (at one extreme) or by leaving choice entirely to localised ‘grass roots’ initiatives. Instead, we take the view that there is a need to establish an overarching framework which permits coordination at all levels, so communities and groups can determine for themselves the degree of involvement in decision making and delivery of services most consistent with their own interests. Accordingly we make the following recommendation:

**Recommendation 4**

*That the Commonwealth, through its Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Coordinating Committee, convene a national conference to determine the terms of reference, membership, roles and responsibilities of a new national and independent body to oversee education for Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islanders.*

*The conference should also address the nature of the relationship between this new body and other existing relevant bodies, including the Commonwealth’s Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Coordination Committee and the Federation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Consultative Groups.*

*Such a body should be a signatory to the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Policy.*

*Such a body should be, at the minimum, responsible for:*

• determining national policy in relation to education for Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islanders;

• overseeing the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Policy and any other associated documents and continuing to monitor its implementation and recommend improvements;

• examining the mix of guaranteed and discretionary funding and determining the principles for allocating available Commonwealth discretionary resources for education for Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islanders;

• determining the timetable for moving to outcomes reporting on education for Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islanders, and

• promoting the coordination of educational services with other services which impact on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples’ access to, participation in, and outcomes from, education.*
Such a body should be made up exclusively of Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islanders.

Such a body should have rights to receive reports from educational service providers and to report annually to the Commonwealth.

The Commonwealth should establish a permanent secretariat to support this new body and should provide such other resources as the body needs to conduct its business properly.

**Information as a Prerequisite for Decision Making**

Developments in Indigenous education over the last five years have been hampered by a lack of coordination in educational service delivery and a lack of information about the range of educational programs and services available. Specific problems were often referred to in the evidence presented to us. We were also told that it was difficult for people to find out about the many good things or ‘best practice’ happening in different parts of the country.

We believe that sharing information and materials would do much to enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of the activities conducted under the auspices of the Joint Policy and we recommend:

**Recommendations**

That the Commonwealth, States and Territories establish and fund a clearinghouse for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander education to:

* collect, evaluate and disseminate best practice materials and resources for:
  - teaching Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students;
  - the teaching and learning of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander studies;
  - incorporating Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives in existing curricula;
  - incorporating, in education programs, appropriate health, nutrition and student welfare information and assistance for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students;
  - the teaching and learning of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural awareness courses for non-indigenous students, cross-cultural awareness courses for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students and counter-racism courses, and
  - the teaching and learning of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander language;

* identify examples of best practice in:
  - innovative methods of educational service delivery;
  - innovative methods of institutional organisation, and
  - innovative administrative arrangements which allow for self-determination in education for Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islanders across all sectors of education
• collect and promulgate information on relevant policies and programs, research and evaluations, including publishing a regular national ASSPA newsletter to inform ASSPA committees about the program and to share information about the kinds of activities ASSPA committees are funding;

• act as an agent to assist with the provision of educational services to Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islanders living in remote areas, and

• maintain a voluntary register of those Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander educators and educators with formal qualifications in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander studies, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages and/or with other extensive experience of teaching Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, who wish to have their names on the register so that information on prospective employment can be supplied to potential employees by the clearinghouse.

This clearinghouse should be an independent body funded jointly by the Commonwealth, States and Territories. Its governing board should be made up of Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islanders.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Consultative Groups

The Joint Policy states that ‘An important purpose of the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Policy is to develop a concerted effort to address the educational needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, by cooperatively directing the strategies of the Commonwealth, the States and Territories...to develop...the establishment of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander educational consultative mechanisms’. Aboriginal Education Consultative Groups (AECGs) have been a forum for consultation with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community since the 1970s and while some AECGs are incorporated bodies, others are attached to State and Territory government departments.

The evidence presented to us supports the concept of AECGs but recognises problems with the way some are currently constituted. In particular there was a concern that the capacity of State and Territory AECGs to provide independent advice might be compromised where funding was not made directly to them or where members are appointed by their State or Territory Government rather than elected by the indigenous community. A view was often put that these organisations might take a more active role in informing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people about developments in education, especially at the regional and local level.

People in some public consultations indicated that the Review of the Joint Policy provided a welcome opportunity to restructure AECGs to ensure wider community representation. AECG arrangements were not universally well understood and the view was expressed that they should consult more, and explain their roles and activities to their constituencies. Some people believed that, by comparison with the school sector, the preschool, TAFE and university education sectors were not sufficiently represented in State and Territory AECGs and in the Federation of AECGs. These people believed that sector specific sub-groups of the Federation should be developed.

There are concerns over the relative weight given to AECGs and ASSPA committees in the overall web of strategies of the Policy. Many submissions touch on this issue. Among other functions, the AECGs participate in the development and monitoring of strategic planning and are thus seen to have a major influence on the development of programs at the local level.

\[60\] Joint Policy statement, National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Policy p9
Perhaps partly because they are seen to have this prominence, AECGs are regarded as rather
centralist (at the State and Territory level) by many schools communities. ASSPA committees,
by contrast, operate on a smaller scale and in ways regarded as highly responsive to local needs.
Many submissions argue that ASSPA committees should be given greater prominence in the
operations of the Policy and that AECGs should be more responsive to, and/or be made up of
representatives of, ASSPA committees.

One of the key tensions in this debate is between centralist and local concerns and priorities.
AECGs defend their wider consultative roles and functions and their responsiveness to the
broad directions for development favoured by the wider Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander
groups they represent. ASSPA committees defend their responsiveness to local and immediate
needs and circumstances, and to local communities. Who gets to be involved in decisions about
what, on behalf of whom, is clearly an issue in the submissions.

We believe that the question of the balance of effort between AECGs and ASSPA committees
deserves further consideration and analysis. Clearly, both have their place and functions, but
the relationship between them deserves further reflection. Some people express the view that
the AECGs should be the main representative bodies in education while in some areas it was
felt that local communities lacked sufficient contact with AECGs.

We believe that there needs to be a reconstituting of AECGs to meet these criticisms and
recommend the following:

Recommendation 6

That, in consultation with existing State and Territory Aboriginal and Torres Strait
Islander Consultative Groups and State and Territory governments, Aboriginal
and Torres Strait Islander Education Consultative Groups be reconstituted to
ensure that:

• office holders are elected by Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islanders;

• the roles and responsibilities of such reconstituted Aboriginal and Torres Strait
Islander Consultative Groups are specified and agreed and include, as a
minimum, responsibility to:
  - participate in the formulation of and endorse strategies drawn up under the
    National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Policy across all
    education sectors;
  - monitor the implementation of these strategies, and
  - provide independent advice to governments on Aboriginal and Torres Strait
    Islander education issues as appropriate;

• such Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Consultative Groups are
  established as incorporated bodies;

• regional and local structures exist to ensure that local constituencies can
  provide input to and receive feedback from their representatives, and

• structures exist to coordinate the activity of these bodies with other relevant
  bodies, including other relevant Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander bodies.

We also believe that the current administrative arrangements for the Aboriginal Education
Strategic Initiatives Program (AESIP) place an unnecessary administrative burden on AECGs,
particularly the focus on reporting on educational outcomes. As the role of the AECGs is primarily an advisory one we believe it would be more appropriate if their AESIP funding was paid in the same way as other advisory structures and recommend:

**Recommendation 7**

**That Commonwealth support for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Consultative Groups be paid as a grant-in-aid, in line with arrangements for other like organisations.**

We believe to be fully effective as independent advisory bodies, AECGs should be paid in a similar way by their State or Territory Government. This would enable the AECGs to plan strategically and maximise their efficiency and effectiveness.

**Recommendation 8**

**That State and Territory support for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Consultative Groups be paid directly to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Groups where they are incorporated bodies.**

Goals 2, 4 and 5 of the Joint Policy are specifically directed at increasing the employment of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people at all levels of education.

Increasing the employment of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people through employment in the education industry is one way of increasing the involvement of Indigenous peoples in education.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Goal 2</strong> To increase the number of Aboriginal people employed as educational administrators, teachers, curriculum advisers, teachers assistants, home-school liaison officers and other education workers, including community people engaged in teaching of Aboriginal culture, history and contemporary society, and Aboriginal languages.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Goal 4</strong> To increase the number of Aboriginal people employed as administrators, teachers, researchers and student services officers in technical and further education colleges and higher education institutions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Goal 5</strong> To provide education and training services to develop the skills of Aboriginal people to participate in educational decision-making.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are employed in the education industry as administrators, teachers, ancillary staff and para-professionals, eg Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Workers (AEWs). The evidence presented to us indicates patchy progress in increasing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' employment in the education industry. While there has been an increase in the numbers working in the ancillary and para-professional areas of education during the course of the first triennium, the numbers of professional people remain limited. Table 2 compares the number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and other Australians employed in schools and preschools.
### Table 2

**Numbers of People Employed in Schools, by Type of School, Type of Employment and Gender, Australia, 1991**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Employed as School Teachers</th>
<th>Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples</th>
<th>Other Australians</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Males</td>
<td>Females</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preschools</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Primary Schools</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>260</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secondary Schools</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Combined Primary and Secondary Schools</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Special Schools</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>149</td>
<td>423</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Employed as Other Occupations (eg AEWs)</th>
<th>Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples</th>
<th>Other Australians</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Males</td>
<td>Females</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preschools</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>258</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Primary Schools</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>386</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secondary Schools</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>207</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Combined Primary and Secondary Schools</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>105</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Special Schools</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>265</td>
<td>979</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: ABS Census of Population and Housing, 1991*

The tertiary system has so far not produced sufficient numbers of teachers who are well enough trained to compete for scarce employment places in State and Territory systems or independent schools. There is a price paid for this both in terms of the quality of education offered to Indigenous students, and in terms of the frequency with which non-indigenous students are able to communicate directly with exponents of Indigenous culture.

There is a need for Indigenous teachers in secondary schools and TAFE Colleges. Few Indigenous students enter the higher level courses required for secondary and tertiary teaching and consequently the numbers of qualified teachers are very limited. There is a particular need for role models of successful progress through the TAFE system, where there are many Indigenous students - particularly in NSW. Too often, they enter in the lowest levels, the remedial and prevocational courses, and do not continue on to acquire full trade certification and higher qualifications.

There is also a need for the upgrading of the formal qualifications of Aboriginal Education Workers (AEWs). One important prerequisite for improvement is access to further training and the acquisition of qualifications. A source of frustration and inequity flows from current patterns of employment which provide no recognition of the prior learning about indigenous culture which benefits both Indigenous and non-indigenous students, and only a very limited career path. The career paths and employment conditions for AEWs are discussed more fully on pages 48-52.
Preservice training of teachers

Education systems are the key mechanisms for creating and sustaining the understanding required for reconciliation. The staffing of all education systems with people sensitive to the needs of Indigenous peoples and aware of the special strength and quality of Indigenous culture thus becomes a high priority in future programs designed to enhance reconciliation.

Requirements for teacher training are further discussed at pages 47-48. It is also an area where there is potential to increase employment of Indigenous people in higher level occupations.

Recommendation 295 of the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody (RCIADIC)\(^7\) makes specific reference for the need for teacher training programs to encompass courses that will give greater understanding of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander issues. It recommends that:

a. all teacher training courses include courses which will enable student teachers to understand that Australia has an Aboriginal history and Aboriginal viewpoints on social, cultural and historical matters, and to teach the curriculum which reflects those matters;

b. in-service training courses for teachers be provided so that teachers may improve their skill, knowledge and understanding to teach curricula which incorporate Aboriginal viewpoints on social, cultural and historical matters, and

c. Aboriginal people should be involved in the training courses at both student teacher and in-service level.

The need for increased participation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people as teachers and trainers in education programs is the subject of a recently released report from the Aboriginal Research Institute of the University of South Australia.

The report - Teacher Education Preservice: Preparing Teachers to work with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Students\(^8\) sets out principles, guidelines and implementation strategies for the delivery of teacher education programs that it says will address the RCIADIC recommendations. Among other things it specifically recommends the increased employment of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in such programs. We agree with the report's conclusions and make the following recommendation:

**Recommendation 9**

*That higher education institutions providing teacher education courses and employers of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander educators implement the recommendations of the Aboriginal Research Institute of the University of South Australia's publication 'Teacher Education Pre-service: Preparing Teachers to work with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Students'.*

The key training grounds for teachers are now the universities. They are the repositories of expertise in research and teaching about Indigenous culture, history and languages. Indigenous students are already encouraged to enter and remain in universities by a number of Joint Policy programs and by various schemes of recruitment and support within universities. Many universities provide staff and physical facilities to cater for the special needs of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander students. These can be expanded in a systematic way to increase further the participation and retention rates in tertiary education.

All students can benefit from the presence on campus of Indigenous students and can also draw

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\(^7\) Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody - National Report: Commissioner Elliot Johnston, AGPS, Canberra, 1991
\(^8\) Teacher Education Preservice: Preparing Teachers to work with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Students - A National Reconciliation and Schooling Strategy, Eleanor Bourke, Rosemary Dowie, Bill Lucas: Aboriginal Research Institute University of South Australia, Adelaide, 1993.
on the research and teaching expertise of Indigenous staff members. Given the wide
distribution of Indigenous students throughout Australian schools and the general mobility
required of all beginning teachers, mandatory courses aimed at raising the cultural sensitivity
of non-indigenous students seem appropriate as one mechanism for reconciliation. This is
now a common feature of some tertiary institutions and is commended by some State and
Territory registration authorities.

The problem for tertiary institutions often is finding appropriately qualified staff to teach such
courses. Indigenous teachers have the greatest credibility but they are in short supply. This
situation could be remedied in the short-term by recognition of the prior learning of traditional
wisdom among people not formally qualified by the usual university standard of significant
post-graduate qualifications and publications. Such people might work in tandem with mentors
to raise their academic profile while contributing credibility and insight into courses for
non-indigenous students.

We believe that non-indigenous teachers and administrators in tertiary institutions should see it
as a priority to undertake a systematic program of planning for the 'Indigenisation' of senior
positions. These key intellectual leadership roles in universities and other tertiary institutions
such as Batchelor College in the Northern Territory will be performed more effectively if these
institutions and their specialist positions are created as genuinely indigenous institutions.
Current patterns of recruitment are justified in terms of avoiding a 'brain drain' from other
community activities, but this will no longer be credible in a future era of reconciliation and
promotion of indigenous self-determination.

Responsibilities of employers

All this presumes that the outcome of access to self-improvement will be teaching positions in
schools for Indigenous staff. Two factors operate in the market for teaching positions - supply
and demand. The supply side of the equation may be affected by the preferences of individuals
for taking jobs in remote and traditional communities or in ethnically diverse urban schools.
This preference will be affected by the security of tenure, other conditions of employment such
as access to housing, provision of supporting staff and career prospects.

We have received evidence that some State and Territory systems have been failing to take full
advantage of Indigenous peoples available for employment. Employers have not recognised the
special cultural benefits associated with the appointment of Indigenous teachers when choosing
between applicants. They have not offered career prospects for their AEWs and opportunities
for up-grading, nor have they offered access to housing and to support staff comparable to that
offered to non-indigenous teachers doing the same job.

States and Territories must ensure that those leaving universities and other training institutions
with appropriate qualifications are supported to choose to continue their involvement with
education. Otherwise these key figures in the process of reconciliation will be lost because they
have chosen, quite reasonably, to pursue other careers.

Employment conditions of Indigenous teachers

The Review received a considerable amount of evidence to suggest that Aboriginal and Torres
Islander teachers are sometimes employed under terms and conditions different for those
applicable to non-indigenous staff. When a teacher in a government system is appointed to a
remote area that is not their normal place of residence, accommodation and fares to and from
their home to the school is usually provided. When a teacher from a remote area is appointed
as a teacher in their own community accommodation and fares are not provided. This is often
perceived as a form of positive discrimination for non-indigenous teachers in the provision of better quality housing, freight subsidies, or airfares during holiday periods. We believe that differential employment conditions such as these are unacceptable and it is the responsibility of employers to remove any such discrimination.

Conversely, some other employment conditions are too inflexible to accommodate the cultural obligations particular to indigenous teaching staff. Apart from community responsibilities there are also family, social and cultural responsibilities that may take them away from work from time to time. Many people see a need for employment conditions to take account of factors such as these. We were told that many teachers take up positions in community organisations such as Community Councils because their employment practices and conditions are more accepting of such demands.

We believe that it is critical that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander teacher graduates are offered positions, and in places where they are accepted as part of the community. We were told that in one major city, eight Indigenous teachers graduated in 1993 but none gained employment in the State education system. While this system does undertake to give recent Indigenous teacher graduates a job, the position can be anywhere in the State. For a number of reasons this makes it extremely difficult for these graduates who often have strong family ties and commitments and may not wish to work in 'someone else's country'.

This is a major issue with teachers from traditionally oriented, remote communities. It is a source of anger and frustration for these teacher graduates not to have priority for placement in their home community where they have the very special capacity to teach bilingual, bicultural programs to their own people. The following extract from a letter from teacher graduates to their employer illustrates the point:

We understood that when we finished training we could take up positions in our Community Schools. We thought that we were in the front of the line but we are told we are at the end of the queue. Non-Aboriginal people hold the teaching positions and can stay as long as they like. We could be waiting for years. ...Our communities sent us to train as teachers so we could go back and teach in our schools. Our communities are depending on us.

In addition there are many two year trained teachers who can't get jobs in the towns and cities because their qualification is not recognised as being sufficient. In one major centre where there many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, and where in some schools they are actually in the majority, we were told that there are only three Aboriginal teachers in work.

In some States and Territories there is no place on the application form for employment to indicate that the person is Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander. Because graduates cannot get jobs many either become unemployed or take up positions in the public service or elsewhere.

There is an ongoing need for the professional development of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander educators and for provisions for them to upgrade qualifications. There was a call for Indigenous graduates to be encouraged to undertake higher degrees and for universities to institute affirmative action plans to accommodate these students. Universities need to have more flexible policies that will take account of and credit the special knowledge and skills of Indigenous teachers in order to get them into programs where they can take up positions as tutors. This is especially so in Aboriginal Studies which is a growing area in many universities. There was, however, an opposing view put by an influential Aboriginal academic who says that university appointments must be on merit and not simply because the student is Aboriginal.
This is a fairly popular viewpoint in many universities. Mentor schemes provide a promising avenue for the development of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander academics.

While the total number of people employed in the education industry has increased, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people predominantly occupy short-term, rather than permanent, and junior positions. In the postschool education industry Indigenous workers make up less than 0.01% of all staff, working mostly in non-teaching positions. Only 20% of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people employed in the higher education sector are permanent employees. Over half of those who do not hold permanent positions are employed under contracts of less than one year. Conditions of employment generally do not have the flexibility to accommodate indigenous cultural requirements. To address these issues, we recommend:

**Recommendation 10**

That, by the year 2001, employers of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander teaching staff, in consultation with unions and representatives of Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islanders, will have reviewed their existing employment practices in preschools, schools, technical and further education, adult and community education and higher education institutions and have taken adequate steps to:

- ensure that pay and conditions of service do not discriminate between Indigenous and non-indigenous professional educators;
- give priority to the employment of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander educators, for the benefit of both Indigenous and non-indigenous students;
- accommodate local and specific cultural affiliations in determining the placement or posting of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees or prospective employees;
- adopt a mentoring system which promotes the advancement of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander educators to senior positions;
- give priority to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander educators to attend inservice professional development courses;
- establish staffing and staff development practices which encourage Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander educators to upgrade their qualifications when they wish to do so, including giving priority to Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islanders in scholarships and awards where such schemes exist;
- allow secondment of experienced Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander teachers to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander controlled community schools under contract without penalty to their entitlements and conditions of service;
- make provision for a special allowance, similar to the Australian Public Service linguistic performance allowance, which recognises the additional and specialist skills of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people where those skills are required and used in the workplace, and
- allow leave for cultural obligations.

Employers, in consultation with unions, should formalise such conditions as may be appropriate in awards.

Employers of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander educators who receive
Commonwealth funding for the education of Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islanders should report annually to the Commonwealth on progress made towards achieving these goals.

An Indigenous teaching service

Those who were pessimistic about the good intentions of governments and bureaucracies suggested a more extreme cure to the problem of access to teaching careers. Their proposal was to bypass the States and Territories completely and to create a separate Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander teaching service, funded directly by the Commonwealth to provide staff for schools managed by Indigenous communities and operating within an autonomous regional administrative structure.

This would clearly create a major burden on Commonwealth resources, given that 90% of funding for government schools currently comes from the States and Territories and includes all teacher salaries. There would be a potential problem with the principle of choice enunciated earlier. Would communities or families be given the choice of schooling within the separate Indigenous system or have a right to opt into the State and Territory system? Would teachers have the right to opt into and out of a system as part of a career choice? Would the most able teachers find sufficient incentives to work in the Indigenous rather than the mainstream?

Past practice in some States and Territories suggests that, when a separate two year trained Indigenous teaching service operated, it came to be regarded as second-rate by staff, students and parents. This service provided a two-year teacher training course for Indigenous teachers, whereas non-Indigenous teachers only became qualified after a minimum of three years of teacher education. It would require considerable goodwill on the part of State and Territory systems to make a remote, community-governed Indigenous teaching service viable, as well as a sensitive consideration of access and equity issues.

There is also the problem of staffing arrangements for the many schools where there is a significant population of non-indigenous students, which is the norm in many States and Territories - Indigenous students in homogeneous community schools are only a small minority of total enrolments nationally. Special arrangements would need to be made for staffing such schools equitably, or creating separate indigenous structures inside or outside existing State and Territory schools. Again, perceptions of relative quality may offset the benefits of cultural appropriateness.

Training for non-indigenous teaching staff

We believe that it is critical for non-indigenous teaching staff to support the goals of self-determination and to have knowledge and appreciation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander history and culture. Professional development of non-indigenous teachers on a wide scale is a key requirement for the effective teaching of Aboriginal Studies and for the changing of attitudes.

We were constantly told that all teachers working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children should have received cross cultural awareness training as a minimum requirement of employment. Many teachers have little knowledge of Indigenous cultures and receive only minimal induction from employers. There was broad agreement that pressure ought to be applied to education providers to have teachers better prepared and trained. Better informed teachers would be more receptive to the increasing employment levels of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander teachers who are seen as being vital in the process of reconciliation.
The teaching of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, especially ones from traditionally oriented communities, is a specialised area of work. Too often, recent graduates or teachers with inappropriate backgrounds are appointed to schools with significant proportions of Indigenous students. There is a real need for experienced and successful teachers, especially in remote areas in both government and independent schools. Around the country there are many such teachers who, if given the chance, would return to teach in such schools but who are restrained by present working conditions and agreements with employers.

Although some education systems currently have provision to allow for secondment of their teachers to other systems, others don’t. We believe that the free flow of teachers from one system to another, and especially the movement of teachers from government systems to the independently controlled Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander schools, will provide a important benefit to these schools. We make the following recommendation:

Recommendation 11

That, by the year 2001, employers of teaching staff, in consultation with unions and representatives of Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islanders, will have reviewed their existing employment practices in preschools, schools, technical and further education, adult and community education and higher education institutions and have taken adequate steps to:

• provide in-service courses in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural awareness, counter-racism and teaching Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students for all staff, especially those posted to institutions with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students;
• give priority to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural awareness and counter-racism courses in inservice professional development plans of all educators;
• give priority to the employment of teacher graduates who have completed Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander studies courses as part of their teacher education course;
• make completion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander studies and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural awareness training mandatory for career advancement and/or renewal of performance contracts, and
• allow secondment of experienced non-indigenous teachers to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander controlled community schools under contract without penalty to their entitlements and conditions of service.

Employers, in consultation with unions, should formalise such conditions as may be appropriate in awards.

Employers of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander educators who receive Commonwealth funding for the education of Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islanders should report annually to the Commonwealth on progress made towards achieving these goals.

Employment conditions of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Workers

AEWs have become an integral part of the education industry since the first Aboriginal Teaching Assistant was appointed in the Northern Territory in 1953. Assisted by generous
Commonwealth funding through the Department of Aboriginal Affairs, every State and Territory except Tasmania had indigenous teacher aides by 1975. In 1981, South Australia introduced the generic job title ‘Aboriginal Education Worker’ (AEW), which has gained widespread acceptance although it is now occasionally expanded to ‘Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Worker’. AEWs are still employed under a variety of other titles, such as Aboriginal Teacher Aides, Assistant Teachers, Koorie Educators, Community Teachers, Aboriginal Literacy Workers and Home School Liaison Officers.

While this Review was underway, a separate investigation of the working conditions of AEWs was being conducted across Australia. The findings of that investigation were published in early 1994 in a report called *Ara Kuwaritjakutu Project: Towards a New Way*. It found that although there are some 21 different job titles for AEWs, their duties were essentially the same. Major functions of school-based AEWs are largely additional to the functions performed by mainstream teacher aides and include:

- providing support and assistance in classrooms through tutorial or extension programs;
- counselling indigenous students and parents especially on dealing with racism;
- liaising between home and school (eg, about attendance, achievement); with indigenous community organisations (eg, ASSPA committees), and with government agencies (eg, welfare, justice agencies);
- participating in committees, both school and community based;
- organising and participating in camps and excursions for Aboriginal Studies, Culture Studies, etc;
- providing a consulting service to principals and teachers (eg, on Aboriginal family life);
- teaching courses and providing in-service training for teachers on cultural awareness;
- promoting and developing indigenous cultural activities in the school;
- performing administrative duties, and
- undertaking specialist duties such as Aboriginal Studies or Language Education.

The Project reported that about 1,500 AEWs were employed during 1993, including part-time staff. The vast majority (approximately 1,100) are in government schools; about 9% are in independent or community schools, and some 10% are in preschools. Almost 40% of the AEWs employed in the school sector work in schools in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. However, most Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students are enrolled in schools in the towns and cities and have insufficient access to AEWs. Many AEWs are studying: in 1993, 28.5% of AEWs were undertaking a course of study, with 76.3% of these students studying part time at university.

A survey conducted by the Ara Kuwaritjakutu Project confirm the general perception that the majority of AEWs are in positions that are at least partially funded by the Commonwealth through the AESIP program. 48% of AEWs surveyed by the Project advised that their positions were fully funded by the Commonwealth. In 1993, over 40% received an annual salary of less than $18,000. Some 53% were in temporary positions, despite the introduction in 1990 of triennial AESIP funding which included a condition that, as far as possible, employment of staff utilising AESIP funding is to be on a permanent - as distinct from casual or temporary - basis.
Following the active support for AEWs provided by the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody\(^9\), a specific initiative to increase AEW numbers was undertaken as part of the 1993-95 AESIP triennium funding. However it appears to have had an unintended consequence of increasing education providers' reliance on AESIP for AEW salaries which reinforces problems of:

- AEWs being under temporary rather than permanent employment conditions;
- some temporary AEWs missing out on holiday pay and employer based superannuation;
- inadequate AEW career paths, and
- high rates of AEW employment turnover.

It was also reported that although the majority of AEWs employed by education systems are covered by awards or agreements, most of these awards are aligned with the relevant teacher aide or school assistant awards. AEWs work under some fourteen awards around the country, with many having inappropriate titles and provisions. Evidence indicates that although AEW duties, responsibilities and working conditions have changed significantly, with their work becoming more complex and demanding, their awards do not reflect these changes. Although increasing numbers of AEWs are obtaining tertiary qualifications, their awards do not generally provide for any resultant increase of salary.

Submissions to the Review indicated strong support for the contribution AEWs made to the education of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, particularly in building links between home and school. There was also a lot of concern for the conditions under which AEWs are generally employed. Like Indigenous teachers, AEWs provide positive role models for all students. and there was almost universal praise for the important and positive benefits that their employment brings to the educational experiences of Indigenous students.

Their employment ‘inside’ the system serves as a constant reminder that education needs to accommodate the cultures and values of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students and that employers need to accommodate the cultures and values of their employees.

AEWs were well represented at the consultations and expressed positive views about their roles. They also expressed concerns about their conditions of employment and employer’s expectations. As one group put it ‘They are all temporary, there are no clear award conditions and they can’t get a loan because they are on year-by-year contracts’. Others were concerned about the expectations some principals held of AEWs. As one person stated: ‘The expectation at schools is more like [AEWs] are miracle workers.’ Another supported this view adding: ‘There is a need to educate teachers about the role of AEWs to ensure they aren’t expected to do everything that comes up with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander kids.’ There was a strong call for support systems to assist AEWs in their work, including regular AEW meetings and discussions and the provision of a coordinator (an Indigenous person). Many enter the job without a great deal of background in education and need regular training and encouragement. We were told that without such support they are ‘set up for failure’. It is important that older people, the ‘strong’ ones, are not excluded from taking up these positions as they have much to offer but they must not be ‘thrown in at the deep end’ as has happened to many people.

This concern about training echoes the findings of the Ara Kuwaritjakutu Project which indicated that all AEWs surveyed had significant concerns about the training and development which is offered to them. While most had access to some form of training, they generally perceived it as not suiting their needs, nor designed to respond to their requests for training in
areas such as conflict resolution, mediation and curriculum. Interestingly, they were critical of federal initiatives focussed on them becoming teachers rather than improving their skills as AEWs. Their preference was for training programs which essentially equipped them to be AEWs, but which also provided the option of pursuing further study if desired. The Certificate in Aboriginal Liaison at the Launceston College of TAFE (Tasmania), the Certificate in Educational Practice at Pundulmurra College (WA), and Certificate to Diploma courses at Batchelor College (NT) were strongly supported by AEWs.

A further source of frustration is the inability of many AEWs employed as assistant teachers to improve their qualifications without leaving their home communities to which they are often tied by family and other obligations. The obvious answer, common to all remote students independent of ethnic identity, is distance education. However, it was suggested that Indigenous peoples find it difficult to sustain the conditions necessary for independent study without specific support and a curriculum tailored to their needs. A successful answer to this problem has been provided by programs such as Batchelor College’s Remote Area Teacher Education (RATE) program and the Remote Area Teacher Education Preparation (RATEP) scheme operated by the James Cook University of North Queensland and the Cairns TAFE College. Funding for RATEP is provided on a project basis by State and Territory and federal education authorities.

In summary, throughout the course of the Review there was consistent praise for the work done by AEWs. They are seen by many as a vital resource for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander education and their contribution is recognised and valued within both Indigenous communities and education systems. However, we have found evidence to affirm the significance of the issues raised in *Ara Kuwaritjakutu Project: Towards a New Way*, notably:

- the employment of significant numbers of AEWs by education systems can distort the picture of Indigenous employment in education as most are employed at the lower ends of salary scales and few are advancing in a career as no career structure exists for them;
- there is a high turnover of AEWs (62% have less than three years experience in their current workplace) which has negative effects on continuity and stability of relationships in schools, which in turn affects student achievement;
- there is no national definition of the roles, rights and responsibilities of AEWs which leads to differing expectations and confusion in the workplace, and the feeling by many AEWs that they are ‘pressured and overmanaged whilst being poorly led’. They are often used to ‘fill in’ as teachers or are used to run Child-Parent Centres without any appropriate salary adjustment;
- salary levels are uniformly low and do not take account of the special attributes and qualities that skilled and experienced workers bring to the job;
- only slightly more than half (53%) of AEWs are in permanent employment and consequently many workers do not have similar leave and superannuation entitlements as others doing the same work. Most AEW positions are funded directly from AESIP funds and in the view of many, employers are not accepting their full responsibilities;
- opportunities for professional development are limited for many AEWs and their requests for specific training in conflict resolution, mediation, curriculum and other areas which would make them more effective in their current positions, are often ignored by employers, and
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Strategic plan
2009
Informing policy and practice in Australia's training system
• AEWs experience institutionalised racism at a number of levels which affects their effectiveness as workers and ultimately contributes to high turnover rates.

We are concerned that AEWs’ pay and conditions of service do not reflect their crucial role in encouraging and facilitating Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples’ access to, participation in, and outcomes from education. To address these issues we recommend:

That, noting the recommendations of the Australian Education Union’s publication ‘Ara Kuwaritjakutu: Towards a New Way’, by the year 2001, employers of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander education workers, in consultation with unions and representatives of Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islanders, will have reviewed their existing employment practices in preschools, schools, technical and further education, adult and community education and higher education institutions and have taken adequate steps to:

• ensure that pay and conditions of service (including security of tenure) do not discriminate between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander education workers and their non-indigenous paraprofessional equivalents;
• set out clearly the roles and responsibilities of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander education workers;
• guarantee improved provision of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander education workers by, for example, introducing staffing formulae which provide for at least one part-time (0.5) Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander education worker in all preschools and schools with more than 10 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, and which provide for one Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander education worker for each 30 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students in schools where Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students are enrolled;
• provide appropriate inservice courses for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander education workers’ peers and supervisors to ensure they are aware of the roles and responsibilities of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander education worker staff;
• give priority to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander education workers to attend in-service professional development courses;
• establish staffing and staff development practices which encourage Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander education workers to upgrade their qualifications when they wish to do so, and
• introduce means by which experts in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander traditional and contemporary cultures can be recompensed for their contributions to the teaching and learning of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander studies.

Employers, in consultation with relevant unions, should formalise such conditions as may be appropriate in awards.

Employers of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander education workers who receive Commonwealth funding for the education of Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islanders should report annually to the Commonwealth on progress towards achieving these goals.
Conclusions on Involvement and Self-determination

It is clear from the evidence presented to us that Indigenous peoples, the people who live with the consequences of limited opportunities for involvement, are still not sufficiently listened to or heard in the establishment or modification of policies, programs and practices that impact on their educational experiences. The consistency and insistence of calls for greater involvement suggest to us that governments and other educational service providers have not reached, or demonstrated, sufficient recognition and regard for the views of Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islanders.

Two perspectives appear in the evidence presented to us:

• a view that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people need to be in positions where they can exercise a strong influence on, and determine, the structures and processes by which education is conventionally governed and administered in Australia, and
• a view that alternative structures and processes must be established through which Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islanders can exercise self-determination in education.

We commend those educational bodies which, over the last five years, have taken steps to include Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islanders in their decision-making processes. We note, however, that some relevant bodies still have not taken appropriate action in relation to these goals of the Joint Policy, or have done so inadequately. Consequently we have made a recommendation that is aimed at redressing such situations.

Our Discussion Paper canvassed the need to alter existing arrangements for overseeing educational policy, providing educational services and monitoring the outcomes of these services. In evidence presented to us people consistently drew attention to the need to move beyond the concept of ‘involvement’ articulated in the Joint Policy to one of self-determination in education. We have recommended a national conference where these two ideas can be brought together and where the framework for a new national and independent body to oversee education can be discussed.

The idea of setting up a new national and independent body has drawn consistent support. This is seen as a sensible response to the widely held view that there is not, at present, one body with the necessary breadth or expertise to carry out this function. It was also seen as being one means by which the principle of self-determination in education might be realised.

The evidence presented to us supports AECGs but recognises problems with the way some of them are currently constituted. In particular there was a concern that the capacity of State and Territory AECGs to provide independent advice might be compromised where members are appointed rather than elected, or where funding for these organisations was not made directly to them. The view that these organisations might take a more active role in informing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people about developments in education, especially at the regional and local level, was also widely put. We agree with these arguments and we recommend changes that will see a reconstituting of AECGs.

Developments in education over the last five years have been hampered by a lack of coordination in educational service delivery and a lack of information about the range of educational programs and services available. Specific problems were most often referred to in the evidence presented to us. We believe that sharing information and materials would do
much to enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of the activities conducted under the auspices of the Joint Policy and we have recommended the establishment of a national clearinghouse for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander education.

While there have been improvements in the employment of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in recent years, there is still a long way to go before there will be equity of employment opportunities and outcomes. There are concerns about the pay and conditions of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander teachers and AEWs. They are often subject to considerable additional pressure arising from their frequent roles as community leaders. Their time is often very limited. Burnout of such people is common. They may also suffer financially in having to forego personal income for the benefit of the community. In order to redress deficiencies in pay and conditions of service, we have made four recommendations for their improvement, drawing on the findings of two recent studies, and have set targets to be achieved before the end of this century. Improved employment opportunities are important not only to provide fair circumstances for individuals, but to facilitate the positive benefits, such as the presence of role models, that the employment of Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islanders in the education industry brings to the educational experiences of Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islanders.

The ten recommendations in this section of the Report (Recommendations 3 to 12) extend the notion of ‘involvement in educational decision-making’ to encompass educational self-determination. While this move is a powerful symbol in its own right, we believe it should be embedded in the governing and advisory structures of all education and training providers.

**Equitable Access**

*Our second Term of Reference* has been to review Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples’ equality of access to education services. Goals 7, 8 and 9 of the Joint Policy refer to the issue of equitable access.

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<th>National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Goal 7</strong> To ensure that Aboriginal children of pre-primary school age have access to pre-school services on a basis comparable to that available to other Australian children of the same age.</td>
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<td><strong>Goal 8</strong> To ensure that all Aboriginal children have local access to primary and secondary schooling.</td>
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<td><strong>Goal 9</strong> To ensure equitable access for Aboriginal people to post-compulsory secondary schooling, to technical and further education, and higher education.</td>
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The Terms of Reference of the Review invite comment on issues of ‘equality of access to educational services’ and, separately, on issues of ‘equity of educational participation’. The two are closely intertwined, and much of the commentary in this section is also relevant to the next, which deals with participation.
Many people have brought to our attention specific instances where Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islanders do not have access to the kinds of educational services they wish. For some people, particularly those living in remote communities, this means not having access to any kind of education, either through local institutions or through some other, distance education based means. Submissions and consultations also drew attention to the unmet need for adult education in remote areas - for many Aboriginal people and Torres Strait Islanders, primary school is their last experience of formal schooling. An analysis of the evidence we received from these submissions and consultations follows.

The ‘neutral’ view of access: integration to the educational ‘mainstream’

Some submission writers see access primarily in terms of getting students to take up available educational opportunities. The access problem is seen as mainly a matter of motivation or of getting parents and communities to ensure that students take these opportunities. For these people, ‘access’ is a neutral matter. It concerns ensuring that rates of access are the same as those for all Australians, as if the numbers (quantity) of those entering education was the main issue with little or no consideration apparent for the relevance and appropriateness (quality) of the education available.

To the extent that they argue the need to achieve a position of (statistically) equal opportunities for individuals, and for access to mainstream institutions, they may be adopting the integrationist approach to education. It should also be noted that a number of these submissions take the view that Aboriginality is a category of ‘disadvantage’. They consider that it is the responsibility of institutions to provide supplementary or compensatory provision to address this ‘disadvantage’. This includes cajoling students, their parents and communities to take up the opportunities which will give students access to the good life as it is defined by schools and other educational institutions on behalf of the dominant ‘mainstream’ Australian culture.

Access as outreach: equal opportunity for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as a special group

Other submissions seem to regard questions of access as questions of ‘outreach’ - a matter of finding special ways of allowing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students to enter educational institutions. A number from ‘mainstream’ institutions are of this kind, and while assuming the framework of values and practices of the institution, they want to reach out to include more Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students. The outreach theme is indicated in many submissions from schools which deal with the special efforts needed to get students to programs and to deliver programs to students in remote communities, and in submissions arguing the need for special efforts to promote courses.

Many people regarded access as a question of bringing existing forms of education to remote populations. They see the problem of access as one of expanding systems, both geographically and culturally, to embrace Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. Some also argue for improved facilities for bringing ‘remote’ students to population centres so they can attend residential schools.

On the other hand, other submissions question whether it is enough to bring Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students within the ambit of ‘mainstream’ education. The ‘localism’ of recent decades, together with concerns for cultural pluralism and inclusiveness, have fostered a recognition that something other than ‘mainstream’ education may well be appropriate.
Most submissions from education systems concede that changes will often be needed to ‘mainstream’ provision, but how substantial these changes might be is not always evident. Many systems provide statistics about access and participation to suggest that progress is being made, also declaring that more can and will be done. Many submissions from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and organisations, especially in higher education, refer to such figures to show that a great deal more needs to be done.

An interesting comment on connections between outreach and cultural awareness and sensitivity is made in a submission from a university which indicates that ‘remoteness’ is not just a question of geographical distance, but also a matter of cultural distance. Making educational accessible to students, it argues, requires adopting community-based approaches to education. Programs are taken out of the university and into communities, and offered in ways judged as culturally appropriate by the communities themselves.

A community perspective on access and participation
Submissions from communities and community schools, especially from ‘remote’ areas, interpret access differently. They do not yield on the equity argument and demand that local communities have equitable access to education. But neither do they presuppose the appropriateness of ‘mainstream’ systemic education. They want a form of education which meets the immediate, pressing needs of their children and communities. They argue for access to forms of education that recognise and respect the whole world views, knowledge, culture, economic needs and political concerns of their own people. At the same time they acknowledge the need for indigenous people to have the knowledge, understandings, skills and values which allow them to interact effectively with the wider Australian society.

Access, in these terms, means not only ‘in principle’ access to all of the educational opportunities available to Australians in general, but also access through appropriate education to the diverse opportunities actually or potentially available in their communities. For these people there is little doubt about the inadequacy of forms of education which have actually produced incapacity among local people to realise the hope of access to a better life and work within their communities. They insist that some other form of education is needed. They want access to an education which might actually realise new possibilities and many submissions suggest ways that education at the local level might be improved to unlock these new possibilities.

There is a difference between those who emphasise access from a system perspective, and those who emphasise access from a local, community perspective. As many submissions from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people point out, access to a form of education that is indifferent to, or corrodes, Aboriginality is unacceptable.

Gaining Equitable Access in Remote Areas
Although the vast majority are in urban areas, many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples live in remote, isolated places. The 1991 Census indicates that about 32% of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples live in rural and remote areas of Australia, compared to about 15% of the Australian population as a whole. This is illustrated in Table 3.
Education participation statistics show that education participation at all levels in the rural and remote parts of Australia is significantly lower than in urban areas. There are also very clear indications that significant numbers of compulsory school-aged students do not attend school, and that among those that do, attendance is often spasmodic and unreliable. During the consultations we visited major centres where education services are available, only to be told there were ‘hundreds’ of school-aged young people not in any regular education program.

Many submissions to the Review were from organisations and individuals based in remote areas of Australia. Members of the Reference Group visited a number of isolated communities in Queensland, Western Australia and the Northern Territory to talk to people and see what was happening first hand.

Evidence from these people highlights the importance and gaps in provision of:

- bilingual and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages programs;
- the involvement of the community in education and the need to support them;
- the critical nature of transport;
- the need for staff housing (especially for staff in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander controlled schools);
- the need to train local people as teachers and AEWs;
- the need for provision of secondary education at the local level and the effects of homesickness on students who board;
- the need to access tertiary study, adult education and training at the local level, and
the potential of distance education strategies.

We recognise that there are considerable problems in delivering educational services to people in remote areas, and that often the needs and aspirations of these people are quite different from those of people in urban centres. Providing services in remote areas is much more expensive than it is in urban areas. It is also complex in terms of staffing, resources and economies of scale. Many sizeable communities situated in areas affected by the tropical wet season are only accessible by air for six months of the year and this factor alone increases costs greatly. As people have moved away from larger settlements to return to their homelands, there has been an increased demand for services in even more remote areas as people almost invariably want to establish a school no matter how isolated their community.

Among people working in remote places or those supporting them such as the teacher unions, there are many criticisms of the levels of education provision. Many say that there are double standards at work, both in terms of staffing and physical resources, whereby town schools are far better resourced than those in the bush. They claim that:

- staffing formulas do not take account of the special needs and circumstances of small schools;
- the level of ESL support is inadequate;
- it is difficult to get a homeland school established;
- enrolments by secondary-aged students are not recognised in staffing formulas, and
- young, inexperienced teachers are often appointed to remote schools and left without adequate levels of support.

There is also a great unmet demand for adult education and training provision in remote communities. For many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, school is their last experience of formal western education. Apart from these gaps in adult education provision, the main problem area is education for secondary school aged students.

While remote area Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities with substantial populations generally have some form of secondary education, such as a high school or a post-primary facility, many smaller communities do not. The options for families are to send their children to boarding school, when and if places are available at a suitable location, to enrol them in some form of secondary correspondence course or to abandon school altogether. Unfortunately this latter option is the one taken up by many.

In outback Australia the provision of post-primary education tends to be patchy and this creates considerable dissatisfaction for many people. This unsatisfactory situation has created an increased demand for boarding facilities in the towns. The Review has been told of a 'huge' demand for boarding places among the existing facilities in some central locations and a need for Commonwealth funds to be available for recurrent costs to support these institutions.

There are many enquires for enrolments in town schools and, while the schools can accommodate extra students, there are no suitable places for them to live. Bright 'town camp' children are being turned away from the boarding facilities and as one respondent put it:

> you only get one chance with these kids - if it doesn't work and they leave, they leave education for ever.

One representative of a boarding school indicated that he could fill 50 to 60 places immediately.
just from town children. However, boarding school presents many problems for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students and their parents. Attrition rates are high as students often feel alienated and homesick in places that are very different from their home environments.

AESIP is supporting a number of promising initiatives that use modern technologies to provide educational services to remote communities. One initiative that has created a great deal of interest right across northern Australia is the Tanami Network. It is a video-tele-conferencing system which, among other things, allows the delivery of distance education programs from a central point to a wide network of users. It also has many other applications for the delivery of services to outback communities apart from education.

At one location courses in Year 8 English and Maths are delivered by correspondence school teachers through the network. Those involved in the program say that it has been very successful, especially among young women in the post-primary age group. From small beginnings, the numbers have gradually increased so that this year there were 30 young women attending regularly and a group recently received its first Year 8 certificates for English and Maths.

Most of these students had abandoned schooling before these courses came online. At the time of writing this report, only secondary education programs are being delivered through the network although there is great potential to deliver a whole range of adult education and vocational training programs through this medium.

In addition to tele-conferencing systems, education programs are being delivered through other forms of the ‘electronic classroom’. Secondary correspondence courses in some outback areas are being delivered through telephone link-ups and computers connected to a modem. However, correspondence courses such as these are only effective when students receive quality support and tuition at both the delivery and receiving ends and when the quality of the program is sufficiently high.

Many teachers of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students remark on the way in which their students have taken to computers and the benefits of using computer technology in the classroom. They recognise computers as a potentially powerful motivator and teaching tool at all levels of formal education. At present the range and amount of materials designed specifically for computer-based delivery is limited. They say that there is great potential to improve students’ performance through the development of appropriate computer software and initiatives to develop these products need to be supported. We concur with this view.

While there is great enthusiasm about the technology used in delivering the programs developed under AESIP, there was considerable and widespread criticism of the quality of the programs delivered and the processes used to develop them. A major and consistent criticism we heard was that in some places too much AESIP money is diverted away from actual service delivery to the employment of non-indigenous people in head office positions. We also heard that programs are developed with little or no consultation with teachers in the field or with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander client groups. Consequently these programs are considered to be inappropriate by many people and do not meet the needs of either the teachers who have to deliver them or their students.

Housing for teachers in remote places is a problem in both the government and non-government sectors. In one State the Review has been told that the educational authorities had sold off housing stock that it owned in rural areas, creating a shortage of housing for teachers working in remote places. This adds to the difficulty of attracting suitable people to these areas. For
independent Aboriginal controlled schools, especially those in Western Australia, housing for non-indigenous teachers is a perennial problem. Many submissions have suggested that the Commonwealth’s Capital Grants Program be varied to allow for projects of this kind.

Many submissions emphasise that the educational services provided to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and communities, especially in areas defined by urban and suburban Australia as ‘remote’, are inadequate by comparison with the services provided in urban and suburban Australia. Other submissions argue that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students even in urban areas may experience schooling as ‘remote’ from their concerns and interests. The extent to which both these kinds of remoteness (‘remoteness’ in material and practical terms as well as in cultural terms) is a cause of disadvantage deserves consideration.

We are concerned that the fundamental goal of local access to educational services is still unfulfilled for many Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islanders. Our concern covers all sectors and all aspects of provision. We recommend:

Recommendation 13

That the Commonwealth and States and Territories jointly provide additional capital funds for:

• the refurbishment of existing buildings to provide appropriate facilities to deliver preschool education services to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children living in rural and remote areas;

• local school educational services for the compulsory years of schooling where Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children do not have access to local schools or to other means of school education;

• residential facilities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander secondary students from rural or remote areas where their access to secondary education is currently limited, and where demand for such facilities can be demonstrated;

• preschool and school transport where no effective or economic means of transport is otherwise available, and

• school teacher accommodation where no other rental accommodation is available within a reasonable commuting distance from their place of employment.

Provision of these additional funds should be contingent on applicants for funding demonstrating that they can make adequate provision for the maintenance and repair of capital items and that they can meet any associated operational costs.

Ownership of capital items purchased with these additional funds should be vested, where possible, in appropriate incorporated Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations.

We also recognise the conflict people face between wanting to stay in their own communities and gaining access to education services of a quality not available locally. Some evidence views educational technologies as one promising way to resolve this conflict. Other evidence identifies potential dangers in these technologies - that they might substitute for, rather than supplement, local provision of educational services; that they might foster a move to centralised curricula; and that they are as yet unproven in cross-cultural contexts.
Evidence from people living in remote areas stresses the difficulties of studying through distance learning methods without the support of on-site tutors or teachers. We recognise that off-campus, mixed-mode and distance education services are most effective when supplemented by the provision of on-site teaching. We also believe that these developing technologies could serve the educational needs of people who are physically isolated in prison. On balance, we are persuaded that the use of these technologies merits further development and we recommend:

**Recommendation 14**

*The Open Learning Technology Corporation accelerate its development of open learning technologies in the schools and vocational education and training sectors, particularly where these technologies would extend Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples’ access to education.*

We also recommend:

**Recommendation 15**

*That the Commonwealth, States and Territories continue to develop the use of alternative technologies, including video-conferencing and tele-conferencing technologies and computer-based teaching and learning aids, to deliver off-campus, mixed-mode and distance education services to Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islanders for whom local access to relevant education services is not yet available.*

*Priority in the development of these technologies should be given to:*

* • delivering secondary education to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people living in those remote areas where education is not available in the compulsory years, and*

* • giving Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students in remote areas access to postcompulsory, and particularly teacher education courses.*

*Ownership of capital items purchased with funds used for these purposes should be vested, where possible, in appropriate incorporated Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations.*

**Recommendation 16**

*That the Commonwealth provide additional funds to support the provision of on-site tutorial support for students in remote areas undertaking postcompulsory education courses by distance education where the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Tutorial Assistance Scheme does not meet this need.*

**Conclusions on Equitable Access**

While primary school is provided for the great majority of children (the exception being services provided to homeland centres which may be only on a part-time basis or not at all), there are gaps in provision for secondary-aged students and major gaps in post-schooling education.

These gaps in educational provision are inexcusable. Australia has international obligations to make primary education free and compulsory; to make secondary education in its different...
forms generally available and accessible to all; to make higher education equally accessible to all on the basis of individual capacity, and to ensure compliance by all with obligation to attend school prescribed by law. States and Territories have enacted laws making schooling compulsory up to the age of 15 or 16 years.

Access to these educational services is not yet universally provided across Australia. There are communities that do not even have access to basic education services. Even where provision is reasonably accessible the journeys to and from school are long and enervating. Further, there are often limits on the range and quality of the educational experience that is provided.

It is our judgement that the standard and quality of all education provided to Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islanders, especially post primary schooling in some remote areas, is not equal to the standard and quality of services provided for other Australians. We have received evidence suggesting that Australia may be in breach of its international and legislative obligations in respect of education for Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islanders.

We are concerned that the fundamental goal of local access to educational services is still unfulfilled for many Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islanders. Our concern covers all sectors and all aspects of provision. We have recommended that the Commonwealth and the providers of education increase their capital expenditure to ensure access to education for all. This includes support for the continuing development of distance learning methods and alternative educational technologies as well as support infrastructure such as teacher housing.

Making education and training accessible is a fundamental responsibility of governments. The four recommendations (Recommendations 13 to 16) addressing gaps in provision, the variable quality of educational services and trying to reconcile the demands of community membership with the pursuit of education and training, are modest responses to the unacceptable and embarrassing gaps in service delivery.

**Raising Participation**

*Our third Term of Reference* has been to review the means of raising the rates of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples’ participation in education to those for all Australians.

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<th>National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Policy Goals</th>
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<td><strong>Goal 10</strong> To achieve the participation of Aboriginal children in pre-school education for a period similar to that for all Australian children.</td>
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<td><strong>Goal 11</strong> To achieve the participation of all Aboriginal children in compulsory schooling.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Goal 12</strong> To achieve the participation of Aboriginal people in post-compulsory secondary education, in technical and further education, and in higher education, at rates commensurate with those of all Australians in those sectors.</td>
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The statistics on participation show uneven progress since the inception of the Joint Policy. There are very encouraging indicators of increased participation in post compulsory education, especially in the TAFE sector where there has been a quite remarkable increase. However in the preschool and compulsory schooling years the progress has been much less dramatic.

Among all preschool aged children, participation in formal education appears to have declined in recent years. Education participation rates for 3 to 5 year olds (that is, in preschool and school) based on the Australian Census of Population and Housing data fell between 1986 and 1991 for both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and other Australian children. This may be associated with the rise in number of preschool-aged children attending childcare services.

Overall, the gaps in preschool participation between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and other Australian 3 to 5 year olds have narrowed but:

- while the gap between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and other Australian 4 year olds preschool participation has almost halved, it remains significant at 9.5%, and
- a high proportion (some 13.2%) of 5 year old Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children apparently are not participating in any form of education. These are mainly children living in remote areas of Australia. This is demonstrated in Table 4.

Primary school participation rates appear to be improving. There has been a steady increase in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander primary school enrolments in all but two States/Territories. Like other Australians, the vast majority of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children do begin and complete primary school.

However, secondary school participation rates are not so encouraging. Significant numbers of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander secondary school students do not complete the compulsory Years 8 or 9. An estimated 25% or more of those who start secondary school leave before the end of Year 10.
Participation in postcompulsory education is particularly inequitable. Between 1986 and 1991 the gap between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and other Australian 16 to 24 year olds' overall education participation (in school, technical and further education and university) widened.

In our view, the most revealing statistic is the current (1993) apparent Year 12 retention rate. Nationally, just over 25% of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students who started Year 7 or 8 five or four years before (depending on the State or Territory) were enrolled in Year 12 in 1993. The Queensland government system has an estimated apparent Year 12 retention rate of 51% in 1993, and if it is included, the estimated national Year 12 rate increases to about 33%. The apparent Year 12 retention rate varies between States and Territories - from a low of just over 10% in the Northern Territory to a high of 88% in the Australian Capital Territory.

Despite the concerted efforts of the last decade to raise Year 12 retention rates for all Australian students, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students' current Year 12 retention rate is now what it was for all Australian students more than twenty years ago.

**Raising Participation - What the Evidence Says**

As with the issue of access, participation in education is viewed in a variety of ways by people who wrote to the Review and those who attended the public meetings. These viewpoints are summarised in the following sections.

A number of submissions make it clear that access and participation are closely linked to questions of involvement in decision making, and aspirations and practices of self-determination. For some, access will be best achieved through the provision of more Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander controlled educational institutions (whether schools, TAFE or universities). For others it will be through ensuring that 'mainstream' institutions make clear and separate provision for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students so that they have some kind of 'home base' within institutions.

**Participation in culturally-sensitive education**

A crucial issue in many submissions is what Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students are gaining access to. Access is not simply a question of availability of educational provision, but availability of culturally appropriate curricula, pedagogies and forms of organisation and assessment. As one submission put it:

> An obvious failing of the AEP is that it is based on the premise that accessing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to existing western education systems and improving retention rates, particularly at the school level, will necessarily result in meaningful educational outcomes. All available evidence including the AEP review discussion paper, illustrates that this is not necessarily the case. Greater access to systems of education that have historically and traditionally failed Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, without reforms involving cultural inclusivity, can only lead to greater experiences of 'failure' and alienation.

This issue is in some ways similar to the question of outcomes, where it is argued by many that outcomes must be not only statistically equitable but also culturally appropriate. Arguably, this perspective about access is aligned with the view that mutual recognition and respect are necessary for reconciliation.

Some submissions regard participation as a matter of making special, culturally-aware and

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1 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander enrolment data in the Queensland Government school system have only been available since 1990. The 1993 Year 12 retention rate is therefore an estimate. It will be possible to calculate non-estimated Year 12 rates for Queensland and Australia for the 1994 year, when data becomes available.
culturally-sensitive provision in areas such as curriculum, teacher education, educational administration, and approaches to educational research and evaluation. A number from universities give evidence of special provision and have adopted special forms of pedagogy and special groupings of students (for example, enclaves, student support groups, and mentoring) as ways of enhancing participation.

**Participation as engagement in culturally-appropriate education**

Some emphasise that participation is not just about numbers. They are critical of the view that participation rates alone are satisfactory measures of the responsiveness of education systems and institutions to the needs and circumstances of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

One of the strongest submissions on this issue reminds us that there is a terrible price being paid in the lives and health of their Aboriginal community for the incapacity of institutions to respond to the needs of people and communities. Education, the authors argue, is essential to improving these conditions, but the rather sterile statistics of performance indicators like participation rates mask the difficulties of achieving participation in education in some community settings. They write:

> The reality of community life in this area, from which criteria for success should derive, is the ever present tensions leading to loss of language and culture. This tension is expressed in the premature death and disfigurement of many young men and to a lesser extent, women. It is this situation that should set the context for gauging success of Aboriginal education. ...Increased Aboriginal control and increased resources available at the community level will enable the development of performance indicators that reflect Aboriginal perspectives and that might provide more appropriate definitions of participation than the use of mainstream derived indicators and procedures.

Other submissions from traditionally oriented communities make similar points about participation being a substantive matter of connecting with, and engaging, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students in an education which they see as sensitively relevant. Technical difficulties with measuring participation distract attention from the real educational problems involved in offering relevant and appropriate education.

How people participate in education is not regarded by such submissions as a culturally-neutral question. As for the issue of appropriateness of outcomes, they see participation as something which is socially and culturally defined - and defined differently for different groups. Comparative participation rates may thus be disguising the inappropriateness of the comparison - apples and pears rather than apples with apples - between one form of participation and another.

Finding ways to recognise and respect differences in the meaning of participation is an important issue and one which is relevant not only in the view of traditionally oriented groups, but also for other Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander groups in rural and urban Australia. Finding appropriate forms and measures of participation in education is seen by such authors as connected to questions of mutual recognition and respect as a basis for reconciliation.

**The need for more sensitive, qualitative research**

Much of what has been said about access also applies to issues about participation. Statistics about continuing participation and retention rates demonstrate the inadequacies of existing levels for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, and they are used to demonstrate both
continuing gradual improvements and continuing inequities. As for access, strong arguments are made that quantitative views of participation are inadequate, and that qualitative views are needed to recognise that participation is a matter of being engaged by the educational opportunities offered.

This requires substantive change in what is offered, not just more of the opportunities which currently exist in the ‘mainstream’, or improved bridges into the mainstream through more culturally aware and sensitive forms of provision (though these are welcomed).

Arguments are put in various submissions that much more research is needed on participation, and that it must be qualitative, not just quantitative research - that is, research capable of identifying what actually fosters continuing engagement in education by indigenous students. Some submissions report that they are exploring such questions in practice through participatory action research in which schools and communities are learning how to improve participation by making changes to existing forms of provision, by monitoring the effects of changes, and by building on success. Often these research activities lead towards new forms of education - especially, in the case of community schools, towards different forms of ‘both ways’ education.

**Improving Participation in Compulsory and Postcompulsory Schooling**

*Primary schooling*

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander primary school enrolment levels across the country continue to rise steadily. There was about a 40% increase between 1985 and 1992, and if the Queensland government system and the Victorian government and non-government systems are included (statistics on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander participation in schooling were only collected in these systems from 1990 and 1988 respectively), the official numbers actually doubled in that period from around 26,000 to 52,000. This increase is shown in Table 5.

There are a number of reasons for this increase, namely high birth rates, increased willingness to identify as an Indigenous person and importantly, actual increases in participation and retention. This pattern of increasing or at least steady enrolments is true of most of the States and Territories except for two where there are large numbers of traditionally oriented people living in remote communities. With these exceptions it would appear that the great majority of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children are enrolled and retained during the primary years of schooling.

While we now have a good overall view of enrolments in schooling, we know a lot less about how regularly Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children attend school. We do know that enrolment data may not provide an accurate picture: for example, during the tropical dry season in Northern Australia many families who live in settlements and towns for much of the year return to their country where often there is no school. We have been told of large groups of school aged young people in some of the major centres who are not attending school with any regularity. In some systems overall attendance may be as low as 60%-70%.

*Compulsory aged secondary schooling*

Unlike primary school enrolments where consistent increases in cohort numbers are indicated from Year 1 to Year 7, secondary school enrolments tend to reach a peak in Year 8 and then fall rather rapidly. Since 1986 there has been a fairly consistent loss of 8%-10% of students.
between mid Year 8 and mid Year 9 and that pattern does not appear to be improving. It is no doubt a concern to major providers of education that a significant number of apparently underage students are ‘falling through the net’ and quitting school.

In most years since 1986, about 20% of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students who started secondary school have not completed Year 9, and in excess of 25% have not made it to the end of Year 10. In July of 1993 there were 4,594 Year 10 students still at school from an original mid Year 8 cohort of 5,944 in July of 1991 - indicating that some 23% of the group had left school up to that point.

Postcompulsory secondary schooling
Over the past decade there has been a dramatic increase in retention rates to Year 12 in
Australian schools. This increase has accelerated in the 1990s. The national Year 12 retention rate has increased from around 35% in the early 1980s to about 60% in 1989 and to 77% in 1992 and 1993. National retention rates to Year 10 have exceeded 90% for at least the last decade and since 1990, have been close to 100%.

The extent to which Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students have increased their participation and retention in education in the senior years of schooling, especially during the period of the first triennium of the Joint Policy, are important questions for the Review. As participation rates for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students in the compulsory years gradually improve, the focus of attention is increasingly shifting to performance in Years 11 and 12 where there are major gaps. Retention rates to Year 10, 11 and 12 are shown in Table 6.

### Table 6

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>State/Territory</th>
<th>Year 10</th>
<th>Year 11</th>
<th>Year 12</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>New South Wales</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>91.92</td>
<td>93.57</td>
<td>89.88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Victoria</td>
<td>81.85</td>
<td>83.19</td>
<td>69.96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Queensland</td>
<td>71.36</td>
<td>71.41</td>
<td>82.18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Australia</td>
<td>68.88</td>
<td>81.88</td>
<td>69.04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Western Australia</td>
<td>81.85</td>
<td>83.19</td>
<td>69.96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tasmania</td>
<td>96.15</td>
<td>107.63</td>
<td>124.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Northern Territory</td>
<td>61.38</td>
<td>53.97</td>
<td>63.71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Australian Capital Territory</td>
<td>57.89</td>
<td>88.89</td>
<td>176.47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Australia</td>
<td>70.13</td>
<td>71.69</td>
<td>78.93</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Estimated Queensland Year 12 rate is 51.3%.
* Estimated Australia Year 12 rate including Queensland is 33.0%.
** Retention Rates to NSW, Victoria, Tasmania and the ACT are calculated from a Year 7 base.

### Source

National Schools Statistics Collection: 1985 to 1993

In 1993 the estimated Year 12 Apparent Retention Rate for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students is 33% (this figure includes an estimated rate for the Queensland government system) compared to non-indigenous*rate of about 78%. This figure, as bad as it is, masks even greater differences when the figures are analysed by other variables. The apparent retention rate is shown in Table 7.
There are, for example, important differences between male and female participation which can be seen in the figure above. It shows the progress of the 1992 Year 12 cohort since 1988 and year by year differences between the two groups. It also provides a view of gender differences in the patterns of attrition. There is a rapid decline in participation by indigenous males in Years 8 and 9, while the major decline for young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women occurs a year later between Year 10 and Year 11.

Analysis of information from the two Censuses in 1986 and 1991 shows major differences according to where the students are living. Participation is highest in the capital cities, lower in major towns, then the communities with fewer than 200 people, and lowest in rural areas with populations of between 200 and 1000. The differences between urban and rural participation rates are significant and the gaps are widening. This gap is especially important as far the participation of young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander men is concerned.

Between 1986 and 1991, the major ‘winners’ in participation have been young Indigenous men living in urban areas - the big cities, provincial centres or sizeable towns - while the big ‘losers’ have been young men in rural areas and especially those in remote areas. For example, during this five year period the rate for 16 year old Indigenous men living in urban areas increased by almost 13% points from about 37% to 50%, while in rural locations the rate increased by only 5% points from 31% to 36%.
There are also important differences even in participation in schooling according to language spoken at home. These participation rates are detailed in Table 8.

Table 8

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander language spoken at home</th>
<th>Other language spoken at home</th>
<th>Percentage difference</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>32.8%</td>
<td>49.3%</td>
<td>16.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>17.3%</td>
<td>28.8%</td>
<td>11.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>6.5%</td>
<td>9.2%</td>
<td>2.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16 to 18 in 1991</td>
<td>18.9%</td>
<td>28.9%</td>
<td>10.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16 to 18 in 1986</td>
<td>17.3%</td>
<td>20.8%</td>
<td>3.5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: ABS Census of Population and Housing, 1991

For all three age groups there are significant gaps between the two groups in 1991. When compared with 1986 data the results assume even greater significance. In 1986 the overall 16-18 year old school participation rate was 17.3% for speakers of an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander language; this improved marginally to 18.9% in 1991. The rate for males improved 0.6% points from 15.9% to 16.5%. In contrast, the rate for non-indigenous language speakers improved from 20.8% in 1986 to 28.9% in 1991, including an improvement among males of 8.2% points.

These results are congruent with those according to location reported above and provide a more specific focus for where the shortcomings in participation are to be found. Clearly there is evidence of a widening gap between those who speak an Indigenous language at home and those who do not. There is also growing evidence of increasing gaps between Indigenous language speaking young men and other sub-groups including Indigenous language speaking young women.

The issues of differences in participation rates in education according to gender, language and home location are taken up elsewhere in this report and we have made a number of recommendations aimed at redressing these deficiencies. Clearly there is much work to be done by the major providers of education in this country to ensure that increasing numbers of young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students complete their schooling. Current retention rates are unacceptable.

Improving Participation in the Non-Compulsory Years

Early childhood

Preschool provision for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children varies greatly between the States and Territories. Mechanisms for provision range from individual provider models as, for example, in New South Wales and Queensland where there are forty nine preschools funded under AESIP, to having State and Territory authorities conduct preschool services for all children as occurs in the ACT and NT.
The community-based nature of the sector in some States and Territories makes consultation and coordination processes very difficult. The Review heard evidence that, because of the fragmented nature of provision, there is an urgent need for a funded organisation to work closely with AECGs to promote early childhood provision at both State and Territory and national levels. Table 9 illustrates the participation of four year olds in education in 1986 and 1991.

Table 9

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Preschool</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People</td>
<td>52.5%</td>
<td>48.5%</td>
<td>56.8%</td>
<td>5.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Australians</td>
<td>68.5%</td>
<td>51.5%</td>
<td>3.8%</td>
<td>3.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Excludes 'educational institution not stated' data)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1986</th>
<th>1991</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>School</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People</td>
<td>5.6%</td>
<td>(404)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Australians</td>
<td>3.0%</td>
<td>(6,970)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: ABS Census of Population and Housing; 1986 and 1991

Submissions to the Review show that there is widespread support and recognition of the importance of early childhood education, but actual patterns of provision show a lack of real commitment from some States and Territories to provide anything like the level of services that go to early childhood education in the first years of school.

Since the late 1980s there has been a dramatic shift in preschool participation levels for all groups of children, both Indigenous and non-Indigenous, away from preschool to other forms of early childhood services such as childcare. At the same time there has been little growth in identified preschool services which offer preference to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children.

There are a number of factors influencing this movement including the provision of subsidies by the Commonwealth government for childcare for low income families; the greater flexibility offered by childcare services, both in terms of the age range catered for and the daily hours of operation, and the fact that preschooling is often expensive and subsidies may not be offered.

Childcare services may in some cases provide educational experiences equivalent to those offered in preschools. This is significant given the importance of learning, especially language learning, in the first three years of life. The Joint Policy’s focus is only on services formally labelled as ‘education’ and therefore AESIP does not seek to fund services for children before preschool. This may require reconsideration in the future if there are material changes to the boundary between what counts as ‘childcare’ and what counts as ‘education’. The Joint Policy notes that ‘The Commonwealth and States and Territories will continue to share some of the costs of student places and staffing in preschools’.

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Submissions to the Review suggested some more immediate concerns regarding early childhood education, including:

- the need for cultural programs in early childhood;
- the need for programs which promote the smooth transition from early childhood services to school;
- the need for providers to receive full triennium AESIP funding rather than funding for only one or two years which has generally been the case until now;
- the need for support services that cater specifically for the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander early childhood sector and that work at both the staff and community levels of organisations, and
- the need to work towards a national policy on early childhood education for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children.

We recognise the importance of early childhood services and also recognise that there is a need for a stronger voice to represent the interests of those involved in the education of young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children.

There was strong support for the continuation and extension of existing policies and practices including strong claims to extend the benefits of the Commonwealth’s ASSPA program - which provides for the participation of parents in educational decision-making and the availability of supplementary funds to extend students’ educational experiences - to the preschool sector.

There is ample evidence to support these claims, both from Australia and overseas, and we recommend:

Recommendation 17

That the Commonwealth, relevant agencies and individual organisations providing preschool education services for Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islanders ensure that preschool education providers:

- adopt staffing policies which give priority in employment to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff where Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children are enrolled;
- adopt measures to include and appropriately remunerate Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community members delivering cultural programs in preschool;
- provide professional development activities in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural awareness and counter-racism for all staff;
- adopt teaching practices which recognise and value the student’s first language, be it Standard Australian English, Aboriginal English, a Kriol or an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander language;
- provide preschool environments in which Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander parents feel welcome and encouraged to be involved in the preschool educational program, and
- adopt practices which maximise the coordination of preschool education programs with health services and nutrition education programs.

We also recommend:
Recommendation 18

That the Commonwealth provide additional funds to extend its Aboriginal Student Support and Parent Awareness program to include Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children attending registered preschools.

The per capita rate paid under this new program for preschool students should be the same as that paid for primary school students under the Aboriginal Student Support and Parental Awareness program, regardless of whether they are attending preschool full or part-time.

By extending the ASSPA program to include preschools, it will also be possible to include in the funding arrangements an element for cultural programs similar to that available to school-based ASSPA committees.

Vocational education and training

We have collected a great deal of evidence that technical and further education institutions are the increasingly preferred providers of postcompulsory education for Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islanders. In recent years there has been quite a remarkable increase in participation in TAFE and other adult education programs. Data collected by DEET indicate that in 1993 there were more than 28,000 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students in TAFE institutions - up from 24,400 in 1992 and 18,350 in 1991. Based on 1992 figures the TAFE participation rate of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people is almost twice that of other Australians. Table 10 illustrates participation in TAFE in 1991 and 1992.

Table 10

![Graph showing participation in TAFE by age, 1991 and 1992](image)

Many reasons have been proposed for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' increasing participation in technical and further education, including:

- the capacity of the institutions to deliver education in a form which is more appropriate for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander adults;
the capacity of the institutions to tailor courses to meet the specific educational needs of Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islanders

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples’ attraction for ‘second chance’ basic (that is, schooling-equivalent) education provided by the institutions, and

the more direct relevance of the courses of study offered by the institutions to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples’ employment aspirations.

On average, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students have higher student contact hours and are more likely to be enrolled full time. Table II illustrates this.

Table II: Average Annual Student Contact Hours of Students at TAFE *, Australia, 1991 and 1992

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People</th>
<th>Other Australians</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Males</td>
<td>Females</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1991</td>
<td>284</td>
<td>309</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1992</td>
<td>315</td>
<td>350</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Excludes Leisure and Recreation Course Contact Hours

There is a strong tendency for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students to enrol in courses specifically designed for them. Many have been referred through Skillshare and other labour market programs, and TAFE institutions are increasingly meeting their needs with specially tailored programs. This interest and recognition of the importance of literacy and numeracy programs is a very positive indicator which suggests that achievement levels in these areas will continue to rise. There is also a positive spillover effect as many of these students are also parents whose educational participation is likely also to encourage their school aged children to continue their education and to achieve more.

About 40% of Indigenous students are doing basic education and preparatory courses. Others are concentrated in two fields of study - Business, Administration and Economics (17%) and the Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences (10.5%). The majority are undertaking studies that will equip them better for the workforce and catching up on deficiencies resulting from leaving
school at an early age. Only 13% of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students were doing trade or higher level courses in 1992.

We have some concern that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander TAFE students remain concentrated in vocational and preparatory courses but consider that at this stage of developing Indigenous education their participation in 'second chance' education, particularly in basic literacy and numeracy courses and in courses leading to the award of a Year 12 qualification or its equivalent, should continue to be actively encouraged. Over time however, we would hope to see a greater proportion of Indigenous students undertaking higher level Award courses.

Keeping in mind the need to balance these points of view, we recommend:

Recommendation 19

That technical and further education institutions, adult and community education colleges exempt Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students from all fees and charges applying to basic literacy and numeracy courses or courses leading to the award of a Year 12 qualification or its equivalent.

We also recommend:

Recommendation 20

That the Australian National Training Authority review the existing State and Territory training profiles and negotiate any necessary changes to those profiles with States and Territories to ensure that:

• by the year 2001, the type and amount of training available for Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islanders matches the training needs identified as a priority by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders;

• priority is given to the development of curriculum materials for, and the delivery of, courses in those areas identified as priorities in the Australian Committee for Training Curriculum project on national curriculum priorities for Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islanders, and

• preference in the allocation of its growth funds is given to:
  - those training institutions which can demonstrate strong demand for its courses among Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islanders, and
  - those private training institutions which best provide for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' educational self-determination.

Higher education

We have similar concerns about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' participation in higher education. Participation rates continue to be lower than for other Australians as indicated on the next page in Table 12, although over the past decade there have been some important improvements in enrolment levels. The number of Indigenous university students increased from around 850 in 1982 to 3,600 at the beginning of the first AEP Triennium in 1990. Between 1988 and 1993 enrolments of Indigenous people in higher education more than doubled, from 2,565 to 5,578.

Almost two thirds of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander university students are studying Arts, Humanities or the Social Sciences (34.6%) and Education (30.6%). In recent years
the proportion enrolled in degree courses has increased with a corresponding decrease of enrolments in diploma and certificate courses. The number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander graduates is steadily increasing.

The proportion of full time enrolments is similar for both groups of students while the proportion of part-time Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students has been consistently less. One interesting phenomenon relates to external studies. Since 1987 the proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students who are studying externally has ranged between 14% and almost 19% while the proportion of non-indigenous students studying externally has remained steady at about 11%. The importance of distance education for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people is worthy of note and in future years it will be interesting to observe the effects of Open Learning and other innovations in distance learning on people living in remote areas of the country.

The important differences between male and female participation in higher education across the whole Australian community are even more marked in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander participation. In 1992 Indigenous students participation rates were 63% for female students against 37% for males - a ratio of almost two to one, although in 1993 the proportions had reverted to a more characteristic 61%-39% balance. Gender differences for other Australian students are much less. The proportion of non-indigenous female students has increased from 51% in 1987 to 54% in 1993. This is illustrated in Table 13.

This gender imbalance in Indigenous participation is a reflection of males lower participation in senior secondary schooling and is a cause for concern. We believe that the universities themselves have a key part to play in encouraging Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander men to undertake higher education studies and should be generally promoting and expanding their programs for Indigenous students more vigorously.

Patterns of admission to higher education are markedly different for Indigenous students from
those of other Australians. The proportion of Indigenous students gaining entry to higher education through mature age provisions and special entry provisions are much higher than those of other Australian students. Between 1989 and 1992 the proportion gaining entry through special entry and mature aged, provisions has ranged around 15% while the proportion of other students gaining such entry has remained steady at about 3% each year. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students are much less likely to have been admitted from final year of secondary education at school: rates have consistently been less than half those of other Australian students.

There is a severe shortage of Indigenous leadership in education and a lack of specialist educators. There are still not many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander educators who have high status in the western world and those who do have the skills and knowledge are over-used and suffer burnout. We regard further graduate study as an appropriate path to increase the numbers as senior administrators and lecturers in higher education and other fields. We see a need for scholarships over and above existing schemes to support such students as financial limitations are a major impediment to graduate study. Although ATSI students are enrolled in undergraduate, graduate and postgraduate courses, their course completion rates are lower than for other Australians. Table 14 on the next page illustrates this.

We also see a need for innovative schemes such as half time lecturing/team teaching and half time graduate study positions in tertiary institutions to increase the numbers qualified to compete for those positions. While the Commonwealth as the major source of funding to universities would be required to provide additional funds to support such proposals, we believe that the universities could be doing more to create and promote such work and study schemes to increase leadership in this area.
Participation in higher education courses has two benefits. Professionally qualified people, through the contributions they make to their communities, are important to the process of securing economic independence for all Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islanders. They also serve as important role models for the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students who follow them.

We believe that universities have an important role to play in the development of Indigenous people’s involvement in public policy and in the encouragement and training of Indigenous leadership. We would like to see an expansion of programs such as the Australian National Internships Program, conducted by the Australian National University in Canberra, which specifically target Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students and gives them opportunities to develop skills and knowledge that can benefit a wider community. Under this scheme university students are given access to training or internship placements that have a political education focus in public institutions including the Federal Parliament and in non-governmental organisations. Schemes such as this for Indigenous students are operating in New South Wales, Victoria, Western Australia and Tasmania. South Australia and Northern Territory are to commence programs in 1995.

We make the following recommendations:

**Recommendation 21**

*That providers of postschool education for Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islanders:*

* more vigorously promote their existing schemes aimed at encouraging Aboriginal
and Torres Strait Islander peoples' participation in postschool education, and

- expand the number of existing scholarships, cadetships and postgraduate awards available to Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islanders.

Recommendation 22

That the Commonwealth provide additional funds for two new schemes to promote Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' participation in postschool education:

- a scholarship/wage subsidy scheme to support Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islanders undertaking innovative combinations of work and related postgraduate study, and

- an internship scheme to support the development of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' knowledge of political science and public policy and to further encourage the development of Indigenous leadership.

Income support for Indigenous students

ABSTUDY is widely regarded as an essential means of enhancing participation in secondary and postsecondary education. Evidence presented to us indicates a strong desire to ensure that it continues to be administered as a separate program from AUSTUDY. We agree, noting that the original arguments in favour of establishing a separate income support payment for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students still hold. We note that the program is currently being evaluated and suggest that all submissions to this Review and notes of public consultations relevant to ABSTUDY should be made available to that evaluation, provided the respective individuals or organisations giving evidence to the Review agree.

However there is concern that the income support provided to Indigenous students is inadequate. In higher education it is argued that the combination of the Higher Education Contribution Scheme (HECS) and the inadequate income provided under ABSTUDY relative to obligations and costs, especially in remote areas, actively discourages participation in tertiary education. Some believe that HECS should be abolished for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students while many feel strongly that it should be abolished for all students.

For secondary schooling, there was a strong view that the income support levels should be modified so that students and families in rural and 'remote' areas would have a real choice to attend (residential) schools in larger towns and cities. In some places residential schooling is seen as a powerful way to get students out of settings where peer pressure prevents students from working hard at school.

A number of submissions expressed the view that continuing access to ABSTUDY benefits should be contingent upon continuing educational performance. It was said that some students were returning to school just to have access to the benefits and treating income support as an automatic right unrelated to continuing educational attendance and achievement. This was regarded as contributing to the development of an unhealthy welfare mentality.

In those consultations which addressed the means/income test, strong views were expressed about it. Administration of the test was regarded as inequitable and degrading, and participants in the public consultations overwhelmingly believed that it should be abolished. In several consultations, it was pointed out that it does not take into account extended family obligations -
a matter of cultural difference that must be taken into account in the guidelines and administration of the program. Some also believe that it wastes DEET resources when DEET officers are required to inspect homes to police levels of entitlement.

Some submissions argue for universal eligibility for ABSTUDY, abolishing the income test on this payment entirely. In a climate of scarce resources, it is difficult to sustain this argument when need in other areas is much more pressing. In our judgement, the income test on the living away from home component for secondary students living in rural and remote areas could be abolished to remove what are seen as invasive tests of eligibility. This change would encourage participation among secondary students in the critical later years of schooling, for little additional cost. To give effect to this judgement we recommend:

Recommendation 23

That the Commonwealth improve ABSTUDY by abolishing the income test on the living away from home component of ABSTUDY for secondary school students in rural or remote areas.

Conclusions on Raising Participation

Access to education is not just a matter of the availability of educational services, but rather the availability of a form of education which is regarded as appropriate by students, their communities and the organisations that represent them. We believe that the provision of culturally appropriate education services for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students is the key to raising their participation in education.

Participation, however, is not just about numbers. The data in the Statistical Annex to this Report mask the qualitative difficulties faced by educational institutions across all sectors in providing education which will engage, and continue to engage, Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islanders in education.

The evidence presented to us provides a variety of views about the best ways to increase participation in education. Some see the problem of relatively low participation as one to be resolved by compensating measures (like out-of-school tutoring), campaigns to strengthen motivation and parent and community commitment to keeping students in education (like ASSPA) ancillary support (like residential accommodation) or other special programs to redress the so-called ‘disadvantage’ of Aboriginality in ‘mainstream’ education.

Others regard improving participation as a matter of making some form of special, culturally sensitive and culturally aware provision in curriculum, teaching and learning practices. A special effort must be made to ensure that education includes rather than excludes the distinctive aspirations, needs, circumstances, knowledge and cultures of Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islanders.

Education should be provided in ways that value and respect diversity. It should recognise that different students need opportunities to access and participate in education in different ways and at different times. Australian education is already diverse. A range of differences can be found in education across classrooms, schools and other educational institutions, between subjects and in subject choices. Providers should make a conscious effort to extend this diversity to meet the aspirations, needs, circumstances and cultures of Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islanders.
In evidence presented to us many people argued that it is critically important to ensure that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children’s first experience of institutional education is a positive one. We recognise this and have recommended extension of the ASSPA program to the preschool sector to increase the capacity of parents to encourage educational achievement and to participate in educational decision-making and to increase supplementary funds to extend students’ educational experiences.

We have concerns that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students in TAFE remain concentrated in vocational and preparatory courses but consider that their participation in ‘second chance’ education should continue to be actively encouraged. We recommend abolition of fees for students undertaking basic education courses and urge ANTA to review its existing training profiles to better accommodate the educational needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students.

We also have concerns about participation in higher education and have proposed the introduction of schemes that will allow people to increase participation at both the undergraduate and postgraduate levels, together with schemes designed to increase political, public policy and leadership expertise.

We note that the Commonwealth’s ABSTUDY program is currently being evaluated and recommend the abolition of the income test on the living away from home component of ABSTUDY for secondary school students in rural or remote areas.

While participation in education has increased in the last five years, the size of the gaps between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students’ participation and all other students’ participation remains largely unchanged. Selective and highly targeted initiatives are now needed especially to respond to gender differences. The seven measures (Recommendations 17 to 23) we propose cover the whole spectrum of education and training provision and need to be implemented as a set to avoid discontinuities in students’ progression and to maximise the opportunities of those currently involved in education and training.
EQUITABLE AND APPROPRIATE OUTCOMES

Our fourth Term of Reference has been to review the means of achieving equitable and appropriate educational outcomes for Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islanders, while acknowledging traditional and contemporary cultural differences, including gender issues. The Joint Policy contains the following goals under the heading of Equitable and Appropriate Educational Outcomes.

National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Policy Goals

Goal 13 To provide adequate preparation of Aboriginal children through pre-school education for the schooling years ahead.

Goal 14 To enable Aboriginal attainment of skills to the same standard as other Australian students throughout the compulsory schooling years.

Goal 15 To enable Aboriginal students to attain the successful completion of Year 12 or equivalent at the same rates as for other Australian students.

Goal 16 To enable Aboriginal students to attain the same graduation rates from award courses in technical and further education, and in higher education, as for other Australians.

Goal 17 To develop programs to support the maintenance and continued use of Aboriginal languages.

Goal 18 To provide community education services which enable Aboriginal people to develop the skills to manage the development of their communities.

Goal 19 To enable the attainment of proficiency in English language and numeracy competencies by Aboriginal adults with limited or no educational experience.

Goal 20 To enable Aboriginal students at all levels of education to have an appreciation of their history, cultures and identity.

Goal 21 To provide all Australian students with an understanding of and respect for Aboriginal traditional and contemporary cultures.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples’ outcomes from education are most often reported in terms of participation in a subsequent level of study, or in terms of post-education destinations, notably employment.

The evidence presented to us has drawn our attention to possible tensions between what is ‘equitable’ and what is ‘appropriate’ in ‘equitable and appropriate outcomes’. When equity is interpreted quantitatively it tends to be understood as referring to statistics such as the rate at which Indigenous students achieve from education relative to the rates for non-Indigenous students. This raises the question of whether or not these same outcomes can be appropriate to both groups, since the backgrounds, needs, circumstances and aspirations of Indigenous peoples may differ from those of other Australians. Issues such as these are taken up in the sections that follow.
Equitable and Appropriate Outcomes -
What the Evidence Says

The right kind of education?

Submissions to the Review generally expressed concern about the educational outcomes achieved by, and available to, Indigenous people. However there are two quite different types of concern. Many Indigenous people and groups made submissions that challenge the relevance of existing forms of education to the needs and circumstances of Indigenous students and communities, while non-indigenous people and groups were more likely to express concern that existing forms of education are not yet reaching Indigenous people. That is, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are more likely to see ‘the problem’ of improving education in terms of whether the right kind of education is being offered, whereas non-indigenous people and groups are more likely to see ‘the problem’ in terms of whether existing forms of education are being offered in the right way.

There is a good deal of support from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and organisations for the idea that different outcomes are appropriate for Indigenous students - different, that is, from the kinds of outcomes that may be appropriate for Australian students in general. One submission refers to the tension this way:

The issue of balancing the terms ‘equitable’ against ‘appropriate’ is a major concern central to serious discussion and, in anumber of issues, effective on-going action research. While the concerns may not be mutually exclusive, within them lies a source of potential conflict for Aboriginal schools seeking to reinforce essential Aboriginal values and world view.

Tensions between what is ‘equitable’ and what is ‘appropriate’ can be reconciled if the AEP goals relating to ‘equitable and appropriate outcomes’ are interpreted to mean that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students and communities should have at least as good a chance of achieving their own goals as others have of achieving the goals that they choose.

Cultural appropriateness: the name of a problem or its solution

In suggesting that education ought to be culturally appropriate, many non-indigenous respondents seem to suggest that there is a need to improve the way in which education is offered. On the question of what might actually be made different, or how the outcomes of education might be made more appropriate, they have relatively little to say. ‘Cultural appropriateness’ thus becomes the name for a problem but not the name of its solution. This suggests that the question of what is appropriate is one that only Indigenous people can resolve.

The problem must be seen as one of working out how to create the conditions under which Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people can resolve the question of appropriateness. This is increasingly regarded as an aspect of reconciliation, that is, creating bases from which Indigenous people can negotiate solutions to the problem of making educational processes and outcomes more appropriate, and creating organisational spaces in which constructive negotiations can occur.

Outcomes, equity and reconciliation

A number of submissions make explicit connections between equitable and appropriate educational outcomes and the possibility of national reconciliation. One submission, for example, puts the point this way:
We now need culturally-sensitive academic programs. Aboriginal children want to grow up as Aboriginal men and women, but with an ability to access and utilise the mainstream socio-economic systems in order to achieve equality by their own personal industry. Economic and social change must, in the first instance, find its roots in basic education. Indeed, the entire reconciliation process is simply not a viable proposition for Australia while ever we are dealing with groups on the one hand who have, and groups on the other hand who have not.

Therefore we believe that any satisfactory reconciliation process must have as its catalyst a process for effective educational delivery. There has to be a viable bridge between any two groups before they can be reconciled, and we believe that there are four major steps involved in the establishment of such a proactive environment conducive to greater recognition and understanding for national reconciliation: equality of educational outcomes - ability for personal industry and achievement - social and economic equality - a bridge over which an effective and lasting reconciliation can be achieved.

The authors of another submission similarly make an explicit connection between education and reconciliation:

Education has been flagged by the Federal Government as one of the major agenda items in the reconciliation process. A statement by Federal Aboriginal Affairs Minister Robert Tickner, published in the Sun Herald of 4 April 1993, outlines a three year process including a ‘...national education program to combat prejudice, further progress towards a formal document confirming Aboriginal rights and improving the everyday lives of Aborigines in health, housing, employment and education’. In line with stated Government objectives, and with the Recommendations of the Royal Commission into Black Deaths in Custody, [the organisation] sees education as an integral part of the reconciliation process.

Many conclude that reconciliation depends on creating both secure bases from which involvement in educational decision making can be achieved, and secure spaces in which negotiations about education can occur. It also depends on reaching views about the outcomes of education appropriate for Indigenous (and perhaps also non-indigenous) students.

We recognise that strategies have been developed to significantly overcome both overt and covert racism but we are concerned that offensive and aggressive occurrences are still entrenched in schools. We know that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples’ outcomes from education are not the same as those of other Australians students. For example, their achievements in literacy and numeracy is lower, there is more likelihood of being in the ranks of the unemployed, less likely to study medicine or engineering, and are less likely to experience life-long formal learning.

Cultural awareness and sensitivity: two views

Almost all submissions argue that greater cultural awareness and cultural sensitivity is needed in schooling and in educational administration, to recognise the special needs of Indigenous people and communities. However, there are different views about the purpose of this greater cultural awareness and sensitivity.

Some respondents believe greater cultural awareness and sensitivity is needed in education and educational administration in order to recognise that Australia is culturally pluralist. Advocates
of this view wish to recognise the distinctiveness of Indigenous peoples and communities. Many are non-indigenous people who assume the dominance of a ‘mainstream’ education system, who recognise that it is marred by a remediable deafness and blindness to the aspirations and needs of Indigenous peoples. They believe that education should change to become more responsive to the experience and culture of Indigenous peoples. They believe that educational institutions, policies and practices should be adapted to become more sensitive to the needs of Indigenous peoples as ‘special’ groups deserving a ‘special’ response.

Other submissions particularly from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and groups agree that more culturally sensitive curricula, pedagogies, modes of assessment, and processes of educational administration are needed but some are not willing to accept the ‘mainstream’ as something to be taken for granted. They believe that the ‘mainstream’ can change and should be changed, because they are not satisfied that it is sufficient for Indigenous Australians to perform better in ‘mainstream’ terms.

Achieving Equitable and Appropriate Outcomes

Calls for the ‘mainstream’ to change to recognise and respect the distinctive aspirations, experience, knowledge and culture of Indigenous people.

Both ways education

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples argue strongly that their culture, knowledge and values should be given equal respect and importance to those of non-indigenous Australia in our education systems. They recognise the importance of the skills and knowledge that non-indigenous Australia has to offer but consider that without a reciprocal recognition of indigenous skills and knowledge, the education being provided is incomplete and lacks cultural fairness and relevance. Their response has been the development of both ways education systems.

The notion of ‘both ways’ or ‘two ways’ education emerged as a creative response by Indigenous people to the history of one-way Eurocentric schooling. It is an innovative approach that calls for equal respect for both Indigenous languages, knowledge and ways of organising learning contexts, and English language and knowledge-based learning in educational institutions. It involves the notion of non-indigenous societies learning from Indigenous societies as well as learning occurring in the opposite direction. These principles allow wide variation of application from preschools to tertiary institutions, from cities to the bush.

One of the great benefits of two ways education programs is that it is empowering for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. The transmission of culture is appropriately the domain of Indigenous peoples and the system is therefore obliged to recognise their expertise, special knowledge and attributes. Elders and other people with expert knowledge become part of the education system.

A number of submissions from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, schools and organisations report that they are exploring the possibilities of ‘both ways’ education in their own settings. The rationale for ‘both ways’ education is put succinctly in a quotation from one of these:

We need our own schools. Two days gadiya business and three days Aboriginal business... Schools only teach one Culture. When we learn gadiya culture, we lose our Aboriginal Culture. Children attending schools are taught gadiya ways of
learning and culture... There is no time left for Aboriginal Culture. This is leading to the continuation of the process of assimilation.

Members of the Reference group were able to observe programs in action first hand in a number of places. Most, if not all, of the independent Aboriginal educational institutions funded under AESIP have both ways programs, and there are many examples of government two ways schools, especially in Northern, Central and South Australia. We believe that such programs must continue to be supported and that education providers, both government and non-government, must be encouraged to expand their two ways programs to include many more schools and institutions.

'Both ways' education recognises that the maintenance and development of Aboriginality is, and will remain, a permanent issue for education and schooling. Education must take different forms in different circumstances. A number of respondents to the Review favour processes through which Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students can develop their own Aboriginality and which maintain shared Aboriginality as a distinctive element in different and changing circumstances of contemporary Australian life.

The substance of 'both ways' education has a variety of elements and forms in different settings, namely:

- linguistic - a number of submissions refer to the vital question of the maintenance and development of Aboriginal languages and, occasionally, Kriols and forms of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander English;
- cultural - that is, the maintenance and development of distinctively Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural practices such as ceremonial and spiritual life, and distinctive modes of family and community social relationship and interaction. Submissions with this emphasis are mostly from traditionally oriented communities;
- political - submissions refer to the maintenance and development of different forms of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander identity and interests within the complex framework of political discourses and institutions of both Indigenous and non-indigenous Australia, and
- economic - that is, the need to give Indigenous people better access to the economic opportunities of Australian life generally, but also (and very compellingly in the case of some submissions from regions and isolated communities) to the particular material, economic and developmental needs of their own communities.

This emphasis on the material consequences of education for community development, while not necessarily reflecting more complex aspects of both ways education, makes it plain that what is at stake in these discussions is not only an abstract notion of culture, but also the need to create the material conditions for the survival of Indigenous people and communities in contemporary Australia. For example, one submission makes a compelling case for improved educational provision based on an analysis of the (majority Aboriginal) demographics of the area, and argues:

A critical factor is to make outcomes appropriate to Aboriginal needs. The education and training system is a white suburban system imported ... with special programs added on (at considerable cost to AESIP) in an effort to create relevance...
for Aboriginal students. The education and training system should be redesigned to meet the needs of the Aboriginal majority - with a suitable curriculum, Aboriginal teaching staff, Aboriginal principals and administrators.

The case is backed up by detailed evidence of demography and employment, and it shows that many non-indigenous people (between ages 25 and 40) come to work in positions that could be filled by local Aboriginal people if they were given appropriate education and training. The case also shows that non-indigenous people have a disproportionate influence in decision making about the forms of economic and community development that may be appropriate for the region.

Two issues need to be recognised. First, educational disadvantage breeds economic disadvantage for both communities and for individual indigenous people trying to compete in the labour market. Second, without a simple commitment to education and training as a basis for mutual recognition, respect and reconciliation, through 'both ways' strategies, it is by no means clear that Indigenous people will be able to achieve the reasonable goal of controlling their own future.

Maintenance and continued use of Indigenous languages

Language is an essential part of a person’s identity and is of critical importance in the transmission of culture. In Australia the destruction of Indigenous languages is continuing and with it, the destruction of unique cultures.

It is estimated that originally there were some 250 languages in Australia. In 1994 there are about 90 living languages. Of these, there are only 10 which have 1000 or more speakers, while about 50 languages have 100 or fewer speakers. Only 20 or so languages are considered to be in a healthy state. It must be recognised that all face the possibility of extinction.

The question of language maintenance and preservation was comprehensively examined in 1992 by the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs in their report - *Language and Culture - A Matter of Survival*. The report makes a strong and unequivocal case for increased support for language maintenance programs while alerting the Australian public to the possibilities of extinction of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages. It makes numerous recommendations among which are important ones supporting two way bilingual programs. The Reference Group strongly agrees with the following statement of the Committee:

> Many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander language speaking children attending school for the first time are confronted by an institution that teaches them only in English and does not recognise their language. The committee believes that it is totally inappropriate that any Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander child today begins school in a language other than their own. It is destructive of both the language and the child. The committee recognises the difficulties in servicing multi language schools but does not believe this is an excuse for doing nothing. Bilingual/bicultural education is essential if strong and weakening Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages are to be maintained.

While there has been support for maintenance of languages through Commonwealth and State government programs, there is a need for increased commitment from all partners if these languages are to be preserved. A major initiative has been the Aboriginal Languages Initiatives Program, introduced as part of the Australian Language and Literacy Policy (ALLP) in 1992.
Two elements of the program that have specific application to schools are the Aboriginal Literacy Strategy (ALS) and the Aboriginal Language Education Strategy (ALES). In the current triennium about $5.4 million per annum are allocated to these two elements. However, most of the money goes into literacy rather than language programs.

A major goal of the Public Awareness Campaign of the ALLP is to promote awareness of Indigenous languages and there have been materials produced to support the campaign including a publication called ‘Langwij comes to school’ a resource for primary school teachers about the use and value of Aboriginal English.

The Australian Indigenous Languages Framework, a pilot study funded through DEET, has been established with a view to introducing the study of Indigenous languages into Years 11 and 12 in schools around Australia. The framework is designed to accommodate all Indigenous languages and linguistic heritage, including languages spoken by entire communities and languages about which little is known. Materials are being developed and trials are being conducted in schools around the country in 1994.

The most important education initiative aimed at maintaining traditional languages has been the development of bilingual and ‘both ways’ schools. The first bilingual schools began in the Northern Territory in the 1970s. However growth of bilingual, bicultural schools has been limited and in 1992 there were only 35 such schools. Outside the Northern Territory and South Australia, there are no bilingual schools in the government sector. Most of the independently controlled Aboriginal schools have a strong bicultural focus and are supported in their language programs through supplementary Commonwealth funding.

Where there are bilingual programs, there appears to be a growth in some ‘mega languages’, for example Warlpiri or Pitjantjatjara, while other languages with fewer speakers are not being supported through two way programs or specific language maintenance programs. At the same time there has been a rapid growth of Aboriginal English and Kriol speakers among school-aged children, often to the detriment of their Indigenous languages.

Clearly there is some important work being done around the country and there are some good programs that can serve as models for future language program development. Reference Group members were impressed with work being done in the Arrente language program that is being developed in Alice Springs. The project is based in an Aboriginal institution; almost everyone involved in the program is Aboriginal and most are Arrente people; it consciously seeks the support and involvement of elders; it feeds back and trials the materials it produces with the people that are going to use them, and it has strong ties with schools with enrolments of Arrente students.

We strongly urge all education providers to recognise the critical importance of preserving and supporting Indigenous languages because of the part that language plays in the maintenance of culture, and urge them to undertake programs that will guarantee continuing, committed support. We believe that other schools, and other Australians, also have a role to play in maintaining Indigenous languages. We recommend:

**Recommendation 24**

*That State and Territory curriculum, assessment and accreditation authorities develop courses of study which allow students to undertake study in an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander language in primary and/or secondary school.*
In those States and Territories which prescribe courses of study in languages other than English, such courses should be regarded as courses in a language other than English.

Acquisition of literacy and English language skills

While Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people strongly support the teaching and learning of their own cultures and languages in educational institutions, they almost universally also recognise the importance of achieving proficiency in standard English in both its spoken and written forms. It is not a question of ‘either/or’ but competency in both English and their own languages.

Statistics on educational participation and retention show large differences in rates between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students and others. Similarly, as shown in the following table, the results of major testing programs in literacy and numeracy that were included in the Discussion Paper show that, at all levels, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students do not achieve as well as non-indigenous students. The two findings are, of course, strongly correlated. Table 15 compares literacy and numeracy achievement of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and other Australian students in primary school.

Like the Aboriginal Employment Development Policy Review, we recognise the possible tension between generating courses and curricula specific to the needs of Indigenous peoples and offering them access to the ‘mainstream’ education and training which may be the gateway to wider employment opportunities. This is reflected in our concern that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples’ education include literacy education, since ‘literacy in the dominant culture’ is a prerequisite for more equitable education and employment outcomes for disadvantaged young people. This was a strongly held view, especially among Indigenous peoples in urban settings (and most Indigenous people do live in urban settings) and among younger people more generally.

Several States have adopted core curricula which require an extended period of study of Asian or European languages. This sometimes leads to a diversion of language learning effort so that Indigenous students already bilingual or trilingual are required to spend valuable time studying, for example, Japanese or German. A higher priority might be to concentrate on both English and Indigenous languages with the latter being an appropriate substitute for the compulsory LOTE. Although in recent years schooling participation rates have only shown moderate improvement, there has been quite a remarkable increase in the number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students in TAFE and adult education such that they are now participating in this sector at much higher levels than other Australians. More than half of these students are involved in basic education and bridging courses, that is, courses designed to improve literacy and numeracy skills as a first step to further employment and education opportunities.

That so many are taking up these opportunities for further education is a reflection of the high value being placed on gaining and improving these skills. Many of these students have children in the education system and many have hopes and aspirations that their children will succeed to higher levels than they did at school.

This quite remarkable phenomenon of ‘second chance’ participation in basic education, admirable though it is, is not one that should be repeated with the current generation of school students. There needs to be a determined effort by all concerned to set achievable targets in literacy development so that by the end of this century parity is achieved in literacy and numeracy attainment levels between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students and others.
Approximately 45% of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander primary school students have significantly lower literacy and numeracy achievement.

Approximately 16% of Other Australian primary school students have significantly lower literacy and numeracy achievement.

Approximately 35% of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander primary school students living in urban areas have significantly lower literacy and numeracy achievement.

Approximately 16% of Other Australian primary school students living in urban areas have significantly lower literacy and numeracy achievement.

Approximately 43% of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander primary school students living in rural and remote areas have significantly lower literacy and numeracy achievement.

Approximately 16% of Other Australian primary school students living in rural and remote areas have significantly lower literacy and numeracy achievement.

* The term 'significantly lower literacy and numeracy achievement' refers to the proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait primary school students with scores of one standard deviation below the mean for other Australian students (shown by the vertical line on the curve).

** Urban and rural data come from one study only. The overall Australia data are derived from a number of studies.

Source: Australian Council for Educational Research, 1994
A critical factor in literacy and numeracy achievement is the experience that children have before entering formal education; the importance of preschool education in this regard cannot be overemphasised. The home environment is also critical and the involvement of parents and the community in education is recognised in a number of current projects being funded under the ALS and ALES programs.

Programs such as Reading Recovery have had remarkable success with many ‘at risk’ children. However, its appropriateness for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children has been questioned: in some people’s view, the ‘predicting text’ approach that it uses does not work.

In their submissions and consultations Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples stressed the importance of beginning literacy programs ‘from where the learner is at’ - a principle that applies to children and adults alike. It involves due recognition of the language spoken at home as an appropriate starting point, including Aboriginal English or Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander languages, as the following extract from a submission urges:

There needs to be major investment in literacy projects at the community level, which involve communities in developing school literacy programs. It needs to be recognised much more widely that successful literacy programs essentially start from where the students are at. This means that in the case of early childhood and the early years of schooling there needs to be focus on home background and in particular, home language. There needs to be community-based work on Aboriginal English. There is also an urgent need for best practice publicity in the whole literacy area, as well as for publication of what is now being tried and achieved with ALS funds.

Programs that are worth further support need to be recognised and publicised as examples of best practice. It is a weakness that much of the best practice activity in the teaching of literacy and numeracy is not more widely publicised.

We are convinced that there will be no substantial improvement in educational outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students unless there is a concentrated effort and a major investment in literacy development by the Commonwealth and the education providers, beginning in preschool and continuing through the early childhood years and beyond. There needs to be a concerted attack on the systemic, widespread problems that affect effective teaching of literacy and numeracy such as classes being too big, bilingual programs that receive poor support from the providers, teachers who are either inexperienced generally or inexperienced in teaching Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, and so on. Similar arguments relate to the acquisition of English language.

There have been numerous and significant demographic shifts of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in recent years and in some places, the shift has been from ‘bush’ communities into the towns. For example, the Northern Territory Government’s housing policies have influenced many families from outback communities to take up offers of houses in Darwin and the other major population centres. On the other hand some Torres Strait Islander parents have chosen to send their children to Cairns or Brisbane where they are exposed to English rather than to the local Thursday Island school. In many parts of Northern and Central Australia non-English Speaking Background (NESB) students are enrolled in town schools. This movement has been so pronounced that in some town schools there is a majority of Aboriginal students. Many of these children have only limited command of English but are in schools where the only language of tuition is English and where little Aboriginal language is spoken. In situations such as these there is a need for intensive English as a Second Language (ESL) tuition. Unlike migrant students they do not normally have access to intensive English language support of the kind which is provided
under the New Arrivals element of the Commonwealth’s National Equity Program for Schools (NEPS).

We believe that there should be recognition and acceptance of the student’s first language as a legitimate form of communication and that access to ESL programs and teaching strategies should be a fundamental right of all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students for whom English is not a first language. We believe that schools and school systems should ensure that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students whose first language is not English are identified and included in the target group for funding under the English as a Second Language (ESL) element of NEPS.

We make the following recommendations:

**Recommendation 25**

That education providers identify those Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander preschool, primary and secondary school students whose first language is Aboriginal English, a Kriol or an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander language and ensure that they are provided with at least the same levels of literacy and English as a second language support and assistance provided to non-indigenous students whose first language is not English.

**Recommendation 26**

That education providers identify those Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander preschool, primary and secondary students whose first language is a Kriol or an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander language and whose literacy and numeracy achievements are below the average for non-indigenous students of a comparable age and ensure that they are provided with at least the same level of intensive English language support and assistance provided to newly arrived immigrant children whose first language is not English.

The Commonwealth should contribute to the provision of this support and assistance in the same way that it contributes to the costs of providing intensive English tuition services to immigrant children under the New Arrivals Component of its National Equity Program for Schools.

**Understanding and teaching Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students**

In all sectors there is a need for more information, courses and programs that will help teachers to work more effectively with their Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students and to work in a sensitive and appropriate manner. Teachers are wanting to tackle the high dropout and truancy rates and the feelings of alienation from schooling that many students experience. They are asking for assistance and ideas about classroom techniques and approaches that will make their efforts more effective. They are suggesting, for example, a need for extension of cross cultural activities that bring teachers and communities together, for training in anti-racist harassment procedures and for awareness raising activities about racism generally.

The problem of lack of preparation and education of teachers was introduced in the Section on Involvement through employment in education (pp. 58 onwards). It has a wider scale impact that is indicated forcefully in the following quote from a peak Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander body:
The real problems in Aboriginal education are racism, inappropriate curriculum, lack of appropriate teacher education and the ‘deficit model’ categorisation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students. AEP participation and outcomes goals cannot be addressed without appropriate curriculum developed by negotiation, without appropriate teacher education, without anti-racist strategies.

One submission to the Review reported that a 1993 survey of teacher education institutions in Australia showed that only three institutions had core units on teaching Indigenous students in their teacher training courses, although some others had electives. We consider that all universities offering teacher education courses ought to provide such units and teacher trainees should undertake at least one unit of their studies in this area, in addition to taking compulsory Aboriginal Studies units.

There is considerable debate but little consensus about whether or not Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students learn in different ways to non-indigenous students. Leaving aside the concept of an indigenous learning style or pedagogy, there needs to be recognition by educators of socio-cultural and linguistic factors in planning teaching approaches and assessment procedures.

There is an ongoing need for high quality resources for use in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander schools which reflect Indigenous lifestyles and cultures. There is also the problem for many schools and institutions in isolated areas of knowing what resources are available. While there is a considerable amount of activity in curriculum and resources development in the area, it can be difficult for these people to firstly learn about them and secondly to gain access to them. A central register of resources, as proposed by Recommendation 5 would greatly assist a wide audience to access a comprehensive set of resources.

The National Reconciliation and Schooling Strategy is currently supporting curriculum initiatives aimed at creating greater awareness and better understanding of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander issues and the Reference Group believes that the kinds of initiatives indicated above would fall within its ambit.

Maintaining Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures are under constant pressure from mainstream Australian cultures. Indigenous peoples strongly resist these pressures, however, many believe that they are not supported in their resistance and, importantly, that they are not supported through the education systems. The erosion of cultures and lifestyles has been rapid in many places; languages are dying, linguistic and group affiliations are being lost. There is a widespread and genuine fear that unless something radical is done immediately, through education and other systems, this damage will be irreparable.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in the cities, towns and outback communities across Australia have consistently told us that education systems are failing to support them in their efforts to preserve their culture and traditions. Too often, they say, the system is failing them on both the ‘black and white sides’ of the coin. Their children’s participation in school education is characterised by high levels of truancy, low levels of achievement, feelings of alienation and lack of respect for a system which lacks relevance. At the same time there is a widespread concern that Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander cultures appear to be minimally taught and valued by many of those who control the systems. In the words of one contributor to the Review:
Participation in the present education system within this country is offering Aborigines an education which is limited. It is limited because it lacks cultural relevance and also because it could lead to the loss of Aboriginal cultural values. To be quite specific, continued participation in the present system of education assists Aboriginal people to lose their languages, cultures and unique identity.

Education has a critical role to play in the development and maintenance of culture and language. Education systems are vehicles through which a society’s culture and socialisation practices can be transmitted, learned and shared. This is true of all societies and education systems; however, the culture and values taught to many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students run counter to their own.

The absence of appropriate educational environments and curricula are likely to be key factors in the high dropout rates from school. The statistics on participation in education that are included as an Annex to this Report, and which featured in the Review’s earlier Discussion Paper, show that despite improvements in recent years in a number of areas of education especially in tertiary sector participation, improvements among school-aged students have been less marked and have been inconsistent, varying with where students come from and their gender.

Table 16 shows that in cities the improvement in participation has been quite strong. In rural Australia the improvements have been less marked. The area of least improvement has been among young men in the non-urban parts of the country, and the Review heard evidence that in some of the more remote areas participation in education may have actually declined during the course of the first triennium of the Joint Policy. Clearly there are cultural factors influencing this decline, together with a lack of appropriate kinds of education and teaching methods. In some cases there is no provision for secondary aged students.

### Table 16

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>16 Year Olds</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Urban Females</td>
<td>41.8%</td>
<td>37.4%</td>
<td>33.1%</td>
<td>30.8%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Urban Males</td>
<td>50.3%</td>
<td>50.1%</td>
<td>41.8%</td>
<td>35.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rural Females</td>
<td>18.6%</td>
<td>18.7%</td>
<td>15.9%</td>
<td>14.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rural Males</td>
<td>31.2%</td>
<td>29.0%</td>
<td>23.0%</td>
<td>17.9%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The statistics also tell us that many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students are undertaking Year 11 and 12 studies in TAFE colleges rather than continuing their education in schools. Tertiary education institutions appear to provide better, more comfortable environments for many students where they feel they are being treated like adults (as they are in their own communities) rather than children, where they have the support of other Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students through enclave arrangements, and where there are expanded subject choice and assessment options.

Over the past twenty five years, there have been important initiatives undertaken by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in response to their concern over loss of culture. In many areas where traditional ownership of land exists, families have returned to these lands to re-establish a greater measure of control over their lives. This 'outstation' or 'homeland' movement has been widespread in the Northern Territory, Queensland and in Western Australia. In many of these communities schools have been established with curricula that have a strong Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander focus.

In each of the States and Territories there are Indigenous-controlled preschools, schools or TAFEs. In Western Australia there has been a noticeable proliferation of independent, locally controlled schools where Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples determine the direction of the curriculum, hire the staff and make all the important decisions about the school's operation.

There has also been the significant increase in the number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander education graduates and teachers. Institutions such as the University of South Australia, Edith Cowan University in Western Australia, James Cook University in Queensland and Batchelor College in the Northern Territory have played a major role in the education of Indigenous teachers who, in turn, have played a major role in the shift in the curriculum balance in many preschools, schools and postschooling educational institutions. Without these graduates the 'both ways' model of education would not have developed.

These trends have provided inspiration and encouragement to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people all over the country. In the overall picture, however, the number of students in these kinds of situations is still relatively small. There are many communities who want greater control over education in order to support their cultural survival but who are not receiving the kind or degree of support that they want or need. Often the major providers of education, the State and Territory departments of education, are viewed as being in opposition to these aspirations. This perception is illustrated in the following extract from a department of education submission:

It is ironic that while common opinion is that the school has very limited influence on 'culture' in the white community (TV and peer groups are said to be much more influential) the school is targeted as either the destroyer of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture or the means to enhance it. A strong case could be made for leaving schools alone to do what they were designed to do best, while 'cultural maintenance' is done in the much larger amounts of time students are not at school.

We oppose the view that it is possible for any school to be culturally neutral. At present the teaching of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture in schools is very limited. It is really only in those government and independent Aboriginal schools where both ways programs are being offered that there are any consistent, ongoing programs. The great majority of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students are in urban 'mainstream' schools and do not receive any cultural or language studies other than those that occur in mainstream Aboriginal Studies programs.
Establishing and developing cultural programs must go beyond the involvement of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in decision making as the goals set out in the Joint Policy suggest. In many senses it requires the handing over of the control of the processes by the providers. This would open up many opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, both those holding formal teaching qualifications and those who have traditional knowledge qualifications, to become directly involved in the education process. The involvement of elders and others of cultural standing is already happening in many places across the country and where it does occur there are benefits for all concerned. In the words of one respondent from an outback community:

The programs used to support and maintain Aboriginal languages began here late last year. We have received some funding to pay the older people in our community to come to our school, which was terrific. The kids loved it, to learn the traditional language, and now our white teacher has come along too and started talking and reading our language which we think is fantastic too.

We believe that there is a great untapped resource among Indigenous adults who, if given the chance, could make a very positive contribution to the education of their children and assist in the removal of those elements of education that alienate their children from schooling. Elsewhere in this report the success of ASSPA committees is discussed - in the opinion of many people, ASSPA is one of the Joint Policy’s most important and successful initiatives. We believe that many ASSPA committees are in a very good position to take control of funds to set up and conduct cultural maintenance programs. Schools and school systems need to be aware that the culture of schools may create an environment in which Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students feel no sense of belonging. For schools and school systems to meet the needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, their cultures and their values need to be accommodated. And in accommodating these cultures and values, the diversity of Australia’s Indigenous peoples must be recognised.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies

Submissions to the Review demonstrated widespread support for the inclusion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies in the curriculum for all Australian students. There is also general support for the inclusion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives in key curriculum documents at all levels of education, such as those included in the statements and profiles developed around the eight key learning areas. A number of State and Territory departments of education have developed major Aboriginal Studies programs that are compulsory studies at both the primary and secondary levels. An important part of that development has been the provision of resource materials designed to be used by both Indigenous and non-Indigenous teachers. Without good materials, it was pointed out, ‘nothing will happen in schools’.

Most submissions from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander individuals and organisations make a sharp distinction between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander education and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies. They discuss Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander education as the education necessary to maintain and develop identity, knowledge, culture and community aspirations for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies on the other hand is the study of Indigenous culture and heritage for all Australian students. It aims to develop widespread cultural awareness and sensitivity to Indigenous Australians. This knowledge is necessary to develop the kind of recognition and respect which might provide a basis for a lasting reconciliation.
While there have been major developments in all education sectors in recent years, further developments need to be encouraged and supported so that Aboriginal Studies becomes part of the education of all students. AESIP funds have assisted greatly in these developments in the past, however, it may be that more funds are required to further this development.

A key requirement for the effective teaching of Aboriginal Studies, and also for the changing of attitudes, is the professional development of teachers on a wide scale. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples strongly believe that all teachers working with their children should have received cross cultural awareness training as a minimum requirement of employment. Many teachers of Indigenous students have little knowledge of their students' culture and receive only minimal induction from employers. There was agreement that pressure ought to be applied to education providers to have teachers better prepared and trained. Better informed teachers would be more receptive to the increasing employment levels of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander teachers who are seen as being vital in the process. Recommendations in the section on involvement through employment in the education industry are intended in part to address this issue.

We consider the following to be important principles which should guide the development of Aboriginal Studies programs and strongly urge education providers and curriculum writers to consider:

• making the study of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander history and culture compulsory at all levels of education;
• revising curricula in all subject areas to ensure that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives are included in curriculum materials in appropriate ways;
• making maximum use of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in all aspects of course development and implementation and having an explicit preference for employment of appropriately qualified Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to teach the courses;
• provision for the inclusion of local content at the school level in the development of Aboriginal Studies curriculum frameworks;
• ensuring that Aboriginal Studies curricula encompass both traditional and contemporary cultures and lifestyles, and
• giving strong emphasis to early childhood education programs to combat racism and promote positive attitudes at a time when children are highly receptive to this kind of development.

In line with these principles we make the following recommendations:

Recommendation 27

That courses aimed at improving non-indigenous Australians' understanding of and respect for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander traditional and contemporary cultures be made a mandatory element of the curricula of courses at all levels of education.

Such courses should be developed by Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islanders, drawing on the curriculum development expertise of others if necessary.

Such courses should include information about local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures on the advice of local communities.
Such courses should be delivered, where possible, by appropriately qualified and/or experienced Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

Accreditation and assessment bodies should formally recognise the prior knowledge and understanding that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students hold in relation to these courses.

Recommendation 28

That the Commonwealth, States and Territories jointly develop materials which include Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives in the ‘Cultural Understandings’ competency.

Vocational education

Vocational education is particularly successful in raising the postschool aspirations of young Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islanders. The Commonwealth’s Vocational Education and Guidance for Aboriginals Scheme (VEGAS) needs to be improved (see Recommendation 40). Funds available for vocational education and guidance for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students are inadequate, relative to the demand for these services. This may be especially so for students and their parents in isolated areas. The expectation of having parent involvement in such areas as student choice of subjects for the post-compulsory years of education and an understanding of tertiary education systems, requires that parents too are brought to centres of education and the program may require expansion in this area.

People and groups who told the Review about their experiences with the VEGAS program gave it universal praise. It was reported as providing valued learning experiences for a number of groups who provided evidence to the Review. The major problems are that few people know about it and funds are limited. One major Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisation in its submission commented:

Few people are aware of VEGAS, possibly because its budget is so limited that almost nothing can be done. It is submitted that the allocation for this program is ludicrously inadequate for the objectives of the program. Urgent consideration must be given not only to increasing the budget allocation of the program, but also ways of integrating it with other DEET programs and also with mainstream equity programs.

We agree with many of these sentiments and accordingly, we recommend:

Recommendation 29

That the Commonwealth provide additional funds under its Vocational Education and Guidance for Aboriginals Scheme.

Labour market

Despite some improvements in educational attainment, Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islanders remain the most disadvantaged in the labour market. While making up some 1.6% of the total Australian population, they are over-represented among the unemployed, the long-term unemployed and among those unemployed and receiving benefits for 18 months and longer. Table 17 illustrates this.
Of even greater concern is the large proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who, after leaving education, do not enter the labour market at all. Little is known about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who are neither in the labour force nor in education.

We regard the labour market programs offered under Working Nation\(^2\) as means by which the unemployed and those participating in Community Development Employment Projects might get education and training that will prepare them specifically for employment. We are concerned that eligible people may not yet be participating in mainstream labour market programs and/or in labour market programs designed specifically to meet their needs. Accordingly, we recommend:

**Recommendation 36**

That agencies responsible for providing specific mainstream labour market programs and labour market programs designed specifically to meet the needs of Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islanders report annually on the participation of Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islanders in those programs, relative to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples’ share of categories of unemployment.

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Gender issues

This Term of Reference also asks us to give special attention to the gender issues affecting participation in education. The evidence presented to us demonstrates that, starting from the early years of secondary school, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander boys and men are less likely to participate in education than Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander girls and women.

There are marked gender differences in Year 12 retention rates, and in participation rates in technical and further education and higher education. While many of our recommendations will improve the educational experiences of all students regardless of gender, evidence has drawn our attention to the need to adopt some special measures to improve the educational experiences and outcomes of male students. Much of the evidence presented to us suggests that their lower participation in secondary education is attributable, at least in part, to the conflict which arises from being treated as children by the education system but as men by their communities. We believe that further research needs to be done to identify the causes of their alienation and recommend this as a research priority in Recommendation 34.

In the interim, we believe that the provision of positive role models for young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander male students in secondary education and the encouragement of school practices which take their changed status into account would be effective means of redressing this problem. Accordingly, we recommend:

Recommendation 31

That agencies and organisations providing secondary education for male Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander secondary students:

- give priority to the employment of appropriately qualified and/or experienced male teachers in secondary schools where classes contain young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander men;

- promote the employment of both male and female Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander education workers in secondary schools, and

- adopt school organisation practices (such as separating male and female students for particular subjects or at particular times) which give appropriate respect to the status of young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander men in their communities.

Conclusions on Equitable and Appropriate Outcomes

There is a good deal of support in the evidence presented to us for the view that different outcomes are appropriate for Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islanders. We do not concur with this view. We do agree, however, that different groups may place different emphases on the many and varied outcomes of education or may manifest the same outcomes in different ways under different circumstances.

We note the emphasis in evidence presented to us placed on the role of bilingual and ‘both ways’ schools in maintaining traditional languages. We recognise the critical importance of supporting the study of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages because of the role they play in the maintenance and development of culture and values. We believe that other schools, and other Australians, also have a role to play in maintaining Indigenous languages and have recommended development of courses of study in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages.
Many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children entering primary school have a limited command of standard English and/or speak Aboriginal English, a Kriol or an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander language as their first language. Lack of proficiency in Standard English, the dominant language of instruction across all sectors of education, is considered to be a fundamental barrier to participation in education. We believe that forms of education which are based on the recognition and acceptance of a child's first language as a legitimate form of communication best serve the educational needs of young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and have recommended increased levels of ESL support for these children.

Many submissions argue that the content, processes and organisation of the dominant forms of Australian education do not acknowledge their culturally corrosive effects on Indigenous Australians. It is crucial, they argue, that the integrity of Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islanders knowledge, communities, and cultures be actively recognised and supported as the basis for their continuing development. We have recommended that study of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander traditional and contemporary cultures be made mandatory for all Australian students in order to provide a basis for a lasting reconciliation.

Vocational education is particularly successful in raising the postschool aspirations of young Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islanders and we have called for an expansion of the Commonwealth’s Vocational Education and Guidance for Aboriginals Scheme.

Despite some improvements in educational attainment, Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islanders remain the most disadvantaged in the labour market. We are concerned that eligible Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islanders may not yet be participating in mainstream labour market programs and/or in labour market programs designed specifically to meet their needs and have called on agencies to provide better quality information to monitor their participation.

Many of our recommendations will improve the educational experiences of both males and females. Evidence has also drawn attention to the need to adopt some special measures to improve the educational experiences of boys and men. We encourage education providers to provide positive role models for young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander boys in secondary education and to encourage practices and means of educational provision that take their changed status into account.

Language, culture and heritage are intricately intertwined with notions of self-determination and reconciliation which are the keys to improving educational and employment outcomes for Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islanders. Non-indigenous Australians need to know more about Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islanders, and Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islanders need the best possible literacy and language skills to be successful in education and training and in working and community life. The eight recommendations (Recommendations 24 to 31) that address these ends have relatively low direct costs and are in the reach and gift of all governments.

**REPORTING, MONITORING AND EVALUATION**

*Our fifth Term of Reference* has been to review the means of ensuring appropriate reporting, monitoring and evaluation procedures for the use of funds under the auspices of the Joint Policy.

The funds spent on education come from a variety of sources, but ultimately from taxpayers, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander taxpayers. The processes of government which
allocate taxation revenue to the Commonwealth's own programs, and to general revenue and specific purpose assistance to the States and Territories, take a number of factors into account - for example, the composition of the population, rurality and special needs. The effect of the Grants Commission's fiscal equalisation principle:

that each State or Territory should be given the capacity to provide the same standard of public services as other States and Territories, if it makes the same effort to raise revenue from its own sources and conducts its business with an average level of operational efficiency.

is to increase general revenue grants to those States and Territories with high proportions of Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islanders in their populations and especially to those States and Territories where Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islanders are concentrated in rural and remote areas.

One of the most worrying gaps in information is the absence of reliable expenditure data, as demonstrated by the following table. The total amount of money spent on education for Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islanders is still not known.

We recognise that there are substantial difficulties in gathering such information. It is not always possible to identify the component of funds used for a general purpose - for example, for total curriculum development - that is applied for education for Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islanders. We also note the claims made in evidence to us, which are discussed further in relation to Recommendation 35 that supplementary funds allocated specifically for education for Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islanders may be diverted to other purposes. In effect, funds are 'swallowed up' in bureaucracies. This claim is particularly strong in evidence presented about the postschool education sector. Table 18 on the opposite page gives a breakdown of State and Territory and Commonwealth funding for the education of Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islanders.

We consider this financial information to be vital to future assessments of the efficiency and effectiveness of education for Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islanders. We recommend:

**Recommendation 32**

That governments identify:

* the component of general revenue assistance to States and Territories which is a loading for those States and Territories with relatively high Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander populations and which is used for the education of Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islanders;

* the component of general revenue assistance spent on education for Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islanders attending ‘mainstream’ education courses, and

* funds spent on specific purpose education programs for Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islanders.

as baseline funding data on education for Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islanders.

The Commonwealth should compile, update and publish this information annually.
### Breakdown of State, Territory and Commonwealth funding for the education of Aboriginal Peoples and Torres Strait Islanders

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>COMMONWEALTH</th>
<th>NSW</th>
<th>VIC</th>
<th>QLD</th>
<th>SA</th>
<th>WA</th>
<th>TAS</th>
<th>NT</th>
<th>ACT</th>
<th>TOTAL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>AESIP - Government</strong></td>
<td>9,746,400</td>
<td>4,271,700</td>
<td>10,079,000</td>
<td>6,860,180</td>
<td>9,125,200</td>
<td>1,271,100</td>
<td>12,071,100</td>
<td>489,900</td>
<td>53,914,580</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>AESIP - Nongovernment</strong></td>
<td>5,714,500</td>
<td>451,800</td>
<td>3,630,800</td>
<td>1,111,500</td>
<td>5,641,800</td>
<td>273,500</td>
<td>5,621,150</td>
<td>132,300</td>
<td>22,837,350</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>AREGs</strong></td>
<td>350,600</td>
<td>206,700</td>
<td>364,900</td>
<td>200,400</td>
<td>325,400</td>
<td>144,500</td>
<td>339,700</td>
<td>141,500</td>
<td>2,184,900</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total AESIP (1994)</strong></td>
<td>15,825,800</td>
<td>4,930,200</td>
<td>14,074,700</td>
<td>8,240,080</td>
<td>15,092,400</td>
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<td><strong>ASSPA</strong></td>
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<td>311,447</td>
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<td><strong>ATAS</strong></td>
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<td><strong>VEGAS</strong></td>
<td>278,291</td>
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<td>790,954</td>
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<td>292,533</td>
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<td><strong>Total AEDA (1993-94)</strong></td>
<td>8,404,024</td>
<td>1,845,689</td>
<td>9,516,410</td>
<td>2,176,905</td>
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<tr>
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<td>2,223,137</td>
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<td>1,554,674</td>
<td>5,589,386</td>
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<td><strong>ABSTUDY - Tertiary</strong></td>
<td>19,664,059</td>
<td>3,917,491</td>
<td>14,886,236</td>
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<td>11,350,700</td>
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<td>2,300,309</td>
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<td>461,616</td>
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<td>301,149</td>
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<td>154,212</td>
<td>1,766,924</td>
<td>225,824</td>
<td>1,598,722</td>
<td>66,176</td>
<td>7,374,680</td>
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<td><strong>Total GRG (1994)</strong></td>
<td>9,574,472</td>
<td>1,517,033</td>
<td>11,267,519</td>
<td>2,015,729</td>
<td>5,665,902</td>
<td>1,398,590</td>
<td>5,665,902</td>
<td>319,555</td>
<td>40,893,747</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Total Equity Program (1994)</strong></td>
<td>na</td>
<td>na</td>
<td>na</td>
<td>na</td>
<td>na</td>
<td>na</td>
<td>na</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Higher Education - Support funding</strong></td>
<td>3,386,363</td>
<td>1,477,715</td>
<td>2,744,422</td>
<td>1,382,747</td>
<td>1,915,664</td>
<td>398,123</td>
<td>1,489,463</td>
<td>415,692</td>
<td>13,210,189</td>
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<td><strong>Higher Education - Teaching costs</strong></td>
<td>11,882,008</td>
<td>4,123,654</td>
<td>9,348,426</td>
<td>4,887,496</td>
<td>6,048,288</td>
<td>1,405,115</td>
<td>4,710,816</td>
<td>987,180</td>
<td>45,393,953</td>
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<td><strong>Total Higher Education (1993-94)</strong></td>
<td>15,269,171</td>
<td>5,601,369</td>
<td>12,893,058</td>
<td>6,270,235</td>
<td>7,963,552</td>
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<td><strong>TOTAL COMMONWEALTH</strong></td>
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<td>20,034,919</td>
<td>76,367,531</td>
<td>25,889,955</td>
<td>54,820,178</td>
<td>8,422,637</td>
<td>55,631,460</td>
<td>2,578,027</td>
<td>322,572,881</td>
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<td><strong>STATE/TERRITORY (4, 5)</strong></td>
<td>27,236,041</td>
<td>3,433,694</td>
<td>17,483,120</td>
<td>12,737,336</td>
<td>15,798,145</td>
<td>39,058,734</td>
<td>570,899</td>
<td>117,183,256</td>
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<td><strong>AECGs (6)</strong></td>
<td>266,000</td>
<td>100,000</td>
<td>557,598</td>
<td>136,937</td>
<td>133,183</td>
<td>10,000</td>
<td>228,000</td>
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<td>1,431,718</td>
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<td><strong>Total STATE/TERRITORY (1994)</strong></td>
<td>27,502,041</td>
<td>3,533,694</td>
<td>18,040,718</td>
<td>12,874,273</td>
<td>15,931,328</td>
<td>39,286,734</td>
<td>570,899</td>
<td>118,614,974</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Vocational Education/Training (93-94)</strong></td>
<td>na</td>
<td>na</td>
<td>na</td>
<td>na</td>
<td>na</td>
<td>na</td>
<td>na</td>
<td>na</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td>106,330,215</td>
<td>23,568,613</td>
<td>94,408,249</td>
<td>38,764,228</td>
<td>70,751,506</td>
<td>9,297,924</td>
<td>94,918,194</td>
<td>3,148,926</td>
<td>441,187,855</td>
</tr>
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</table>

1. Aboriginal education direct assistance funds to the ACT are included in NSW and therefore skew both the NSW and ACT government funding ratios.
2. GRG funding for government schools is based on 1992 enrolments and 1994 initial funding rates; GRG funding for non-government schools is based on 1993 enrolments and 1994 initial funding rates.
3. Teaching costs include funding under the former Aboriginal Participation Initiative and funding provided under higher education general operating grants. Note Mar operating grant funding is an estimate only and is based on the average funding level per EFTS/1 for each institution.
4. Information provided by State and Territory government education providers under Schedule C to Aboriginal Education Strategic Initiatives Program agreements.
5. Figures for some States/Territories do not include general expenditure on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students attending 'mainstream schools'; figures for the Northern Territory are not precise due to the integrated nature of education delivery and the high percentage of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students.
6. No ACT government funding has been provided to the ACT AECG since February 1992.
The data in the Statistical Annex to this Report reveals the extent of both what is known and what is still not known about Indigenous education. One common issue in submissions and consultations, and a matter of great concern to us, is the inadequacy of collection and analysis of information about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples’ access to, participation in, and outcomes from, education. Collecting this information is one important way for Australia to keep track of what is being done in education.

On the basis of the evidence presented to us, we believe that the current reporting and monitoring arrangements across all sectors of education are inadequate. In some cases the necessary information is not being, or has only recently begun to be, collected. In other cases information is being collected to no purpose and/or is not publicly available.

The absence of basic statistical information impedes proper policy formulation. For example, the lack of information about, for example, literacy attainment levels and language spoken at home makes it difficult to assess the extent of unmet need for intensive English language instruction or the potential for bilingual education in English and Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander languages to redress literacy problems.

Information about socioeconomic status (provided by data on income, parental income and parental educational attainment) should allow us to assess the compounding effects of the often multiple educational disadvantages experienced by Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islanders. Without this information it is difficult to identify, for example, the component of an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander student’s educational disadvantage attributable to poverty.

Without this information governments, providers and the community cannot be assured of the efficiency of the educational services they provide for Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islanders; nor can they properly account for the use of the funds they spend. This is an area which needs urgent and sustained attention and we recommend:

**Recommendation 33**

*That the Australian Bureau of Statistics and recipients of Commonwealth funding for education for Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islanders maintain databases to enable national reports on the state of education for Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islanders to be compiled and published annually.*

These reports should include, as a minimum:

- the number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander advisory structures by sector of education and the proportion of positions held by Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islanders on these bodies;

- the number of full-time equivalent Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff employed, and the total number of employees, by:
  - age;
  - gender;
  - location;
  - parent’s educational attainment;
  - sector of education;
  - part-time or full-time status;
  - casual, contract or permanent employment status;
- professional or paraprofessional status/academic or non-academic status,
  and
- level of appointment within occupational classification.

- the number of additional education places provided to Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islanders by construction or refurbishment of facilities, by sector of education;
- the number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children enrolled at and attending preschool education programs, by age, gender, location, parent’s income, parent’s educational attainment, language spoken at home and sessional participation;
- the number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students enrolled at and attending primary, compulsory secondary and postcompulsory secondary school programs, by age, gender, location, employment status, parent’s income, parent’s educational attainment, language spoken at home and year of schooling;
- the number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander year 12 students eligible for entry to higher education institutions, by age, gender, location, employment status, income or parent’s income, parent’s educational attainment, language spoken at home and subjects studied in Year 12;
- the number of full-time equivalent Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islanders enrolled at and attending technical and further education institutions, by age, gender, location, employment status, income or parent’s income, parent’s educational attainment, language spoken at home and field and stream of study;
- the number of full-time equivalent Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islanders enrolled at and attending adult and community education institutions, by age, gender, location, employment status, income or parent’s income, parent’s educational attainment, language spoken at home and field and stream of study;
- the number of full-time equivalent Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islanders enrolled at and attending higher education institutions, by age, gender, location, employment status, income or parent’s income, parent’s educational attainment, language spoken at home and field of study;
- the number and proportion of Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islanders aged 19 who have completed Year 12 or its equivalent, by gender, location, employment status, income or parent’s income, parent’s educational attainment, language spoken at home and course or field of study;
- the number and proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students enrolled at and attending courses not leading to the award of any formal credential, by sector of education, age, gender, location, employment status, income or parent’s income, parent’s educational attainment, language spoken at home and course or field of study;
- the number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students completing courses of study, and the proportion of these students receiving a formal credential at the end of that course of study, at the following levels:
  - Certificate;
  - Associate Diploma;
  - Diploma;
- Degree, and
- Postgraduate award;
- by type of institution, age, gender, location, employment status, income or parent's income, parent's educational attainment, language spoken at home and field of study.

- the number of Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islanders enrolled at and attending intensive English language instruction courses by age, gender, location, employment status, income or parents' income, parent's educational attainment and language spoken at home;

- the number of Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islanders enrolled at and attending courses in Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander languages, by age, gender, location, employment status, income or parent's income, parent's educational attainment and language spoken in the home;

- the number of Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islanders enrolled at and attending courses aimed at enhancing their capacity to manage and develop their communities, by age, gender, employment status, income or parent's income, parent's educational attainment, location, language spoken at home and field of study, and

- the number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and other Australian students completing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander studies courses, by age, gender, location, employment status, income or parent's income, parent's educational attainment and language spoken at home.

The standard ways that access to, participation in, and outcomes from, education are measured do not and cannot reveal a great deal about the quality of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' educational experiences, or at least do so only in a very indirect way.

Educational outcomes mean different things to different people. The evidence presented to us makes it clear that Australians share a broad vision of the outcomes they want from education. At the same time, Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islanders place great importance on the transmission and continuing development of Indigenous cultures and values through education. At the moment the culture and values being reproduced through institutional education are not their own. One compelling submission arguing for improved provision puts it this way:

A critical factor is to make outcomes appropriate to Aboriginal needs. The education and training system is a white suburban system imported... with special programs added on in an effort to create relevance for Aboriginal students. The education and training system should be redesigned to meet the needs of the Aboriginal majority - with a suitable curriculum, Aboriginal teaching staff, Aboriginal principals and administrators.

We believe that work should be undertaken to develop a complementary set of performance indicators which could provide evidence of the quality of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' educational experiences. These performance indicators need to take into account all of the outcomes of education - including the transmission and continuing development of cultures and values. Essentially this is a shift in emphasis, to place greater weight on assessing the quality of educational outcomes as opposed to measuring only input and quantitative outcomes measures. In the words of one research organisation:
...monitoring of the AEP should not focus principally on quantitative data but should also establish mechanisms for the collection of qualitative data on a large scale from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. Much has been required of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people at a local level in the implementation of this policy and yet we have not specifically included them in the regular monitoring process.

The processes involved in education related research are as important as the research itself. Priority in research funding should be directed to projects which engage local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people as equal partners in all stages of research - from its design to reporting its results.

Australia’s Indigenous peoples argue strongly that their cultures, knowledge and values should be given equal respect and importance in education systems as is accorded to the ‘mainstream’ heritage, and in response have developed the both ways system of education. Both ways education recognises that the maintenance and development of Aboriginality is, and will remain, a permanent issue for education and schooling and that education for contemporary Aboriginality must take different forms. This evidence favours processes through which Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students can develop their own Aboriginality, and do so in ways which maintain shared Aboriginality as a distinctive element in the different and changing circumstances of contemporary Australian social, cultural, economic and political life.

We have drawn out a set of priorities for research from the evidence presented to us. Most of these priorities are discussed in some detail throughout this report. We believe these accurately reflect the immediate concerns of Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islanders and we recommend:

Recommendation 34

That the Commonwealth provide additional funds to support ongoing research, evaluation and monitoring of education for Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islanders.

The Commonwealth should allocate funding for this work on the basis of open and competitive tender.

Priority for funding should be given to:

• the development of indicators of the quality of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples’ educational experiences;

• research on the causes of educational alienation, especially educational alienation experienced by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander boys and young men;

• research on the post education destinations of Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islanders;

• the assessment of language maintenance needs;

• local explorations of two-ways education models;

• the development of best practice primary and secondary education courses in Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander languages;

• community level needs assessment of educational aspirations, and

• the development of counter-racism education.
There were many proposals put before the Review for funding of innovative ideas, ranging from relatively small scale projects at the community level to very large scale ones which propose fundamental shifts in the balance of power. Almost all reflect attempts by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to gain greater control over education for themselves and their children. We believe that many of these proposals deserve support.

In our view, the most appropriate approach for funding of these ideas is to set up pilot projects where they can be trialed, tested and further developed. Some of the proposals that we are recommending will require the cooperation and goodwill of major providers of education. For example, the expressed wish of the people of the Torres Strait to take charge of their share of AESIP funding requires the agreement of the Queensland government. Islander communities are unanimous that it is time to move the centre of policy formation, decision making and service delivery to the Torres Strait region and they see such an initiative as a step towards taking control of the educational futures of their children.

Similarly, any trial of direct funding of an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander education unit in a university will require a considerable degree of cooperation. 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.

We believe that support for schemes such as these will enhance Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people’s self-determination and accordingly we recommend:

**Recommendation 35**

That the Commonwealth provide additional funds for innovative proposals in education for Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islanders which:

- contribute to the achievement of the Commonwealth’s national priorities for education for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people;
- are time-limited, and
- are able to demonstrate that ongoing funding for the wider application of successful initiatives will be provided by funding bodies other than the Commonwealth.

The process for selecting innovative proposals for funding should be on a competitive submission basis. Preference should be given to innovative proposals which have been endorsed by local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities or organisations. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Consultative Groups should not be excluded as potential applicants for up to ten per cent of the available funding.

These funds should support pilot projects in the following areas:

- trialing approaches which enhance Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples’ self-determination in education within government school systems;
- testing the feasibility of direct funding models, in the first instance by providing Commonwealth funds for:
  - Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islanders residing in the Torres Strait.
directly to the Torres Strait Regional Authority, rather than to the Queensland government, and

- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander university students directly to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander enclaves in tertiary institutions, rather than to the institutions themselves.

- trialing a nationally available postgraduate course in the language teaching methods and understandings necessary for the delivery of courses under the Australian Indigenous Languages Framework;

- trialing regional high school models which develop alternative school organisation practices to encourage participation in secondary education;

- trialing the local delivery of ‘both ways’ education models, and

- trialing local area aggregations of school-based Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Student Support and Parent Awareness committees as alternative recipients of Commonwealth funding, to test direct funding models and to determine the best means by which their activities might be coordinated with local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Consultative Groups.

There is already a core of specialists in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander studies within many universities and a growing informal network of these and other Indigenous people inside and outside these institutions. One extension of this arrangement could be some form of institutional expression, often represented in evidence as the desire for an Indigenous university.

Such a university would have a special mission to research and promote Indigenous approaches to a whole range of studies currently dominated by non-indigenous perceptions and assumptions. It could also generate teaching materials for use across all sectors of education, raising cultural awareness among both Indigenous and non-indigenous students, and provide a core curriculum for pre-service and in-service teacher preparation.

Many of these objectives can be achieved by changing arrangements within and between existing institutions, and by raising the status and profile of the activities of the communities of Indigenous scholars and students. The next step proposed by proponents of an Indigenous university is to develop from this network in existing universities a separate network of campuses (perhaps linked together under a common Vice-Chancellor like the Australian Catholic University which grew out of State-based teachers’ colleges)

We recognise the strong support for an Indigenous university among several influential proponents but consider that many issues still need to be resolved before a firm commitment to establish an Indigenous university could reasonably be made - not least what the wider community of Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islanders would regard as the most appropriate form for such a university. To assess these feasibility issues we recommend:

**Recommendation 26**

That the Commonwealth immediately commission a feasibility study to investigate options for an Indigenous university. Such a study should:

- canvas the range of Australian and overseas models of tertiary provision for indigenous peoples, including the option of cooperative networks of specialist units in existing universities;
• quantify the capital and recurrent funding implications of the proposal and assess the capacity for a private sector contribution to these costs, and
• report by the end of 1996.

The study should be overseen by a committee with a majority of Aboriginal people and Torres Strait Islanders and include representatives of the Commonwealth (including the Department of Employment, Education and Training and the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission), the Australian Vice-Chancellors Committee, the Higher Education Council of the National Board of Education, Employment and Training, representatives of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander higher education staff, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander university students, and relevant union and business interests.

Conclusions on Reporting, Monitoring and Evaluation

Without realistic and reliable data about how much is spent, and on what, for education, governments and the community cannot make informed judgements about how much to spend or how effective services are. Perhaps even more important is the need to establish what educational outcomes are being achieved, for individuals, for communities and the nation’s Indigenous peoples as a whole, from investment in education for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. There are no major technical reasons why our two recommendations (32 and 33) on monitoring and evaluation cannot be implemented; we consider they need systematic and urgent attention. These data will provide a context for further research into the best ways to provide education and training for Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islanders. The three recommendations (34, 35 and 36) on priorities for research and related innovative practice are critically important.

RESOURCES AND NEEDS

Our sixth Term of Reference has been to examine funding allocations, the distribution and management of resources for education for Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islanders and the compatibility of these resource allocations with needs.

Needs as a problematic concept

Many submissions to us were written as pleas or manifestos for the proper resourcing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander education. They are not to be regarded as asking for ‘more'; rather they are demanding ‘enough’ to ensure that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students and communities have a reasonable chance of gaining access to and maintaining their participation in education.

It has been argued that the disadvantage of some Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students and groups results from insufficient system resources, and/or from not having those resources applied in ways that will actually make educational opportunities accessible or continuing participation engaging and rewarding.

The issue of needs-based allocation of resources is considered in a variety of ways in submissions, perhaps because authors wish to emphasise different elements of the complex
relationship between Indigenous and non-indigenous Australians. We consider that the issue of the allocation and distribution of resources in terms of need should be considered circumspectly - 'need' is a problematic construct. Approaches to meeting needs differ depending on how 'needs' are defined and understood and depending on whether the authors of submissions wish to emphasise one or another approach in the balance between:

- sustaining the distinctive aspirations of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, groups, communities and organisations as an element of strategies for improving recognition of, and respect for, their aspirations, concerns and interests, and as a basis for reconciliation;
- making different forms of special provision in education to improve cultural awareness and sensitivity, and
- assisting with the integration of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students into 'mainstream' schooling and society, especially by various kinds of compensatory provision.

There is a strong tendency towards the first of these three approaches in submissions to the Review, and away from the third. The submissions include much detailed, sometimes conflicting, commentary on resources, needs and programs.

**The Joint Policy**

Almost all submissions indicate that the resources provided by the Commonwealth are very significant and welcome. They are sometimes the only source of support and are crucial to the implementation of strategies to meet the Joint Policy's goals.

Many, perhaps most, submissions argue that additional funds are needed for the reasonable activities of institutions and systems as they implement strategies to achieve the Joint Policy's goals. Several say that improvements in base funding for education providers are needed and that some of the funding provided under the Joint Policy should become part of base funding, not supplementary to it. Several argue that resources should be assessed on the basis of Indigenous educational needs and circumstances, not by comparison with levels of resource allocation for 'mainstream' education.

As discussed in relation to Recommendation 32, there is a need for more detail about levels of State and Territory funding so that a better estimate can be made about expenditure on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander education as a proportion of total Australian expenditure on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander education. There is also a need for a clearer identification of expenditure to differentiate between funding provided specifically under the Joint Policy and that from other sources. In particular it is argued that targeted resources for Indigenous students should not be swept up in institutions' recurrent budgets.

People in some public consultations were of the view that there is still a pressing need for increased funding although money is not all that is needed to improve the implementation of the Joint Policy. We have discussed in earlier section of this Report the importance of employing more Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who could work towards the more complete implementation of the Joint Policy. This issue was raised strongly in respondents' discussion of resourcing issues.

There were numerous other resource issues raised in the submissions and consultations. The following needs were commonly identified:
• better networking between institutions so that duplication and waste of resources is avoided;
• increased support for programs such as audiological services, addiction and drug abuse support services to address health problems that are barriers to education, as well as for specific education services such as, library, information and curriculum development services;
• a national Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander higher education institution (or network of institutions) - or at least a feasibility study of this proposal;
• support for research on aspects of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander education, including community needs analysis, qualitative research into student participation, and participatory action research in schools and communities, and
• practical support for education in remote communities, including funding for appropriate staffing formulae and conditions, teacher housing, new educational facilities (including computer-based and other communication facilities), travel and vehicles, and continuing teacher education and staff development.

Commonwealth Support Programs for the Education of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples

Funding of the school sector

Many comments in submissions to the Review and in consultations were about the specific programs run under the auspices of the Joint Policy and, in particular, about the scope of these programs and the way they are administered. This section describes Commonwealth education support programs for the compulsory and post-compulsory education sectors.

The Commonwealth provides support funding for school education for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples under a range of programs. As well as access to 'mainstream' Commonwealth recurrent, capital and targeted programs supporting education for all Australian students, which amount to some $3 billion each year, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities have access to special funds earmarked for education for Indigenous peoples. An overview of the Commonwealth's programs for schools is provided in Appendix 4 of this Report.

Non-government school education providers deliver a variety of services. In some cases they are the dominant provider, at least of specific types of service. For example, in parts of Western Australia, such as the Kimberley region, the Catholic education system has been the major provider of education for Aboriginal students. In other parts of the country, independent schools offer secondary schooling and boarding facilities, which are particularly vital to those living in remote areas.

Funding of vocational education and training

The establishment of the Australian National Training Authority (ANTA) has changed DEET's role in the direct administration of vocational education and training programs. However, the Commonwealth retains special responsibilities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

A priority for the Commonwealth's equity policy for the VET sector will be to ensure the sector meets its responsibilities for all equity target groups. This will involve examination of relevant legislation and funding arrangements to determine future monitoring of ANTA by DEET on
equity matters. The Commonwealth has particular constitutional obligations for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. Strategies will need to be developed, such as ensuring that ANTA has appropriate equity performance indicators.

In 1990, the National Training Board (NTB) was established to facilitate the development and approval of national competency standards for industry. The role of the NTB is to endorse skill standards proposed by industry and to provide advice and assistance to industry in developing national competency standards. The NTB has engaged a consultant to report on the avoidance of bias and discrimination in the development of competency standards. This study will widen the application of the guidelines which the NTB has issued on the avoidance of gender bias and discrimination in the development of industry standards. ATSIC is represented on the steering group for this study.

Responsibility for managing national VET curriculum projects lies with the Australian Committee for Training Curriculum (ACTRAC). ACTRAC has funded a project to identify Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples’ curriculum objectives, to prepare selection criteria against which project proposals could be commissioned and/or funded by ACTRAC and to recommend an appropriate process for providing on-going advice to ACTRAC on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander priorities for national VET curriculum development including adaptation of non-Aboriginal curricula where appropriate.

Better outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in the VET sector can only be achieved if TAFE staff have access to adequate professional development. The National Staff Development Committee (TNSDC) is funding the development of three Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander projects for 1994 - Cross cultural training; Language and Literacy; and Recognition of Prior Learning for TAFE staff. TNSDC has undertaken extensive consultation with representatives of the National Federation of Aboriginal Education Consultative Groups to inform the planning and development of the projects.

TNSDC projects link in directly with Joint Policy goals by assisting personnel in the national vocational education and training system to develop the competencies required to meet education and training needs of the diverse range of client groups, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

The Australian vocational training system

DEET has responsibilities in the development phase for the new system of entry level training, the Australian Vocational Certificate training system (AVTS). Once it is fully operational the Commonwealth will retain responsibility for any system of employer incentives associated with the new system.

The issue of ensuring access for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to the AVTS is one of concern to all Australian governments. An AVTS Equity Strategy has been endorsed for the development of the new system, to ensure that the new system of entry level training addresses the needs of people who previously have been disadvantaged in education and training.

The Equity Strategy highlights the features of the new system that will provide access to vocational education and training for disadvantaged young people. It also prescribes the process through which equity concerns are to be addressed in the implementation of pilot projects and outlines further research that is being undertaken. The identified target groups include Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

24 National Strategy for Vocational Education and Training - Towards a Skilled Australia, Australian National Training Authority, 1994
MCEETYA have asked for further advice on ensuring equitable access to the AVTS by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. A consultant will develop an overview of the possible impact of the new system on participation in education and training by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and strategies to overcome barriers, including perceived barriers. The key questions to be addressed centre on the capacity of mainstream entry-level training under the proposed AVTS to meet the training needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

The Commonwealth Government agreed to the development of a number of additional AVTS pilots on the advice of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. Six pilot projects specifically targeted to the needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities have received in-principle approval. These new pilot projects will build on a range of AVTS pilot projects which already include Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. These additional pilot projects, developed and managed by their communities, will provide training and skills essential to the further economic development of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.

Funding of higher education

While higher education institutions are self-administering, the Commonwealth Government is the primary source of funding and as such has the main responsibility for national policy and planning. The Commonwealth had introduced programs to encourage Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander participation in higher education before the Joint Policy was adopted.

The Aboriginal Participation Initiative provided funding for places at higher education institutions earmarked for Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander students. In addition, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people formed one of the target equity groups designated under the Higher Education Equity Program (HEEP).

In 1990 the Commonwealth published A Fair Chance for All, a national plan for equity in higher education. Its objectives were to:

- increase the participation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in higher education with the emphasis on bachelor and higher degrees; and certain disciplines, including, law, business and health, and
- increase the completion rates of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students.

It set targets of:

- an increase of 50% in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander enrolments in higher education by 1995;
- an increase in the proportion of bachelor degree enrolments to 50% of all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander enrolments by 1992 and 60% by 1995;
- improvement in the graduation rates of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students to that of the total student population by 1995, and
- improvement in the number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students across all courses by 1995.

These objectives and targets are consistent with the relevant goals of the Joint Policy. Substantial progress has been made towards meeting these targets.

The Commonwealth has sought to emphasise to higher education institutions that access to
higher education by itself is insufficient if attention is not also given to improving educational outcomes. This is in line with the goals of the Joint Policy. Institutions have been asked to consider, in the development of their Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander education strategies, how successful educational outcomes should be defined and measured. More attention will need to be given to such issues as how to reduce attrition rates and increase completion rates, as well as other aspects of successful educational participation.

DEET commissioned a study of Equity and General Performance Indicators which was published in 1994. The findings of this study will be instrumental in changing arrangements for HEEP so as to place a greater emphasis on educational outcomes in the allocation of funding. Following widespread consultation, it is intended that this will relate institutional HEEP grants more closely to their performance in achieving successful educational outcomes for members of the equity target groups. This would be a logical occasion to review participation in higher education.

Issues about Commonwealth education support funding

Two major issues arise about the Commonwealth’s support funding for education: support for independent providers, and security and stability of support funding.

Funding for Independent education providers

The Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody noted the following justifications for the establishment of independent Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community controlled institutions:

- the right to choose an education which is in accord with cultural values and lifestyles, as has historically been the right of religious groups in Australia;
- as an expression of Aboriginality, ensuring the perpetuation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures, norms and values, and
- as the most appropriate educational and social environment for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children alienated by other monolingual and monocultural institutions.

We concur with these views. However a number of issues which need to be addressed, whether there is currently sufficient choice in the kind of education that is available. While various models of involvement in educational decision making have been discussed elsewhere in this Report, we are concerned about some of the funding issues associated with community-controlled independent education providers. As one submission stated:

The Review of the AEP Joint Policy Statement must make explicit the options which Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities need to have open to them in the schooling of their children without losing the academic strength of the AEP in its current format.

Supplementary funding under AESIP goes to some 80 non-government Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander-controlled educational providers servicing the preschool, school and vocational education and training sectors. These providers also receive varying amounts of mainstream and supplementary funding from State and Commonwealth government agencies, but usually only very limited amounts from private sources. Under current arrangements the ongoing viability of many of these providers is in question. AESIP is the major funding partner.

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26 Equity and General Performance Indicators in Higher Education, Lin Martin, Flinders University, AGPS, Oct 1994
27 Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody - National Report; Volume 4: Commissioner Elliot Johnston QC, AGPS 1991, p329
Independent education providers in the vocational education and training sector came into being as a culturally and academically appropriate alternative to courses provided by TAFE systems. Growth of independent provision in this sector has been fairly limited, although in Western Australia the control of some former TAFE colleges has been handed over to local Aboriginal communities. In the TAFE and adult community sector, only limited mainstream Commonwealth, State and Territory funds are generally available for independent providers.

Some independent preschools would attract higher levels of State or Territory funding if their facilities met all requirements for registration, such as complying with building standards and employing appropriately qualified teaching staff. While there is an expectation that AESIP capital funds over coming years should in part achieve the building component, such a solution does not resolve the fundamental issue of the absence of any State or Territory monetary commitment.

One of the principles underlying State and Territory and Commonwealth governments' recognition of and support for non-government education providers, is the presumption that government subsidies will be supplemented by private funds. Non-government education systems also enhance their provision with AESIP funds. As in government schools and community-controlled schools, much of this funding goes towards the employment of staff. This presumption contrasts with the absence of a sound economic base for many independent Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander education providers. Lack of third funding sources results in high dependence by independent providers on the Commonwealth for funding especially under AESIP.

While we are not advocating unlimited funding for independent providers, we are concerned about the financial impediments to the ongoing viability of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander controlled independent education providers. We are especially concerned about the need for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander parents to be able to choose to send their children to an independent school.

Ensuring funding on a secure and stable basis

Many submissions to the Review contained request for funding for specific projects, often of critical local relevance. While not necessarily indicating the extent of need, such requests seem to indicate that funding is either wrongly directed or inadequate. We cannot assess the merits of these individual requests for funding. Where calls for additional funding for a particular need or place have been consistent we have recommended elsewhere in this report that additional funding be provided or that new priorities for the use of existing resources be set.

Much of the evidence complains of complex, and sometimes incomprehensible, funding arrangements. Many comments request funding for specific programs or strategies which are already in place, indicating that many people do not yet have adequate information about the array of programs and services available to them. Perhaps this also reflects the fact that these programs and services have been subject to chronic revision.

We concur with the widespread view put in evidence to us that too much time and funding is being wasted on writing submissions and on what are seen as unnecessarily bureaucratic administrative requirements. We are particularly concerned about the level of minor operational detail required by the Commonwealth under current administrative arrangements. Many respondents put the view that the general lack of coordination and information sharing may mean that valuable resources are being wasted on re-inventing the wheel. The set of administrative principles set out in Recommendation 2 and the establishment of the education
clearinghouse proposed in Recommendation 5 should address many of these concerns. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples’ control of the expenditure of these funds should be maintained by their continued involvement in endorsing strategic plans. It is clear that particular changes to the administration of existing programs could enhance their efficiency without jeopardising either these programs’ objectives or Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples’ aspirations for educational self-determination. We recommend:

The overwhelming impression from submissions and consultations is that many (though not all) problems could be resolved not by the provision of additional funding, but rather by providing existing funds on a secure and stable basis - as a guaranteed entitlement rather than being subject to the unknowns of competitive submission-based arrangements. However some new funding is required to ensure that Commonwealth support for indigenous education is provide on a secure and stable basis.

We recommend:

Recommendation 37

That funds currently provided by the Commonwealth for education for Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islanders and which are used for recurrent purposes (for example, for salaries) be paid as a per capita recurrent grant under financial and educational accountability conditions as apply to other per capita recurrent payments.

A provider’s entitlement to this supplementary recurrent funding to ensure equitable and appropriate educational outcomes for Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islanders should depend on:

- the formal recognition of the provider as an accredited provider of an educational service;
- the number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students enrolled and actively participating in a course of study with the provider at a certain census date, and
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Consultative Group (or another appropriate representative Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander group) endorsement of the education provider’s operational plan.

The per capita amount to be paid for each Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander student should take into account:

- the different costs of providing educational services across sectors of education (preschool, school, vocational, technical and adult education, or higher education);
- the different costs of providing educational services in urban, rural and remote area;
- the level of support available from State and Territory governments, and
- need, recognising that independent Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander controlled providers may lack access to sufficient funds from other sources.

The accountability arrangements for this recurrent funding should:
- for financial accountability, be satisfied by a formal statement that funds were used for the purposes for which they were provided, and
• for educational accountability, be satisfied by reports on the educational outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students endorsed by representatives of the relevant Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and/or organisations.

The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students' educational outcomes data to be reported should be agreed between the Commonwealth, education providers and representatives of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.

Any changes to existing Commonwealth funding arrangements should be contingent on recipients' agreement to:

• revised reporting and monitoring arrangements which simplify financial accountability in return for greater educational accountability;

• the continued and permanent employment of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander education workers, and

• recipients’ commitment to implement the recommendations of this Report relating to staffing policies and practices.

These new arrangements should commence at the beginning of the next funding triennium of the Joint Policy. The Commonwealth should make additional funds available to ensure that existing educational providers do not lose under the new arrangements.

Aboriginal Education Strategic Initiatives Program

There appears to be a great deal of confusion and lack of knowledge at all levels, and especially at the level of local communities, about what AESIP is and does. Indeed, in many cases the terms ‘AEP’ and ‘AESIP’ are used interchangeably. This confusion has made the task of the Review more difficult. We have stressed wherever possible that the Commonwealth’s AESIP program is only one of many Commonwealth contributions to education under the Joint Policy. We have emphasised that the Joint Policy also requires that States and Territories contribute to achieving its goals. As we said earlier in this Report the responsibility for education for all students rests with the States and Territories and that the bulk of the funding for the education of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students in preschool, school and vocational education and training programs is provided by State and Territory Governments, not the Commonwealth.

That confusion becomes particularly apparent in discussions about an Indigenous Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Bureau or some equivalent body. Some view the transfer of AESIP to such a body as equivalent to transferring responsibility for the entirety of education policy to it. While program delivery is the manifestation of policy on the ground, there are many ways in which the administration of programs influences policy. Administering programs is not setting policy.

Views about particular Commonwealth programs

The following summary of evidence about individual Commonwealth programs should be read in the context of these general concerns about Commonwealth support funding. Arguments about the priorities of AESIP also reflect the fact that appropriate strategies for meeting the goals of the Joint Policy are not set out in the policy. They suggest to us that the difficulty lies with the Joint Policy itself, rather than with the program.
Many of the comments about AESIP such as the need for continuity and stability in funding, or for streamlined administrative and accountability procedures, or the need for better ways to exercise self-determination in education, are equally applicable both to other Commonwealth programs and to the educational services funded and delivered by State and Territory and other educational providers. These general issues are taken up in other places in this Report. In fact there were very few concerns raised which related specifically and only to AESIP, except perhaps that it was argued that more Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are needed in positions from which they can advise States and Territories on AESIP funding and priorities. In general, it was thought that AESIP is a vital program but that its priorities (set out in Strategic and Operational Plans) needed to be negotiated more at the grassroots, rather than at State or Territory government level; and that DEET, State and Territory departments and AECGs have exercised too much control over policy development via AESIP; thus marginalising local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander involvement. There is a view that, system-wide, the Joint Policy initiatives may be favoured over initiatives which local groups judge more likely to be successful, and that there should be a better balancing of allocations towards resources for local initiatives.

Despite the tendency to see AESIP as the AEP program, there was considerable concern that supplementary Commonwealth funds are being used for aspects of basic educational provision that should be the responsibility of the States and Territories. In public consultations, there was support for the view that Commonwealth funding should operate as it was originally intended, that is, to supplement, not replace, basic educational provision by State and Territory systems and be used generally for strategic and innovative projects, rather than for recurrent purposes. People in a number of the consultations were of the view that steps should be taken to ensure better identification of State and Territory resources for basic educational provision for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students and programs.

It is clear that many of the general concerns about the state of education for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples might be addressed by making significant changes to AESIP, particularly as a means of establishing good practice in program administration in this area.

**Aboriginal Student Support And Parent Awareness program**

Evidence to the Review consistently showed that there was very strong support for the ASSPA program and, frequently, recognition of the program’s success in making parents feel part of the school community. ASSPA committees are widely regarded as having the potential to make a real contribution to achieving improved educational outcomes and especially increased local control of education programs.

There is considerable support for ASSPA committees having a more significant role not only in administering the program at local level but also more generally in the management of schools and in educational decision-making processes and structures. Given its effectiveness in enabling parents to participate in local educational decision-making, many believe that the ASSPA program should be extended to preschools. The Reference Group agrees with this view and elsewhere in this Report has recommended the extension of ASSPA to the preschool area.

The vital nature of and strong interest in the ASSPA programs is indicated by the fact that ASSPA issues were probably the ones most widely discussed during the course of the Review. There was much debate, conjecture and varying opinion. The following are among the more frequently raised issues.

**The guidelines:** It is argued that ASSPA guidelines, especially those relating to funding,
need to be more flexible and responsive to local needs and circumstances. Annual cycles of funding, which require unspent funds to be returned, place pressure on committees to expend funds to unrealistic deadlines and prevent an accumulation of funds for pressing needs. Because administrative arrangements are so unwieldy, non-indigenous administrators tend to become involved in implementing ASSPA activities. Block funding is seen as an alternative that could assist with administrative demands. Many consider that funding cycles and possibilities for rollover of funds should be reconsidered.

There is often confusion at the local level about what ASSPA funds can reasonably be used for. In some places, it was felt that there should be a tightening up of ASSPA activities, rather than a loosening up. Some people believe that guidelines should focus on kinds of support for students and families which will help to keep students at school, and help them to be successful in school. Others suggested that they might be extended to permit funds to be used towards needed facilities or resource teachers.

Administration: Many people have difficulty with administrative requirements for the program. Some suggestions for improvements were to link ASSPA and ATAS funding arrangements, based on the school census to help reduce paperwork; and to give ASSPA committees responsibility for administering VEGAS and the Sister Schools programs. However there are also concerns that basing ASSPA funding too rigidly on census date figures means that small changes in student numbers can severely disrupt ASSPA funding, especially in small schools.

School principals: There is widespread concern that ASSPA committees are unduly dominated and influenced by school principals, although in some places it was felt that because of the inexperience of ASSPA committee members in many of the matters they encounter, guidance from principals is needed. It was suggested that ASSPA committees would benefit from better liaison between DEET field officers, local representatives of education systems, AEWs and ASSPA committees, and that this may help to balance the influence of school principals in cases where principals were judged to be ‘taking over’. It was also suggested that State and non government systems should provide training for principals in how best to work with ASSPA committees.

In a number of places, the view was expressed that ASSPA committee meetings should be held away from the school because, for some parents, school is seen as a hostile place. Experience in some places has shown that attendance is better when the meetings are held elsewhere.

Use of ASSPA funds: It was argued that ASSPA funds should not be viewed by schools as a global addition to their funding. There is concern that committees are being put under increasing pressure to permit ASSPA money to be used for other purposes. It is considered essential that ASSPA funding should be under the direct control of committees and not vested in schools. There is a widespread view that it would be helpful if ASSPA committees were shown whole-school budgets, so they could make better judgments about how ASSPA funds might best be used to supplement existing provision.

There was some concern about the relationship (sometimes described in terms of a ‘bribe’) between ASSPA funds and school fees - especially where students may be excluded from excursions when school fees are not paid although ASSPA funds cover the cost of these excursions. In some consultations, people believed that it was necessary to emphasise what the program is intended to achieve, and to keep it from being turned into a means of assimilation via education.
Training of ASSPA Committees: Many respondents suggested that committees need additional support and training to deal adequately with some of the tasks now being expected of them. Areas where training was requested included running meetings, making submissions, managing finances and bookkeeping. In the past DEET field officers have provided appropriate support and training for committees, but current staffing restrictions mean there are too few field officers to adequately meet the needs in this area.

Networking of ASSPA Committees: There is widespread support for greater linking of ASSPA committees in local clusters. Respondents called for meetings to encourage exchange of experiences between ASSPA committees and for an ASSPA newsletter to be established. We consider that a pilot study to explore the potential and problems of having a shared ASSPA committee for a cluster of schools could be worthwhile. It was also suggested that some proportion of each ASSPA committee's funding ought to be allocated to local AECGs and that ASSPA committees should be required to work with local AECGs where they exist.

Based on this and other evidence we recommend the following changes:

Recommendation 38

That the Commonwealth further improve its Aboriginal Student Support and Parent Awareness program by:

• more vigorously promoting the fact that:
  - secondary school students are eligible to be members of their school's ASSPA committee, and
  - funds are currently paid directly to ASSPA committees.

• allowing ASSPA funds to meet the institutional fees and charges incurred by committee members undertaking relevant, accredited short courses (for example, bookkeeping) which allow them to both contribute to ASSPA committees and further their own education and training.

• providing complementary program guidelines for school staff setting out the dual purposes of the ASSPA program and promoting the strengthening of links between schools and ASSPA committees. These guidelines should highlight that:
  - ASSPA committees can become an integral part of the partnership between the school, parents and the community,
  - ASSPA funds are supplementary to and do not replace funds provided to the school for general expenditure for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students,
  - providing school budgets to ASSPA committees would assist them to make informed decisions about expenditure based on schools' priorities and planning
  - Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children should not be excluded from school activities on the grounds that their school fees have not been paid,
  - the use of ASSPA funding for school activities is legitimate, and
  - the autonomy of ASSPA committees, and

• encouraging ASSPA committees or groups of ASSPA committees to become incorporated bodies.
Aboriginal Tutorial Assistance Scheme

We note that ATAS is currently under internal review by DEET and believe that all submissions and notes of public consultations relevant to this scheme should be made available to that review, provided the respective individuals or organisations giving evidence to the Review agree.

There is widespread support for ATAS and for Homework Centres: they are widely regarded as an effective means of enhancing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students' participation in school and postschool education. Despite this general approval, however, there are numerous criticisms of the program in practice.

There is concern that the administrative demands of ATAS are excessive, frequently causing substantial delays in getting activities started, then followed by 'endless form filling-in' by both staff and parents when the program is established. This seems to be especially so in the case of Homework Centres. We heard of cases where homework programs are being offered informally and on a voluntary basis because the people involved believed it was too complicated to apply for funding.

One common suggestion for simplifying the administration of the program is to have half-yearly rather than quarterly contracts. Such a procedure fits in more efficiently with a semester system of education which is now followed by the majority of education authorities at all levels. There is considerable support for funding for periods longer than 13 weeks, and for tutors not being required to re-apply for their positions each time.

In the higher education sector there were suggestions for lessening paperwork by instituting a bulk funding arrangement which would allow, for example, tutors to become employees of the university. We were told that currently the bureaucratic overload is deterring students from applying and causing major problems for DEET staff. It is widely believed that the ATAS guidelines for higher education need to be different from those for school students. Small group tutoring arrangements are being instituted where students are studying the same subject and there was criticism that often this kind of arrangement doesn’t work because students within the group can have diverse tutoring requirements.

In a number of places we heard of the need for in-class tutors to assist those students who were most ‘at risk’ of leaving school - the ones who were also least likely to attend Homework Centres. In some parts of the country there are many students who urgently need backup support but they are not getting it. Many people believe that the limit of five hours per week is not sufficient for some students who need more intensive and regular contact. It was thought that there may be benefit in providing funds to allow young people who have been expelled or suspended from school to continue to have access to homework centres, as a way of maintaining their orientation to schooling.

Students in some outback places who are undertaking secondary correspondence courses without the benefit of a teacher also need ATAS support. While ATAS guidelines stipulate that the program is primarily for the tuition of students outside school hours, there can be special circumstances, such as this one, where tutors can be employed during school time. This fact needs to be better publicised. Without such support, students doing these secondary courses are at a great disadvantage.
Homework Centres

Homework Centres are considered to be valuable when the school supports and facilitates their operation, for example, through the provision of a room. DEET officers also play an important part in their setting up and continued operation. Evidence to the Review clearly suggests that without the support of the principal and teaching staff of the school the program will be at risk of failing.

We heard of truancy being minimised on those days when Homework Centres are operating as the students see them as a safe and welcoming places. Others spoke of the importance of providing transport, afternoon tea and good teachers in the successful operation of Centres. It is an area where AEWs can have an important role in getting the students to the Centre and then maintaining links between the school and the family.

In Homework Centres, it was argued that lower staff-student ratios are needed (1:18 or so was regarded as unreasonably high). With many students with significant deficits there is a need for 1:1 tutoring. Others argue that the requirement for a minimum number of students attending in homework centres should be abolished. The requirement that teachers should run homework centres was thought to be too rigid. It was suggested that people other than already busy teachers - youth workers, for example - are also capable of providing appropriate support for homework centres.

Numerous people consider that ASSPA committees could adopt a higher profile in the ATAS scheme. The Review was told that where bulk funding arrangements to ASSPA committees were in place, the process has worked very well. In some consultations, it was argued that ATAS could be managed by ASSPA Committees and that staff should be appointed by local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations.

We expect that the ATAS Review will take up in more detail the issues outlined above and in the mean time we make the following recommendation:

Recommendation 39

That the Commonwealth improve its Aboriginal Tutorial Assistance Scheme by:

- setting a minimum tutor hours entitlement, at two hours per week for primary students, three hours per week for secondary students and four hours per week for technical, further and tertiary education students,

- more vigorously promoting the fact that:
  - tutors without formal teaching qualifications can be employed under special circumstances (for example, in remote areas where such qualified tutors are not available), and
  - tutors can be employed during school hours under special circumstances (for example, where students are studying by correspondence),

- allowing for the employment of tutors where students need general assistance (for example, in study methods) rather than assistance in particular subject areas, and

- allowing for contracts for tutors to be made for longer than 13 weeks in circumstances where a student's continuing need for tutoring is known to extend beyond 13 weeks (for example, secondary school students, university students doing semester and year long courses).
**Vocational and Educational Guidance for Aboriginals Scheme**

VEGAS is a small program amounting to some $1.5m a year and although it received support in many of the comments made in consultations, there was widespread confusion about what VEGAS is and does. A particular concern was expressed about whether it is directed at compulsory or postcompulsory school students.

Among those who had experience of the program or did know about it, there was good support including requests for an expansion and more funding. Some thought that VEGAS could be expanded to include work awareness, not just work experience, especially in areas where relevant and appropriate work experience is not readily available. It was suggested that the program could usefully be augmented by local registers of possible work experience placements.

Some concern was expressed that VEGAS rewards equally those who do and those who don’t work hard at school; it was thought that students should have to earn the right to participate in VEGAS-sponsored trips, and that such trips should occur in school vacations, not during term-time. We recommend the following changes to the program to make it more effective:

**Recommendation 40**

*That the Commonwealth improve its Vocational Education and Guidance for Aboriginals Scheme by more vigorously promoting:*

- the program to schools early in the school year;
- the use of funds for school based activities raising understanding of the range of postschool options and work awareness, and
- the fact that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander education support units in technical and further education institutions, universities and other postschool education institutions are eligible to apply for funding.

**Doing business with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples:**

*Issues for service delivery*

It is far beyond the scope of this Review to analyse the vast volume of literature which exists on public administration in general and on the move to client focused service delivery and case management in particular. Even so, it is clear that what has emerged over the course of the Review makes an important contribution to these debates.

Our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander ‘clients’ are telling us that the debates around client service and case management are in many ways misleading. ‘Clients’ are not uniform; no one form of service delivery is likely to meet the needs of all clients and this is demonstrably and particularly the case in relation to provision of education for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. Equally, clients are not ‘cases’, they are people. They have idiosyncratic but profoundly human needs in this domain - to have better information, to be treated with respect, to have the big picture.

What has become clear in the course of this Review is that the educational experiences of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, like all people, are shaped by the interactions they have with individuals as well as with systems or structures.

This point is most clearly echoed in the many calls, not just for more DEET field officers, but for particular, ‘good’, DEET field officers to return to positions from which they have been
removed as a consequence of bureaucratic restructuring. Frequent references were made to the inability of DEET field officers to provide adequate levels of support because of the many demands on their time.

In almost all consultations, it was strongly suggested that more DEET field officers should be appointed to go out into communities to discuss how best to respond to local needs. Many people thought that greater levels of administrative support for DEET programs in the field would be appropriate, perhaps provided by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people (and perhaps in an agent system similar to that adopted by the Department of Social Security). This would assist DEET field officers to work more strategically instead of being bogged down with paperwork.

The guidelines and structures of programs run under the auspices of the Joint Policy were perceived by many as 'changing continually' - this chronic revision is an enduring source of frustration to those offering or wanting to offer programs at the local level. Continuity of programs and funding is seen as essential to the steady development of education.

Excessive paperwork in the local administration of programs is commonly seen as a barrier to operational success at the local level, especially in ASSPA and ATAS. This is particularly the case for smaller communities and for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander controlled institutions. They are at a disadvantage in applying for program funds because, for example, they have fewer resources to divert to preparing strong submissions. There was widespread support for simplifying and streamlining submission and acquittal procedures.

There is also strong support for triennial funding which permits more strategic planning and use of resources. In particular, it was suggested that it would help if strategies were developed to ensure continuing funding for programs that have proven to be successful. Financial year funding would be preferred to calendar year funding by a number of those at public consultations.

Many submissions and consultations expressed the view that too much of the supplementary Commonwealth funding is seen as being absorbed in program administration - for example, in head office based jobs. Administrators at State and Territory level were sometimes perceived as out of contact with local and community program concerns and providers, and to be addressing system issues not necessarily felt to be pressing at the local level. It should be noted, however, that there was almost universal support for DEET field officers, who are generally regarded as being more responsive to local needs, and frequent calls for additional field staff to be made available.

We have become aware of many perceptions about an apparent lack of communication between the Department's National Office and its local staff. Many of the issues raised about DEET programs and their lack of flexibility for local circumstances might be readily resolved if there was more consistency between the intentions of the policies (and the limits on their flexibility) at national level, and the way the guidelines are applied on the ground.

We are concerned that lack of information or misleading impressions about DEET programs are quite common. For example, a frequently raised issue is the supposed necessity for the principals to co-sign cheques on behalf of ASSPA committees. This is not, and has never been, a requirement of the ASSPA program and yet this belief prevails, leading many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to feel patronised and protected. Many people present at consultations felt inadequately informed about programs and guidelines, and indeed about the details of the Joint Policy itself, and were uncertain about how to get further information.
The evidence presented to us also highlights the need for a set of principles to underpin the way in which agencies do business with Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islanders. We believe that the application of these principles will not only enhance program delivery from the client’s perspective but will also increase the efficiency and effectiveness of agencies. We recommend:

Recommendation 41

That all educational service providers, including the Commonwealth Department of Employment, Education and Training, adopt the following principles in relation to the administration of programs supporting education for Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islanders:

- the most accessible and widely available information to ensure the community knows of and understands its entitlements,
- the longest possible advance notice of any changes in administrative arrangements,
- the simplest possible application forms, requiring the minimum amount of information to effect efficient program delivery,
- the simplest possible acquittal procedures,
- the least possible delay in answering questions, processing applications or making payments, and
- the earliest possible notification and payment of entitlements.

We strongly believe that any changes to the internal structure of agencies administering educational policies, programs and services for Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islanders should be invisible to the people who receive them. Improvement in the quality of service to clients is what matters; how this is achieved should be of much less concern. We have therefore been surprised by the many frank comments made in evidence presented to us about the internal organisational structure of DEET and about other agencies providing education for Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islanders. We have taken these comments as an indication that the quality of service provided by these agencies is not ideal.

We note that the DEET’s Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Units are currently under internal review and believe that all submissions and notes of public consultations relevant to these Units should be made available to that review, provided the respective individuals or organisations giving evidence to the Review agree. We recommend:

Recommendation 42

That the Commonwealth Department of Employment, Education and Training improve the quality of its service to Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islanders by:

- recognising that staff are expected by the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities they work in to be familiar with the broad details of programs across the employment, education and training portfolio, and, in some cases, across all Commonwealth portfolios, and providing adequate staff training and development so that they are able to meet these expectations,
- maintaining Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Units as discrete structures responsible, through the Area structure, to one National officer,
• recognising the links between education and employment by ensuring that the roles and responsibilities of the Department’s Remote Area Field Service and its Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Units are coordinated through Aboriginal Strategies Branches in Area Offices,

• locating responsibility for policy for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander education (across all education sectors), direct assistance and income support in one National Office organisational unit, and

• basing the administrative and staffing resource allocation for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Units on a formula which takes into account both the administrative requirements of the programs they administer and the strong preference expressed by Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islanders to do business face-to-face and in environments where they are most comfortable.

At least in part, the confusion and uncertainty about education that appears to exist in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities may be attributable to a lack of continuity in staffing in the key agencies providing education for Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islanders. To meet this concern the Reference Group recommends:

**Recommendation 43**

*That the Commonwealth appoint a senior executive, with appropriate support, to oversee the implementation of the recommendations of this Report, at least until such time as the body proposed in Recommendation 4 is established.*

We are also concerned to ensure that the process of evaluation of programs towards achieving the goals of the Joint Policy continues. A number of the positive developments which have occurred over the last two years may be a consequence of the fact of the Review’s existence. We see value in maintaining this watchdog role and we recommend:

**Recommendation 44**

*That education for Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islanders be reviewed again from the year 2001.*

*The Report of that Review should be presented to governments by the end of the year 2002.*

**Conclusions on Resources and Needs**

There is confusion and lack of knowledge at all levels and especially at the local level, about what AESIP is and does and, while there were very few concerns relating specifically to AESIP, it is clear that many of the general concerns might be addressed by establishing good practice in program administration in this area.

We believe that it is important that funding of programs to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people is provided on a secure and stable basis and we have recommended changes to the administration of existing programs. We think that these changes will enhance the programs’ efficiency without jeopardising either program objectives or Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples’ aspirations for educational self-determination.

The ASSPA program attracted a great deal of comment, most of it positive. It is seen as one of the major successes of the AEP by many people, and we consider its extension to preschools
would be worthwhile. However there are a number of areas about which people expressed concern and as a result we have recommended some changes to the program. Similarly ATAS and VEGAS are viewed as highly beneficial programs that could operate significantly better with relatively minor changes to process and better promotion of their administrative procedures and program objectives.

The educational experiences of Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islanders, like all people, are shaped by the interactions they have with individuals as well as with systems or structures. This point is made most clearly in the many calls, not just for more Commonwealth education field officers, but for particular, 'good', field officers to return to particular places. In response to such criticisms we have recommended changes to the administration of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Units and propose the use of a set of principles for the delivery of programs to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people that will improve the efficiency and effectiveness of those programs.

In other parts of this Report we have made recommendations for additional funding to meet identified gaps in need for education for Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islanders. Recommendations 37 to 42 are designed to improve the way existing resources are managed and to enhance program efficiency and effectiveness. We are concerned to ensure that the process we have undertaken in reviewing education for Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islanders continues (Recommendations 43 and 44).
6. A SCHEDULE OF NECESSITY

The Joint Policy already embraces a range of strategies to achieve its goals. These strategies have different specific objectives, involve different groups of people, respond to different needs, and have different administrative and staffing support arrangements. Evidence presented to us emphasises that uncertainty and confusion exists about all of these strategies to improve Indigenous education.

There is a clear call for greater stability and certainty in policy, programs and practices in the future. On the other hand, the evidence heard by the Review also demonstrates that change is warranted. Taken together, these two views suggest that an evolutionary, rather than a revolutionary, approach to change should be adopted.

We have adopted a set of principles which, we believe, should underpin any future work undertaken under the auspices of the Joint Policy. These five principles - educational self-determination, diversity, subsidiarity, affiliation and efficiency - have guided our work and we believe they are manifest in the recommendations of this Report.

We believe that the proposals set out under Involvement and Self-determination are the critical next steps in the movement to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples’ educational self-determination. We have recommended some improvements to existing structures for educational self-determination and the establishment of new bodies to assist this process. We have suggested reforms to the education industry and in particular to its staffing policies and practices. The quality of educational services is critically dependent on the skills, knowledge and attitudes of the people who deliver them.

We are concerned that some people still do not have access, particularly local access, to the educational services available to other Australians. Under Equitable Access we have recommended new funds, for capital and for the trialing and support of alternative educational technologies, to address this problem.

Under Raising Participation we have recommended the continuation of initiatives known to be effective in raising Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children’s participation especially in preschool education. We have proposed a number of new initiatives to encourage increased participation in technical and further education, adult and community education and higher education.

Equitable and Appropriate Outcomes sets out proposals which, we believe, will lead to better outcomes from education, such as intensive English language tuition and other English as a second language services to improve English literacy attainment levels; further improvements in curricula for both Indigenous and non-indigenous students, and special measures to improve the educational experiences of young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander boys and men. We believe that the direction of the assistance given to all Australians under the Commonwealth’s Working Nation strategy to Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islanders will be of positive benefit in enhancing the employment outcomes of their education.

We are deeply concerned by the lack of information about what has and has not been achieved in education for Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islanders. The recommendations made under Reporting, Monitoring and Evaluation indicate the data still needed to inform policy decisions and specify the means by which the data might be collected. Other recommendations identify research priorities and seek new funds to pilot new ideas which we consider will progress the achievement of the goals of the Joint Policy.

Resources and Needs identifies a number of improvements needed to existing Commonwealth
programs of assistance for education, proposes a feasibility study on an Indigenous university, and sets out administrative principles and practices which, we believe, will improve the way business is done with Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islanders. It also proposes interim arrangements for overseeing the implementation of our recommendations and sets the immediate timetable for the next review of education for Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islanders.

We are realistic about achieving the goals of the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Policy. We believe that the recommendations made in this Report are readily amenable to action by governments and other educational service providers. Some of the recommendations can be implemented unilaterally by particular agencies; others require cooperation and negotiation between agencies. Some can be implemented immediately and at little cost; others require longer lead times to ensure that Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islanders understand and endorse the recommended changes and to ensure that adequate funds are available to implement the recommendation.

At its meeting in November 1994 the Ministerial Council on Employment, Education, Training and Youth Affairs on which the Commonwealth and all States and Territories are members agreed to develop a National Strategy for the Education of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples to complement the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Policy. The Ministerial Council set up a Taskforce to develop this Strategy. We believe that the implementation of those recommendations of this Report which require cooperative effort between Commonwealth, State and Territory agencies is best pursued through the Ministerial Council Taskforce.

Prime Minister Keating, addressing the New Educational Realities Conference in Melbourne on 15 June 1994, described the Commonwealth’s agenda in education as:

less... a vision than a schedule of necessity - the series of things we need to do, must do and can do.

His words are particularly apt for education for Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islanders and, taken together, our recommendations are a schedule of necessity. The conclusion of the story of the painting adorning the cover of this report is prophetic:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Watjanilatja:</th>
<th>Conclusion:</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Walungurralakampa yanangu tjuta kuulaku nintirringkula mayutju nyinaku. Palunyatjanu pipirri tjuta kuulangka tjarrparru nintilingkurriku walypalakunu wangkaku kaljaku, yanangukunu, ngurraku walytjaku, tulkuku, tjukurrpatutara. Walypala kuultitji mayutju kuulangka nyinanyingka, pipirri tjuta tjana ngurra kutu nyinaku.</td>
<td>At Walungurru the yanangu people now know about schools - they are going to control their own school. With yanangu people in charge the children will be able to come to school and learn properly, learn both walypala language and culture, and yanangu culture and tradition. If the walypala remain solely in charge, our children will not learn properly at all.</td>
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</table>
Australia is at a critical moment of hope and promise in the tasks of achieving educational equity for Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islanders and reconciliation between Australia’s Indigenous and non-indigenous peoples. It is a moment in which we can all act to make a better future and to achieve new partnerships, recognising and respecting the heritage of all Australians.

Individually, each of our proposals offers a small step towards equity and reconciliation in and through education for Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islanders. Combined, they are a systematic and powerful strategy to provide better educational policies and practices for Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islanders. In Yolngu:

| Gurtha nhara methuthu ganumbali djarritjuntjun baykandjarri bunuwarra mayku nharana dhiyalkthiyalk yalala butthun dhurrkuma wangangura, gukula waritj nunungitj rilmija |
| The sacred fire is burning; the tongues of the fire set alight the tree of knowledge. The sparks will fly across the land in this country we call Australia. |
7. APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1

National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Policy

Long-term goals for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education

Involvement of Aboriginal people in educational decision-making

1. To establish effective arrangements for the participation of Aboriginal parents and community members in decisions regarding the planning, delivery and evaluation of pre-school, primary and secondary education services for their children.

2. To increase the number of Aboriginal people employed as educational administrators, teachers, curriculum advisers, teachers assistants, home-school liaison officers and other education workers, including community people engaged in teaching of Aboriginal culture, history and contemporary society, and Aboriginal languages.

3. To establish effective arrangements for the participation of Aboriginal students and community members in decisions regarding the planning, delivery and evaluation of post-school education services, including technical and further education colleges and higher education institutions.

4. To increase the number of Aboriginal people employed as administrators, teachers, researchers and student services officers in technical and further education colleges and higher education institutions.

5. To provide education and training services to develop the skills of Aboriginal people to participate in educational decision-making.

6. To develop arrangements for the provision of independent advice for Aboriginal communities regarding educational decisions at regional, State, Territory and National levels.

Equality of access to educational services

7. To ensure that Aboriginal children of pre-primary school age have access to pre-school services on a basis comparable to that available to other Australian children of the same age.

8. To ensure that all Aboriginal children have local access to primary and secondary schooling.

9. To ensure equitable access for Aboriginal people to post-compulsory secondary schooling, to technical and further education, and higher education.

Equity of educational participation

10. To achieve the participation of Aboriginal children in pre-school education for a period similar to that for all Australian children.

11. To achieve the participation of all Aboriginal children in compulsory schooling.

12. To achieve the participation of Aboriginal people in post-compulsory secondary education, in technical and further education, and in higher education, at rates commensurate with those of all Australians in those sectors.

Equitable and appropriate educational outcomes

13. To provide adequate preparation of Aboriginal children through pre-school education for the schooling years ahead.

14. To enable Aboriginal attainment of skills to the same standard as other Australian students throughout the compulsory schooling years.

15. To enable Aboriginal students to attain the successful completion of Year 12 or equivalent at the same rates as for other Australian students.

16. To enable Aboriginal students to attain the same graduation rates from award courses in technical and further education, and in higher education, as for other Australians.

17. To develop programs to support the maintenance and continued use of Aboriginal languages.
18. To provide community education services which enable Aboriginal people to develop the skills to manage the development of their communities.

19. To enable the attainment of proficiency in English language and numeracy competencies by Aboriginal adults with limited or no educational experience.

20. To enable Aboriginal students at all levels of education to have an appreciation of their history, cultures and identity.

21. To provide all Australian students with an understanding of and respect for Aboriginal traditional and contemporary cultures.

APPENDIX 2

National Review of Education for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples -

National Reference Group

Mr Mandawuy Yunupingu (Chair)  
Ms Romina Fujii (Deputy Chair)  
Ms Hilda Kickett  
Ms Colleen Hayward  
Mr Gerry Moore  
Mr Lionel Bamberlett

Term of Reference

Against the goals of the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Policy (AEP), to examine the effectiveness of strategies developed through the first triennium of the Policy, the outcomes achieved and the extent of unmet need; and develop subsequent strategies in terms of:

1. ensuring Aboriginal involvement in educational decision making and delivery of education services;
2. providing equality of access for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to education services;
3. raising the rates of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander participation in education to those for all Australians;
4. achieving equitable and appropriate educational outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people while acknowledging traditional and contemporary cultural differences, including gender issues;
5. ensuring appropriate reporting, monitoring and evaluation procedures for the use of funds provided in support of the AEP; and
6. examining allocations, distribution and management of resources for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander education and compatibility of these resource allocations with needs.
APPENDIX 3

Guidelines for submission to the National Review of Education for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples

Submissions are being invited from providers of education, Aboriginal Education Consultative Groups, and all interested persons and organisations.

Submissions addressing the Terms of Reference [set out in Appendix 2 of the Discussion Paper] are sought, including comments on any or all of the following:

a) views on the current state of progress in Aboriginal education and transition to the labour market, and any information which would assist the Review in analysing reasons for the state of progress against the educational goals of the AEP, in terms of improved access, participation and outcomes, together with any reports/evidence/research/data etc. to support such views;

b) views on successful educational and other strategies, including those seen as 'good practice' during the first triennium 1990-92 of the AEP by providers and education systems (preschool, school, technical and further education, adult and community education, higher education), or by Aboriginal Education Consultative Groups, or others, together with any reports/evidence/research/data etc. which documents their effectiveness;

c) proposals for strategies for improving educational attainment, particularly in the early compulsory years of schooling; such strategies should address the wide diversity of aspirations and community positions on such issues as the value and relevance of mainstream school achievement;

d) suggestions on the place of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies in curriculum;

e) proposals for priorities in developing culturally responsive pedagogy to acknowledge the diversity of learning styles, needs and values of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, paying particular attention to students' needs in literacy;

f) proposals for priorities in developing culturally responsive teacher education - preservice and inservice - in areas which address the provision of educational experiences which are appropriate to the learning styles, needs and values of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, including the implications for curriculum delivery;

g) priority strategies for improving rural and remote area education at all levels, including ways of ensuring the provision and retention of experienced teachers for Aboriginal education who are appropriately qualified and able to meet the needs of Aboriginal students in the terms of (e) and (f) above;

h) views on the contributions made by Aboriginal Education Workers and ways of increasing their effectiveness in terms of improving progress in Aboriginal education;

i) views on the effectiveness of any of the various Commonwealth and State programs which contribute to the achievement of the goals of the AEP, including any proposals for improvements in their effectiveness, particularly the Aboriginal Student Support and Parent Awareness Program, the Aboriginal Tutorial Assistance Scheme, the Vocational and Educational Guidance for Aboriginals Scheme, and ABSTUDY;

j) priority proposals for development of new sector-specific or system-wide educational or other strategies by providers;

k) priority strategies by Aboriginal Education Consultative Groups with any projections of the extent of educational progress that should be achievable; and

l) priority proposals for investigation and research in the immediate and medium term into priority areas for improvements in Aboriginal education.

Against each of the areas identified in (a) to (l) above, comments are invited in regard to action at the national or State and Territory or local/institutional level as well as any proposals for cooperative/collaborative/joint strategies between States/systems/providers.

The Review shall be at liberty to use and apply each submission as it may consider appropriate in responding to the Terms of Reference.
Appendix 4

Commonwealth Support Programs for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Students

The Commonwealth aims to strengthen Australia's schools by assisting schools and systems in providing education services of the highest quality under a range of programs designed to:

- prepare students for life in general and for full participation in society, including participation in a skilled and adaptable workforce;
- promote equity both within schools and within society more generally;
- maximise school retention, especially among those groups which currently have low retention;
- maximise the competence, efficiency and confidence of teachers through inservice teacher training, improved career paths for teachers and other means;
- facilitate the transition of students from primary to secondary schooling, from one school system to another and from schooling to further education and training and employment, and to better inform them about the range of options available, and
- provide better feedback on schooling to parents, students, teachers, employers and the general community.

More information about Commonwealth schools program can be found in Commonwealth Programs for School - Administrative Guidelines, published each year. Listed below are its programs that assist all students at all levels of education. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students are a proportion of these students.

Schools General Recurrent Grants

Some $2 billion a year is provided for general recurrent support. In the government sector a flat rate is paid per student, depending on whether the student is in primary ($319 per year in 1994) or secondary ($472 per year) education. In the non-government sector funding is allocated on the basis of need with rates varying in 1994 from $423 per year for primary students in less needy schools to $2,550 per year for secondary students in the most needy schools. The program recognises that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community schools may not generate private funds in the same way as most other schools (that is, mostly from charging fees). The enrolment criteria and the level of funding restrictions for new Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community schools are less strict than those applying for other schools.

Schools Capital Grants Program

The Capital Grants Program provides capital funds of just over $300 million a year to government and non-government school authorities to improve educational outcomes in schools catering for students from disadvantaged socio-economic backgrounds, students with disabilities and students with special needs for social justice reasons. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander independent education providers can receive funding under both the General Element of the program and the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Support Element.

National Equity Program for Schools

The National Equity Program for Schools (NEPS) provides some $270 million each year, targeting assistance to those students most disadvantaged in the schooling systems. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students are a NEPS target group, as are those who live in poverty or isolation. NEPS payments to the States and non-government sectors are subject to annual agreements which provide for funding decisions to be taken as close to
the students as possible and in consultation with the community. Schools authorities have agreed to work towards quite detailed reporting of the outcomes achieved by disadvantaged students compared with those not targeted by the program.

**National Professional Development Program**

The National Professional Development Program provides some $20 million annually, recognising that the role teachers play is central to all outcomes in education. By definition, the best possible outcomes are directly related to the quality of teachers. This in turn is a product of preservice training, continuing professional development and personal values and attitudes.

In 1994 the Commonwealth has made special provision under the program for a number of projects which are directly relevant to education for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people:

- a project to develop a teacher training and development package to support the implementation of Aboriginal Studies in the school curriculum;
- a project to provide professional development for teachers of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages;
- a project to provide professional development for English teachers working with students who speak Aboriginal English, and
- a project to develop inservice training material for mathematics teachers teaching Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students in remote areas.

**Curriculum Development Projects Program**

The Curriculum Development Projects Program has supported a range of school curriculum initiatives in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander studies. Between 1991 and 1993 the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies Project has produced a number of documents including Principles and Guidelines for Aboriginal Studies and Torres Strait Islander Studies and Aboriginal Studies and Torres Strait Islander Studies: A Resource Guide for Schools. Further work to develop teaching and learning materials in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander studies across the curriculum based on the curriculum statements and profiles for Australian schools is currently under way.

**Assistance for Isolated Children**

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students who are studying below secondary level and who are aged 14 years can receive financial assistance under the Assistance for Isolated Children Scheme if they study by correspondence or live away from home because of distance or disability.

**Aboriginal Education Assistance**

Funds under this element have been used to advance the National Reconciliation and Schooling Strategy. The range of projects undertaken included the Sister Schools Scheme; the Local History Kit; the Australia Today Series: Aboriginal Australians and the Torres Strait Islanders; the Review and Survey of Best Practice in teaching Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander studies and the Aboriginal Education Worker’s survey.

The element has also funded the Australian Education Union to undertake a research project examining the terms and conditions under which Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander education workers are employed. The final report of the project, launched by Minister Free on 3 August 1994 contains recommendations about career paths, conditions of service, training needs and the roles and responsibilities of these workers. This report is discussed in more detail elsewhere in this Report.

**Aboriginal Education Strategic Initiatives Program**

The Aboriginal Education Strategic Initiatives Program (AESIP) provides some $85 million annually in supplementary funds to government, non-government, independent Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community education providers and Aboriginal Education Consultative Groups specifically for initiatives which will achieve progress towards the long term goals of the Joint Policy.

State and Territory Strategic Plans agreed with the Commonwealth set out the broad priorities, strategies and links needed to give effect to the goals of the Joint Policy. The Joint Policy requires that Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander communities be involved in the development of Strategic Plans, through AEHCs. Grants are made subject to the Commonwealth’s approval of three year Operational Plans. The Plans must be
consistent with State and Territory Strategic Plans for each funding triennium agreed with the Commonwealth. The Operational Plans are the basis for direct negotiations about the level of funding to be made available to providers over the funding triennium.

ABSTUDY

The scheme provides means-tested income support and other financial assistance to enable students to complete secondary education and progress to tertiary education. Assistance is available to students of any age undertaking full-time secondary studies at school, TAFE or adult secondary colleges. Assistance is also available for attendance at primary school if the student is 14 years of age or older on 1 January in the year of study. Assistance is also available to students undertaking approved tertiary courses on a full or part-time basis which are offered by higher education institutions, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander colleges and some private providers.

Aboriginal Tutorial Assistance Scheme

The Aboriginal Tutorial Assistance Scheme (ATAS) provides supplementary tutorial assistance to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students in primary, secondary, postschooling and tertiary education. Under the scheme, tuition is provided either on a one-to-one or group tutorial basis. Homework Centres are also funded under the scheme to provide an alternative study environment where the home environment is not conducive to study. In 1992-93 some 57,000 students were assisted under the scheme. Over seven hundred Homework Centres were funded.

Vocational And Educational Guidance For Aboriginals Scheme

The Vocational and Educational Guidance for Aboriginals Scheme (VEGAS) provides about $1.5 million each year for one-off projects aimed at creating an awareness of education and vocational options in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander school students and their parents. Projects targeted at communities in remote areas are encouraged. Currently, projects funded under the scheme include major career expositions for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander secondary students and their parents, camps aimed at imparting study skills and excursions to universities and TAFE colleges.

Aboriginal Student Support And Parent Awareness Program

The Aboriginal Student Support and Parent Awareness (ASSPA) program has the aim of involving Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in educational decision making processes and so increase participation and retention rates in education.

Funds ($100 each year for each primary student and $200 each year for each secondary student) are provided on a per capita basis to urban and rural school-based committees of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander parents. Committees in remote areas receive higher rates of funding than those in non-remote localities ($150 each year for primary and $300 each year for secondary student). Funds must be used for activities aimed at increasing the participation and retention of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students in education. Projects aimed at influencing curricula at the local level and cultural awareness activities are encouraged. Currently some 2,900 committees operate at primary and secondary schools around the country involving some 10,000 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander parents. While the expertise of committees varies, some training is provided to equip committees with the skills to help them become more effective.
**APPENDIX 5**

List of submissions from individuals and organisations

*List of submissions from individuals*

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>NSW</th>
<th>Mr M Donovan, Merewether</th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ms B Stewart, Sunshine</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Ms L Taylor, Moree</td>
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<td>VIC</td>
<td>Ms J Hall, Kerang</td>
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<td>Ms J Phillips, Ballarat</td>
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<td>Ms V Robinson, Clayton</td>
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<td>QLD</td>
<td>Mrs G Andrew, Bakers Creek</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Mr R Bowen &amp; Mr N Hewett, Hope Vale via Cooktown</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Mr P Brady, Brisbane</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Mr J Bristo, Grunumba</td>
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<td>Ms R Collins, Ms S Bach &amp; Ms J Alcorn, Inala</td>
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<td>Mr D Feehely, Meringandan</td>
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<td>Ms J Herbert, Proserpine</td>
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<td>Mr B Knight, Ingham</td>
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<td>Ms K Lakatos, Cairns</td>
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<td>Ms W Ludwig, Cairns</td>
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<td>Mr M Luker, Brisbane</td>
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<td>Ms H Mc Cann, Hervey Bay</td>
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<td>Mr R Pastourel, Caravonica</td>
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<td>Ms D Savage, Ms C Stanley, Ms R Solomon, &amp; Ms V Lenay, Townsville</td>
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<td>Mr R Whittaker, Mt Isa</td>
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<td>SA</td>
<td>Prof C Bourke, Underdale</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Mr D Calope, Ms D Henley, &amp; Mr L Altman, Elizabeth</td>
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<td>Mr G Moodie, Norwood</td>
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<td>WA</td>
<td>Mr D Bates, Maylands</td>
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<td>Mr L Colley, Jigalong, via Newman</td>
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<td>Mr C Wyatt, Perth</td>
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<td>Ms S Foster, Sandy Bay</td>
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<td>ACT</td>
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<td>Ms A Finlay, Mr H Lowe, Ms A Purdon, Mr I Stewart &amp; Mr E White, Batchelor</td>
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Ms L Lewis, via Darwin
Ms E Mason, Casuarina
Ms R Marika, Ms D Banyawarra, Ms D Gondarra, Ms N Dhurrkay,
Ms T Puruntatameri, Ms Y Gurruwiwiw, Mr S Garling, Ms P Batumbil,
Ms G Warmnirrirr, & Ms E Gorrawatjiwuy, Batchelor
Mr I Stewart, Batchelor
Mr L White & Ms R Marika-Mununggiritj, Yirrkala
Stage 4 Diploma of Teaching Students From Batchelor College, Batchelor

In addition there were four anonymous submissions to the AEP Review

**List of submissions from individual schools, colleges and TAFE**

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<th>State</th>
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<td>Yiyili Aboriginal Community School, Fitzroy Crossing</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Hedland College, Port Hedland (joint submission with the following three colleges)</td>
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<td>Kalgoorlie College, Kalgoorlie</td>
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<td>ACT</td>
<td>Canberra Institute of Technology, Canberra</td>
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<td>NT</td>
<td>Blackstone Remote School, Papulankutja, via Alice Springs</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Institute For Aboriginal Development Inc, (joint submission with</td>
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<td>Tangentyere Council &amp; Central Australian Aboriginal Congress), Alice Springs</td>
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**List of submissions from organisations and peak organisations**

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<tr>
<td>NSW</td>
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<td>Audiological Society of Australia, Carlingford</td>
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<td>Catholic Education Commission, Sydney</td>
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<td>Cowra ASSPA Committee, Cowra</td>
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<td>Group Training Australia, Sydney</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Illawarra Children's Cultural Resource Unit Inc, Wollongong</td>
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<td>Minimbah Local Aboriginal Education Consultative Group, Gateshead</td>
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<td>NSW &amp; ACT Aboriginal Higher Education Network, Lismore</td>
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VIC
National Tertiary Education Industry Union, South Melbourne
Council of Australian Postgraduate Associations Incorporated, Melbourne
The Association of Heads of Independent Schools of Australia, Jolimont
Australian Association of Speech and Hearing, Melbourne
Australian Council For Educational Research, Camberwell
Australian Education Union, South Melbourne
Catholic Education Commission of Victoria, East Melbourne
Education Committee, Synod of Victoria, the Uniting Church in Australia, Mooroolbark

QLD
Hinchinbrook Branch, Queensland Teachers Union, Ingham
Queensland Catholic Education Commission, Brisbane
Torres Strait Islander Education Consultative Committee, Thursday Island
Cape York and Gulf of Carpentaria Principals' Association, Gununa

SA
Dover Gardens Primary School ASSPA / MCE Committee, Dover Gardens
SA Independent Schools Board, Malvern
South Australian Secondary Principals Association, Adelaide
Australian Secondary Principals' Association, Adelaide
National Centre For Vocational Education Research Ltd, Leabrook
Catholic Education Office, Thebarton
Wilija Program (Anangu), c/- Woodville High School, Woodville

WA
Catholic Education Office of Western Australia, Leederville
Kimberley Land Council, Derby
WA Aboriginal Independent Community Schools Support Unit (additional to and through the National Council of Independent Schools' Association), Perth

TAS
Tasmanian Aboriginal Centre Inc, Hobart

ACT
National Catholic Education Commission, Braddon
Archdiocese of Canberra and Goulburn, Catholic Education Office, Manuka
National Council of Independent Schools' Associations, Deakin
Australian Early Childhood Association Inc, Watson
Australian Library and Information Association, Canberra
The National Languages and Literacy Institute of Australia, Deakin
Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies, Canberra
National National Federation of Aboriginal Education Consultative Groups, Canberra
Australian Mining Industry Council, Canberra

NT
Hodgson River School Council & ASSPA Committee, via Katherine
Papunya Community Council, Papunya
Catholic Education Centre, Darwin
Jabiru ASSPA Committee, Jabiru
Jilkinggan School Council, via Katherine
Feppi, NT Aboriginal Education Consultative Group, Darwin
Australian Education Union, NT Branch, Darwin
NT Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Educators Association, Darwin

List of submissions from government departments and authorities

NSW
Ministry of Education and Youth Affairs, Sydney
Department of School Education, Sydney
NSW TAFE Commission, Sydney
Board of Studies, Sydney
Office of Youth Affairs, Sydney

VIC
Directorate of School Education, Melbourne
Curriculum Corporation, Carlton
QLD
Department of Education, Brisbane
Department of Family Services and Aboriginal and Islander Affairs, Brisbane
Department of Employment, Vocational Education, Training and Industrial Relations, Brisbane
Vocational Education, Training and Employment Commission, Brisbane
Australian National Training Authority, Brisbane
North Queensland Area Office, DEET, Townsville

SA
Children's Services Office, Department for Education and Children's Services, Adelaide
The Aboriginal Education Unit, Department for Education and Children's Services, Enfield

WA
Moora District Education Office, Education Department of Western Australia, Moora
Education Department of Western Australia, East Perth
Area Central Student Assistance Centre, DEET, Perth
Area South Office, DEET, Applecross

TAS
Curriculum Services Branch, Department of Education and the Arts, Hobart

ACT
ACT Department of Education & Training, Canberra
National Board of Employment, Education and Training, Canberra
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission, Canberra
Department of Employment, Education & Training, Canberra

NT
Northern Territory Department of Education, Darwin

List of submissions from universities

NSW
Australian Catholic University, Sydney
University of New South Wales, Kensington
Centre For Australian Indigenous Studies Education and Research, University of Technology Sydney, Broadway
Aboriginal Education Centre, University of Sydney

VIC
Institute of Koorie Education, Deakin University, Geelong
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Committee, La Trobe University, Bundoora
University of Melbourne, Parkville

QLD
James Cook University of North Queensland, Townsville
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Unit, Queensland University of Technology, Brisbane
School of Social Science, Queensland University of Technology, Carseldine
Faculty of Education, Queensland University of Technology, Kelvin Grove
Faculty of Law, Queensland University of Technology, Brisbane
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies Unit, the University of Queensland, Brisbane

SA
National Centre For Education and Training on Addiction, the Flinders University of South Australia, Bedford Park
Faculty of Aboriginal and Islander Studies, Aboriginal and Islander Study Centre, University of South Australia, Port Lincoln
The University of Adelaide

WA
Curtin University of Technology, Perth
Edith Cowan University, Perth

ACT
University of Canberra

NT
Batchelor College, Batchelor
Centre For Aboriginal and Islander Studies, Northern Territory University, Casuarina
Access and Equity Sub-committee, Education Faculty, Northern Territory University, Casuarina
**List of exhibits submitted to the Review**

(Listed according to state of origin of submission, which may differ from state in which published)

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- **Shaping Australia's Future: It's Time to Teach the Teachers Aboriginal Studies and Torres Strait Islander Studies**, paper by Ms R Craven, 1993.
- **Aboriginal Communities and Negotiation: Our Respective Roles within the Education Sector**, Transcript of Speech by the Hon V Chadwick, February 1994.
- **Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Recruitment & Career Development Strategy**, University of New South Wales, 1993.
- **Aboriginal Careers Scheme**, University of New South Wales, 1992.

**VIC**
- **Negotiating Document for Workers in Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander Higher Education**, National Tertiary Education Industry Union, 1994.
- **Census of Non-government Schools, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Students**, Catholic Education Commission of Victoria, 1993.
- **Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Policy**, Australian Education Union, Melbourne, 1993.

**QLD**
- **RATEP as a Model for Professional Development**, paper by Mr P Brady, 1993.
- **The Implications of the Remote Area Teacher Education Program (RATEP) for Tertiary Distance Education**, paper by Ms P Santo & Mr P Brady, 1992.
- **Case Study: Technology and Teacher Education; a Study of the Remote Teacher Education Programme**, paper by Ms J Sachs & Mr L Logan, 1991.
- **Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies Major in the Bachelor of Arts Degree**, Undergraduate Student Handbook, the University of Queensland, Brisbane, 1994.
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Training Needs, Ministerial Statement by the Hon M Foley.


SA
Profile of the Wiltja Program (Anangu Communities), c/- Woodville High.

WA
Clerical Training for Aboriginal People Working in Remote Community and School Offices, University of Notre Dame, Broome Campus, 1994.

ACT

NT
Reflections on the Shoalhaven Aboriginal Education Research Project, research paper by Ms S Ardler, Ms A Brown, Ms R Brown, Ms J Carter, Ms G Crossley, Ms P Lester, Ms J Lonesborough, Ms B Saltor, Mr I Stewart, Ms E Sturgeon, & Mr S Williams, Wollongong, 1993.
Get It Right: Indigenous Demands for Control of Indigenous Higher Education, research paper by Mr S Williams, Ms I White & Mr I Stewart, Sydney, 1993.
Bureaucratic Impediments to Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Empowerment, Self-Determination & Self-Management, research paper by Mr I Stewart, Mr S Williams, & Ms J Carter, Sydney 1993.
Aboriginal Secondary Education: from Yolngu Aspiration to Thwarted Realisation, paper by Mr L White, Yirrkala, 1991.
Bachelor of Nursing: Information Brochures, Northern Territory University, Casuarina, 1994.

The Educational and Vocational Training Needs of the Aboriginal Labour Market in Rural and Remote Areas of the Northern Territory, report compiled by Batchelor College, Batchelor, 1993.
APPENDIX 6

References

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Bourke, E, Dow, R and Lucas, B, *Teacher Education Preservice: Preparing teachers to work with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Students - A National Reconciliation and Schooling Strategy*, Aboriginal Research Institute, University of South Australia, Adelaide, 1993.


McCann, H, *Contradictions, gaps and policy documents and Aboriginal community controlled adult education*, University of Southern Queensland, Hervey Bay Campus, 1993.


*National Commitment to Improved Outcomes in the Delivery of Programs and Services for Aboriginal Peoples and Torres Strait Islanders*, Perth 1992.


*Our Future Our Selves, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Community Control, Management and Resources*, House of Representatives Standing Committee on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs, AGPS, Canberra, 1990.

Review of the Aboriginal Employment Development Policy; Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission, Canberra, 1994.


School Achievement Among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Students, J Ainley, 1994, (unpublished).


APPENDIX 7

List of Tables used in this report

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APPENDIX 8

Recommendations

Recommendation 1
That all Australian governments reaffirm their commitment to the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Policy.

Recommendation 2
That the work of all bodies developing policy and/or providing educational programs or services which impact on Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islanders be based on the following principles:

- self-determination in education - putting the authority to make decisions in the hands of Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islanders;
- diversity - empowering Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islanders to exercise the maximum degree of choice in education;
- subsidiarity - shifting responsibility for and about education for Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islanders as far 'down' administrative systems as possible, given the demands of accountability and the efficient delivery of services;
- affiliation - ensuring coordination between groups as far 'up' the administrative system as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and organisations wish, to pursue shared aims and to achieve economies of scale, and
- efficiency - of the available resources, minimising the amount of money spent on administration and maximising the amount of money spent on actually providing educational services for Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islanders.

Recommendation 3
That all bodies developing educational policy and/or providing educational programs or services which impact on Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islanders:

- establish a formal Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander advisory structure to that body; and/or
- appoint an Aboriginal person and/or a Torres Strait Islander to that body
to ensure that the decisions of these bodies properly reflect the views of Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islanders.

Recommendation 4
That the Commonwealth, through its Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Coordinating Committee, convene a national conference to determine the terms of reference, membership, roles and responsibilities of a new national and independent body to oversee education for Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islanders.

The conference should also address the nature of the relationship between this new body and other existing relevant bodies, including the Commonwealth's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Coordination Committee and the Federation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Consultative Groups.

Such a body should be a signatory to the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Policy.

Such a body should be, at the minimum, responsible for:

- determining national policy in relation to education for Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islanders;
- overseeing the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Policy and any other associated documents and continuing to monitor its implementation and recommend improvements;
- examining the mix of guaranteed and discretionary funding and determining the principles for allocating available Commonwealth discretionary resources for education for Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islanders;
• determining the timetable for moving to outcomes reporting on education for Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islanders, and

• promoting the coordination of educational services with other services which impact on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples’ access to, participation in, and outcomes from, education.

Such a body should be made up exclusively of Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islanders.

Such a body should have rights to receive reports from educational service providers and to report annually to the Commonwealth.

The Commonwealth should establish a permanent secretariat to support this new body and should provide such other resources as the body needs to conduct its business properly.

Recommendation 5

That the Commonwealth, States and Territories establish and fund a clearinghouse for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander education to:

• collect, evaluate and disseminate best practice materials and resources for:
  - teaching Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students;
  - the teaching and learning of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander studies;
  - incorporating Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives in existing curricula;
  - incorporating, in education programs, appropriate health, nutrition and student welfare information and assistance for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students;
  - the teaching and learning of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural awareness courses for non-indigenous students, cross-cultural awareness courses for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students and counter-racism courses, and
  - the teaching and learning of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages;
  - identify examples of best practice in:
    - innovative methods of educational service delivery;
    - innovative methods of institutional organisation, and
  - innovative administrative arrangements which allow for self-determination in education for Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islanders across all sectors of education;

• collect and promulgate information on relevant policies and programs, research and evaluations, including publishing a regular national ASSPA newsletter to inform ASSPA committees about the program and to share information about the kinds of activities ASSPA committees are funding;

• act as an agent to assist with the provision of educational services to Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islanders living in remote areas;

• maintain a voluntary register of those Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander educators and educators with formal qualifications in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander studies, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages and/or with other extensive experience of teaching Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, who wish to have their names on the register so that information on prospective employment can be supplied to potential employees by the clearinghouse.

This clearinghouse should be an independent body funded jointly by the Commonwealth, States and Territories. Its governing board should be made up of Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islanders.

Recommendation 6

That, in consultation with existing State and Territory Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Consultative Groups and State and Territory governments, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Consultative Groups be reconstituted to ensure that:

• office holders are elected by Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islanders;

• the roles and responsibilities of such reconstituted Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Consultative Groups are specified and agreed and include, as a minimum, responsibility to:
- participate in the formulation of and endorse strategies drawn up under the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Policy across all education sectors;
- monitor the implementation of these strategies, and
- provide independent advice to governments on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander education issues as appropriate;
- such Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Consultative Groups are established as incorporated bodies;
- regional and local structures exist to ensure that local constituencies can provide input to and receive feedback from their representatives, and
- structures exist to coordinate the activity of these bodies with other relevant bodies, including other relevant Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander bodies.

Recommendation 7
That Commonwealth support for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Consultative Groups be paid as a grant-in-aid, in line with arrangements for other like organisations.

Recommendation 8
That State and Territory support for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Consultative Groups be paid directly to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Groups where they are incorporated bodies.

Recommendation 9
That higher education institutions providing teacher education courses and employers of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander educators implement the recommendations of the Aboriginal Research Institute of the University of South Australia's publication 'Teacher Education Pre-service: Preparing Teachers to work with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Students'.

Recommendation 10
That, by the year 2001, employers of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander teaching staff, in consultation with unions and representatives of Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islanders, will have reviewed their existing employment practices in preschools, schools, technical and further education, adult and community education and higher education institutions and have taken adequate steps to:
- ensure that pay and conditions of service do not discriminate between Indigenous and non-Indigenous professional educators;
- give priority to the employment of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander educators, for the benefit of both Indigenous and non-Indigenous students;
- accommodate local and specific cultural affiliations in determining the placement or posting of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees or prospective employees;
- adopt a mentoring system which promotes the advancement of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander educators to senior positions;
- give priority to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander educators to attend inservice professional development courses;
- establish staffing and staff development practices which encourage Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander educators to upgrade their qualifications when they wish to do so, including giving priority to Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islanders in scholarships and awards where such schemes exist;
- allow secondment of experienced Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander teachers to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander controlled community schools under contract without penalty to their entitlements and conditions of service;
- make provision for a special allowance, similar to the Australian Public Service linguistic performance allowance, which recognises the additional and specialist skills of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people where those skills are required and used in the workplace; and
• allow leave for cultural obligations.

Employers, in consultation with unions, should formalise such conditions as may be appropriate in awards.

Employers of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander educators who receive Commonwealth funding for the education of Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islanders should report annually to the Commonwealth on progress made towards achieving these goals.

Recommendation 11

That, by the year 2001, employers of teaching staff, in consultation with unions and representatives of Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islanders, will have reviewed their existing employment practices in preschools, schools, technical and further education, adult and community education and higher education institutions and have taken adequate steps to:

• provide inservice courses in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural awareness, counter-racism and teaching Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students for all staff, especially those posted to institutions with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students;

• give priority to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural awareness and counter-racism courses in in-service professional development plans of all educators;

• give priority to the employment of teacher graduates who have completed Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander studies courses as part of their teacher education course;

• make completion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander studies courses and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural awareness training mandatory for career advancement and/or renewal of performance contracts, and

• allow secondment of experienced non-indigenous teachers to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander controlled community schools under contract without penalty to their entitlements and conditions of service;

Employers, in consultation with unions, should formalise such conditions as may be appropriate in awards.

Employers of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander educators who receive Commonwealth funding for the education of Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islanders should report annually to the Commonwealth on progress made towards achieving these goals.

Recommendation 12

That, noting the recommendations of the Australian Education Union’s publication ‘Ara Kuwaritjakutu: Towards a New Way’, by the year 2001, employers of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander education workers, in consultation with unions and representatives of Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islanders, will have reviewed their existing employment practices in preschools, schools, technical and further education, adult and community education and higher education institutions and have taken adequate steps to:

• ensure that pay and conditions of service (including security of tenure) do not discriminate between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander education workers and their non-indigenous paraprofessional equivalents;

• set out clearly the roles and responsibilities of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander education workers;

• guarantee improved provision of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander education workers by, for example, introducing staffing formulae which provide for at least one part-time (0.5) Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander education worker in all preschools and schools with more than 10 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, and which provide for one Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander education worker for each 30 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students in schools where Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students are enrolled, and

• provide appropriate inservice courses for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander education workers’ peers and supervisors to ensure they are aware of the roles and responsibilities of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander education worker staff;

• give priority to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander education workers to attend in-service professional development courses;
• establish staffing and staff development practices which encourage Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander education workers to upgrade their qualifications when they wish to do so;
• introduce means by which experts in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander traditional and contemporary cultures can be recompensed for their contributions to the teaching and learning of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander studies.

Employers, in consultation with relevant unions, should formalise such conditions as may be appropriate in awards.

Employers of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander education workers who receive Commonwealth funding for the education of Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islanders should report annually to the Commonwealth on progress towards achieving these goals.

Recommendation 13

That the Commonwealth and States and Territories jointly provide additional capital funds for:
• the refurbishment of existing buildings to provide appropriate facilities to deliver preschool education services to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children living in rural and remote areas;
• local school educational services for the compulsory years of schooling where Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children do not have access to local schools or to other means of school education;
• residential facilities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander secondary students from rural or remote areas where their access to secondary education is currently limited, and where demand for such facilities can be demonstrated;
• preschool and school transport where no effective or economic means of transport is otherwise available, and
• school teacher accommodation where no other rental accommodation is available within a reasonable commuting distance from their place of employment.

Provision of these additional funds should be contingent on applicants for funding demonstrating that they can make adequate provision for the maintenance and repair of capital items and that they can meet any associated operational costs.

Ownership of capital items purchased with these additional funds should be vested, where possible, in appropriate incorporated Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations.

Recommendation 14

The Open Learning Technology Corporation accelerate its development of open learning technologies in the schools and vocational education and training sectors, particularly where these technologies would extend Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples’ access to education.

Recommendation 15

That the Commonwealth, States and Territories continue to develop the use of alternative technologies, including video-conferencing and tele-conferencing technologies and computer-based teaching and learning aids, to deliver off-campus, mixed-mode and distance education services to Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islanders for whom local access to relevant education services is not yet available.

Priority in the development of these technologies should be given to:
• delivering secondary education to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people living in those remote areas where education is not available in the compulsory years; and
• giving Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students in remote areas access to postcompulsory, and particularly teacher education, courses.

Ownership of capital items purchased with funds used for these purposes should be vested, where possible, in appropriate incorporated Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations.

Recommendation 16

That the Commonwealth provide additional funds to support the provision of onsite tutorial support for students in remote areas undertaking postcompulsory education courses by distance education where the Aboriginal and
Recommendation 17
That the Commonwealth, relevant agencies and individual organisations providing preschool education services for Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islanders ensure that preschool education providers:

- adopt staffing policies which give priority in employment to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff where Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children are enrolled;
- adopt measures to include and appropriately remunerate Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community members delivering cultural programs in preschools;
- provide professional development activities in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural awareness and counter-racism for all staff;
- adopt teaching practices which recognise and value the student’s first language, be it Standard Australian English, Aboriginal English, a Kriol or an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander language;
- provide preschool environments in which Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander parents feel welcome and encouraged to be involved in the preschool educational program, and
- adopt practices which maximise the coordination of preschool education programs with health services and nutrition education programs.

Recommendation 18
That the Commonwealth provide additional funds to extend its Aboriginal Student Support and Parent Awareness program to include Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children attending registered preschools.

The per capita rate paid under this new program for preschool students should be the same as that paid for primary school students under the Aboriginal Student Support and Parental Awareness program, regardless of whether they are attending preschool full or part-time.

Recommendation 19
That technical and further education institutions, adult and community education colleges exempt Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students from all fees and charges applying to basic literacy and numeracy courses or courses leading to the award of a Year 12 qualification or its equivalent.

Recommendation 20
That the Australian National Training Authority review the existing State and Territory training profiles and negotiate any necessary changes to those profiles with States and Territories to ensure that:

- by the year 2001, the type and amount of training available for Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islanders matches the training needs identified as a priority by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders;
- priority is given to the development of curriculum materials for, and the delivery of, courses in those areas identified as priorities in the Australian Committee for Training Curriculum project on national curriculum priorities for Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islanders; and
- preference in the allocation of its growth funds is given to:
  - those training institutions which can demonstrate strong demand for its courses among Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islanders, and
  - those private training institutions which best provide for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples’ educational self-determination.

Recommendation 21
That providers of postschool education for Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islanders:

- more vigorously promote their existing schemes aimed at encouraging Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples’ participation in postschool education, and
- expand the number of existing scholarships, cadetships and postgraduate awards available to Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islanders.
Recommendation 22
That the Commonwealth provide additional funds for two new schemes to promote Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' participation in post-school education:

- a scholarship/wage subsidy scheme to support Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islanders undertaking innovative combinations of work and related postgraduate study; and
- an internship scheme to support the development of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' knowledge of political science and public policy and to further encourage the development of Indigenous leadership.

Recommendation 23
That the Commonwealth improve ABSTUDY by abolishing the income test on the living away from home component of ABSTUDY for secondary school students in rural or remote areas.

Recommendation 24
That State and Territory curriculum, assessment and accreditation authorities develop courses of study which allow students to undertake study in an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander language in primary and/or secondary school.

In those States and Territories which prescribe courses of study in languages other than English, such courses should be regarded as courses in a language other than English.

Recommendation 25
That education providers identify those Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander preschool, primary and secondary school students whose first language is Aboriginal English, a Kriol or an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander language and ensure that they are provided with at least the same levels of literacy and English as a second language support and assistance provided to non-indigenous students whose first language is not English.

Recommendation 26
That education providers identify those Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander preschool, primary and secondary students whose first language is a Kriol or an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander language and whose literacy and numeracy achievements are below the average for non-indigenous students of a comparable age and ensure that they are provided with at least the same level of intensive English language support and assistance provided to newly arrived immigrant children whose first language is not English.

The Commonwealth should contribute to the provision of this support and assistance in the same way that it contributes to the costs of providing intensive English tuition services to immigrant children under the New Arrivals Component of its National Equity Program for Schools.

Recommendation 27
That courses aimed at improving non-indigenous Australians' understanding of and respect for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander traditional and contemporary cultures be made a mandatory element of the curricula of courses at all levels of education.

Such courses should be developed by Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islanders, drawing on the curriculum development expertise of others if necessary.

Such courses should include information about local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures on the advice of local communities.

Such courses should be delivered, where possible, by appropriately qualified and/or experienced Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

Accreditation and assessment bodies should formally recognise the prior knowledge and understanding that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students hold in relation to these courses.
Recommendation 28
That the Commonwealth, States and Territories jointly develop materials which include Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives in the 'Cultural Understandings' competency.

Recommendation 29
That the Commonwealth provide additional funds under its Vocational Education and Guidance for Aboriginals Scheme.

Recommendation 30
That agencies responsible for providing specific mainstream labour market programs and labour market programs designed specifically to meet the needs of Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islanders report annually on the participation of Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islanders in those programs, relative to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' share of categories of unemployment.

Recommendation 31
That agencies and organisations providing secondary education for male Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander secondary students:
- give priority to the employment of appropriately qualified and/or experienced male teachers in secondary schools where classes contain young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander men;
- promote the employment of both male and female Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander education workers in secondary schools, and
- adopt school organisation practices (such as separating male and female students for particular subjects or at particular times) which give appropriate respect to the status of young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander men in their communities.

Recommendation 32
That governments identify:
- the component of general revenue assistance to States and Territories which is a loading for those States and Territories with relatively high Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander populations and which is used for the education of Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islanders;
- the component of general revenue assistance spent on education for Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islanders attending 'mainstream' education courses, and
- funds spent on specific purpose education programs for Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islanders

as baseline funding data on education for Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islanders.

The Commonwealth should compile, update and publish this information annually.

Recommendation 33
That the Australian Bureau of Statistics and recipients of Commonwealth funding for education for Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islanders maintain databases to enable national reports on the state of education for Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islanders to be compiled and published annually.

These reports should include, as a minimum:
- the number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander advisory structures by sector of education and the proportion of positions held by Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islanders on these bodies;
- the number of full-time equivalent Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff employed, and the total number of employees, by:
  - age;
  - gender;
  - location;
  - parent's educational attainment;
  - sector of education;
  - part-time or full-time status;
- casual, contract or permanent employment status;
- professional or paraprofessional status/academic or non-academic status, and
- level of appointment within occupational classification;
• the number of additional education places provided to Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islanders by construction or refurbishment of facilities, by sector of education;
• the number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children enrolled at and attending preschool education programs, by age, gender, location, parent’s income, parent’s educational attainment, language spoken at home and sessional participation;
• the number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students enrolled at and attending primary, compulsory secondary and postcompulsory secondary school programs, by age, gender, location, employment status, parent’s income, parent’s educational attainment, language spoken at home and year of schooling;
• the number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander year 12 students eligible for entry to higher education institutions, by age, gender, location, employment status, income or parent’s income, parent’s educational attainment, language spoken at home and subjects studied in Year 12;
• the number of full-time equivalent Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islanders enrolled at and attending technical and further education institutions, by age, gender, location, employment status, income or parent’s income, parent’s educational attainment, language spoken at home and field and stream of study;
• the number of full-time equivalent Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islanders enrolled at and attending adult and community education institutions, by age, gender, location, employment status, income or parent’s income, parent’s educational attainment, language spoken at home and field and stream of study;
• the number of full-time equivalent Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islanders aged 19 who have completed Year 12 or its equivalent, by gender, location, employment status, income or parent’s income, parent’s educational attainment, language spoken at home and course or field of study;
• the number and proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students enrolled at and attending courses not leading to the award of any formal credential, by sector of education, age, gender, location, employment status, income or parent’s income, parent’s educational attainment, language spoken at home and field or study;
• the number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students completing courses of study, and the proportion of these students receiving a formal credential at the end of that course of study, at the following levels:
  - Certificate
  - Associate Diploma
  - Diploma
  - Degree, and
  - Postgraduate award;
by type of institution, age, gender, location, employment status, income or parent’s income, parent’s educational attainment, language spoken at home and field of study;
• the number of Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islanders enrolled at and attending intensive English language instruction courses by age, gender, location, employment status, income or parents’ income, parent’s educational attainment and language spoken at home;
• the number of Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islanders enrolled at and attending courses in Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander languages, by age, gender, location, employment status, income or parent’s income, parent’s educational attainment and language spoken in the home;
• the number of Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islanders enrolled at and attending courses aimed at enhancing their capacity to manage and develop their communities, by age, gender, employment status, income or parent’s income, parent’s educational attainment, location, language spoken at home and field of study, and
• the number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and other Australian students completing Aboriginal
and Torres Strait Islander studies courses, by age, gender, location, employment status, income or parent’s income, parent’s educational attainment and language spoken at home.

**Recommendation 34**

That the Commonwealth provide additional funds to support ongoing research, evaluation and monitoring of education for Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islanders.

The Commonwealth should allocate funding for this work on the basis of open and competitive tender.

Priority for funding should be given to:

- the development of indicators of the quality of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples’ educational experiences;
- research on the causes of educational alienation, especially educational alienation experienced by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander boys and young men;
- research on the post education destinations of Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islanders;
- the assessment of language maintenance needs;
- local explorations of two-ways education models;
- the development of best practice primary and secondary education courses in Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander languages;
- community level needs assessment of educational aspirations, and
- the development of counter-racism education.

**Recommendation 35**

That the Commonwealth provide additional funds for innovative proposals in education for Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islanders which:

- contribute to the achievement of the Commonwealth’s national priorities for education for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people;
- are time-limited, and
- are able to demonstrate that ongoing funding for the wider application of successful initiatives will be provided by funding bodies other than the Commonwealth.

The process for selecting innovative proposals for funding should be on a competitive submission basis. Preference should be given to innovative proposals which have been endorsed by local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities or organisations. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Consultative Groups should not be excluded as potential applicants for up to ten per cent of the available funding.

These funds should support pilot projects in the following areas:

- trialing approaches which enhance Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples’ self-determination in education within government school systems;
- testing the feasibility of direct funding models, in the first instance by providing Commonwealth funds for:
  - Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islanders residing in the Torres Strait directly to the Torres Strait Regional Authority, rather than to the Queensland government, and
  - Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander university students directly to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander enclaves in tertiary institutions, rather than to the institutions themselves;
- trialing a nationally available postgraduate course in the language teaching methods and understandings necessary for the delivery of courses under the Australian Indigenous Languages Framework;
- trialing regional high school models which develop alternative school organisation practices to encourage participation in secondary education;
- trialing the local delivery of ‘both ways’ education models, and
- trialing local area aggregations of school-based Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Student Support and Parent Awareness committees as alternative recipients of Commonwealth funding, to test direct
funding models and to determine the best means by which their activities might be coordinated with local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Consultative Groups.

**Recommendation 36**

That the Commonwealth immediately commission a feasibility study to investigate options for an indigenous university. Such a study should:

- canvas the range of Australian and overseas models of tertiary provision for indigenous peoples, including the option of cooperative networks of specialist units in existing universities;
- quantify the capital and recurrent funding implications of the proposal and assess the capacity for a private sector contribution to these costs, and
- report by the end of 1996.

The study should be overseen by a committee with a majority of Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islanders and include representatives of the Commonwealth (including the Department of Employment, Education and Training and the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission), the Australian Vice-Chancellors Committee, the Higher Education Council of the National Board of Education, Employment and Training, representatives of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander higher education staff, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander university students, and relevant union and business interests.

**Recommendation 37**

That funds currently provided by the Commonwealth for education for Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islanders and which are used for recurrent purposes (for example, for salaries) be paid as a per capita recurrent grant under financial and educational accountability conditions as apply to other per capita recurrent payments.

A provider’s entitlement to this supplementary recurrent funding to ensure equitable and appropriate educational outcomes for Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islanders should depend on:

- the formal recognition of the provider as an accredited provider of an educational service;
- the number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students enrolled and actively participating in a course of study with the provider at a certain census date, and
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Consultative Group (or another appropriate representative Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander group) endorsement of the education provider’s operational plan.

The per capita amount to be paid for each Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander student should take into account:

- the different costs of providing educational services across sectors of education (preschool, school, vocational, technical and adult education, or higher education);
- the different costs of providing educational services in urban, rural and remote areas;
- the level of support available from State and Territory governments, and
- need, recognising that independent Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander controlled providers may lack access to sufficient funds from other sources.

The accountability arrangements for this recurrent funding should:

- for financial accountability, be satisfied by a formal statement that funds were used for the purposes for which they were provided, and
- for educational accountability, be satisfied by reports on the educational outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students endorsed by representatives of the relevant Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and/or organisations.

The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students’ educational outcomes data to be reported should be agreed between the Commonwealth, education providers and representatives of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.

Any changes to existing Commonwealth funding arrangements should be contingent on recipients’ agreement to:

- revised reporting and monitoring arrangements which simplify financial accountability in return for greater educational accountability;
• the continued and permanent employment of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander education workers,
  and
• recipients' commitment to implement the recommendations of this Report relating to staffing policies
  and practices.

These new arrangements should commence at the beginning of the next funding triennium of the Joint Policy.
The Commonwealth should make additional funds available to ensure that existing educational providers do not
lose under the new arrangements.

Recommendation 38

That the Commonwealth further improve its Aboriginal Student Support and Parent Awareness program by:

• more vigorously promoting the fact that:
  - secondary school students are eligible to be members of their school’s ASSPA committee, and
  - funds are currently paid directly to ASSPA committees

• allowing ASSPA funds to meet the institutional fees and charges incurred by committee members
  undertaking relevant, accredited short courses (for example, bookkeeping) which allow them to both
  contribute to ASSPA committees and further their own education and training;

• providing complementary program guidelines for school staff setting out the dual purposes of the
  ASSPA program and promoting the strengthening of links between schools and ASSPA committees.
  These guidelines should highlight that:
  - ASSPA committees can become an integral part of the partnership between the school, parents and
    the community
  - ASSPA funds are supplementary to and do not replace funds provided to the school for general
    expenditure for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students
  - providing school budgets to ASSPA committees would assist them to make informed decisions
    about expenditure based on schools’ priorities and planning
  - Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children should not be excluded from school activities on the
    grounds that their school fees have not been paid;
  - the use of ASSPA funding for school activities is legitimate, and
  - the autonomy of ASSPA committees, and

• encouraging ASSPA committees or groups of ASSPA committees to become incorporated bodies.

Recommendation 39

That the Commonwealth improve its Aboriginal Tutorial Assistance Scheme by:

• setting a minimum tutor hours entitlement, at two hours per week for primary students, three hours
  per week for secondary students and four hours per week for technical, further and tertiary education
  students;

• more vigorously promoting the fact that:
  - tutors without formal teaching qualifications can be employed under special circumstances (for
    example, in remote areas where such qualified tutors are not available), and
  - tutors can be employed during school hours under special circumstances (for example, where
    students are studying by correspondence);

• allowing for the employment of tutors where students need general assistance (for example, in study
  methods) rather than assistance in particular subject areas, and

• allowing for contracts for tutors to be made for longer than 13 weeks in circumstances where a
  student’s continuing need for tutoring is known to extend beyond 13 weeks (for example, secondary
  school students, university students doing semester and year long courses).

Recommendation 40

That the Commonwealth improve its Vocational Education and Guidance for Aboriginals Scheme by more
vigorously promoting:

- the program to schools early in the school year;
- the use of funds for school based activities raising understanding of the range of postschool options and work awareness, and
- the fact that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander education support units in technical and further education institutions, universities and other postschool education institutions are eligible to apply for funding.

**Recommendation 41**

That all educational service providers, including the Commonwealth Department of Employment, Education and Training, adopt the following principles in relation to the administration of programs supporting education for Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islanders:

- the most accessible and widely available information to ensure the community knows of and understands its entitlements;
- the longest possible advance notice of any changes in administrative arrangements;
- the simplest possible application forms, requiring the minimum amount of information to effect efficient program delivery;
- the simplest possible acquittal procedures;
- the least possible delay in answering questions, processing applications or making payments, and
- the earliest possible notification and payment of entitlements.

**Recommendation 42**

That the Commonwealth Department of Employment, Education and Training improve the quality of its service to Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islanders by:

- recognising that staff are expected by the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities they work in to be familiar with the broad details of programs across the employment, education and training portfolio, and, in some cases, across all Commonwealth portfolios, and providing adequate staff training and development so that they are able to meet these expectations;
- maintaining Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Units as discrete structures responsible, through the Area structure, to one National officer;
- recognising the links between education and employment by ensuring that the roles and responsibilities of the Department’s Remote Area Field Service and its Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Units are coordinated through Aboriginal Strategies Branches in Area Offices; locating responsibility for policy for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander education (across all education sectors), direct assistance and income support in one National Office organisational unit, and
- basing the administrative and staffing resource allocation for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Units on a formula which takes into account both the administrative requirements of the programs they administer and the strong preference expressed by Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islanders to do business face-to-face and in environments where they are most comfortable.

**Recommendation 43**

That the Commonwealth appoint a senior executive, with appropriate support, to oversee the implementation of the recommendations of this Report, at least until such time as the body proposed in Recommendation 4 is established.

**Recommendation 44**

That education for Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islanders be reviewed again from the year 2001. The Report of that Review should be presented to governments by the end of the year 2002.
**APPENDIX 9**

**Abbreviations used in this report**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Full Form</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ABS</td>
<td>Australian Bureau of Statistics</td>
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<tr>
<td>ACTRAC</td>
<td>Australian Committee for Training Curriculum</td>
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<td>AEDP</td>
<td>Aboriginal Employment Development Policy</td>
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<td>AECG</td>
<td>Aboriginal Education Consultative Group</td>
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<td>AEDA</td>
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<td>AEP</td>
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<td>AESIP</td>
<td>Aboriginal Education Strategic Initiatives Program</td>
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<td>AEWs</td>
<td>Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Workers</td>
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<td>Australian Language and Literacy Policy</td>
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<td>Australian National Training Authority</td>
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<td>Australian National University</td>
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<td>Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission</td>
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<td>Australian Vocational Certificate Training Scheme</td>
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<td>COAG</td>
<td>Council of Australian Governments</td>
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<td>Department of Employment, Education and Training</td>
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<td>ESL</td>
<td>English as a Second Language</td>
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<td>FAECG</td>
<td>Federation of Aboriginal Education Consultative Groups</td>
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<td>Higher Education Contribution Scheme</td>
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<td>HEEP</td>
<td>Higher Education Equity Program</td>
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<td>General Recurrent Grants</td>
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<td>Languages Other Than English</td>
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<td>National Centre for Vocational Education Research</td>
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<td>National Equity Program for Schools</td>
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<td>Non-English Speaking Background</td>
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<td>National Training Board</td>
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<td>Technical and Further Education</td>
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<td>The National Staff Development Committee</td>
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<td>UNESCO</td>
<td>United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation</td>
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