

Engagement programs

- 4.1 Throughout the inquiry, the committee was consistently surprised and concerned about the lack of data available regarding attendance and education outcomes for Indigenous students. Whilst programs and initiatives that encourage students and their families to engage with school are critical in addressing non-attendance and the resultant poor NAPLAN scores, they must be based on an accurate understanding of what is causing the issues in the first instance.
- 4.2 Noting the lack of data, and that there is no silver bullet for such a complex problem, the committee focussed on gathering evidence about programs that appeared successful and the reasons for that success. As the committee received evidence, it became clear that there was a huge disparity between the number of programs available to boys in comparison to girls. This chapter considers some of the common narratives of these programs and initiatives and illustrates this with case studies.

Gender differences

- 4.3 PM&C noted that, in 2015, the average school attendance rate (Year 1 to 10) for Indigenous girls was 84.3% compared to 83.2% for Indigenous boys. Furthermore, 50.7% of Indigenous girls attended school 90% or more of the time, compared with 47.7% of boys.¹

¹ Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet, *Supplementary Submission 43.1*, 44th Parliament, p. 7.

- 4.4 PM&C advised that 'Indigenous girls outperform Indigenous boys in reading across all year levels and across all remoteness areas'.² The 2017 Closing the Gap Report explained that the gap between girls and boys is considerably larger for Indigenous students than for non-Indigenous students, noting that 'for reading literacy, on average 15 year-old Indigenous males are performing about one-and-a-third years of schooling below their Indigenous female peers'.³
- 4.5 However, in 2016, Dr Nicholas Biddle and Ms Anneke Meehl conducted research exploring the differences in participation and education outcomes for Indigenous students. Dr Biddle and Ms Meehl cautioned that, despite Indigenous girls' relative high performance, 'it would be incorrect and, indeed, dangerous to assume that Indigenous girls no longer require support to achieve positive education outcomes'.⁴
- 4.6 Dr Biddle and Ms Meehl found that, despite more Indigenous females completing Year 12, Indigenous males are more likely to hold post-school qualifications:
- In 2011, 45% of working-age Indigenous males had a postschool qualification, compared with 42% of Indigenous females... This disparity was greatest in the area of certificate attainment: 33% of working-age Indigenous males had a certificate compared with only 23% of Indigenous females.⁵

Gender equity

- 4.7 Throughout the inquiry, the evidence clearly demonstrated that there is a significant disparity between the availability of, and funding for engagement and mentoring programs for girls compared to that provided for boys. It is essential that all coeducational schools that offer an engagement or mentoring program for boys also offer a comparable program for girls.

² Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet, *Supplementary Submission 43.1*, 44th Parliament, p. 7.

³ Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet, *Closing the Gap: Prime Minister's Report 2017*, p. 40.

⁴ Dr Nicholas Biddle and Ms Anneke Meehl, 'The gendered nature of Indigenous education participation and attainment', *Working Paper No. 106/2016*, Centre for Aboriginal Economic Policy Research, Australian National University, p. 12.

⁵ Dr Nicholas Biddle and Ms Anneke Meehl, 'The gendered nature of Indigenous education participation and attainment', *Working Paper No. 106/2016*, Centre for Aboriginal Economic Policy Research, Australian National University, p. 4.

- 4.8 Ms Andrea Goddard, Executive Director, Stars Foundation, gave evidence to the inquiry on two occasions, emphasising the importance, relevance, and need for gender equity:

...the holistic wraparound support to place based, school based programs supporting young Aboriginal women is absolutely essential if we are ever to close the gap. If we do not have young, educated, empowered women, these girls will be having babies very soon, and the chances are that their children will not have the benefit of educated, employable, empowered mothers that are going to then be able to create a positive future pathway for them. So we know absolutely – and I know I am not telling anyone here anything – that it is the empowerment and education of women that changes not just the future life course for them, in terms of their health, social skills, employment and wellbeing outcomes, but also the future of their families and communities.⁶

- 4.9 The disparity in funding for school-based ‘academy-style’ programs was acknowledged by Dr James Watterston, Director-General, Queensland Department of Education and Training. He explained that:

Fundamentally, we have been trying to seed fund similar organisations that focus on girls...So we are growing the market. I think we have four programs that we are piloting now. The plan is to get equity right across the state, to make sure any young Indigenous people who are struggling with engagement and support around the school day, which is what Clontarf and other organisations do, are able to access that support. So we are not going to be rolling back from here, we want to push this right out.⁷

- 4.10 Role Models and Leaders Australia, which runs the Girls Academy program, stated that ‘there is a serious gender imbalance in investment in Indigenous education support programs’.⁸ It observed that ‘investment in boys outweighs investment in girls by approximately 300%’⁹. Mr Ricky Grace told the committee that:

...it is humbling to see the thirst in these girls’ eyes for a program. The humbling part for me is to see something that they have been wanting for a long time. Especially in places where they are

⁶ Ms Andrea Goddard, Executive Director, Stars Foundation, *Committee Hansard*, Darwin, 6 April 2017, p. 32.

⁷ Dr James Watterston, Director-General, Queensland Department of Education and Training, *Committee Hansard*, Brisbane, 29 August 2017, p. 23.

⁸ Role Models and Leaders Australia, *Prospectus: Girls Academy Program 2017*, p. 8.

⁹ Role Models and Leaders Australia, *Prospectus: Girls Academy Program 2017*, p. 8.

looking to the side and smelling bacon and egg breakfasts for the boys and then nothing for them.¹⁰

Equity of funding

- 4.11 In its interim report for this inquiry, the committee found that ‘there is an urgent need to provide additional funding to ensure that the number and type of girls’ programs funded and delivered is comparable to that of boys, particularly in the area of integrated school based programs’.¹¹
- 4.12 PM&C advised that, in 2014, 60 academies had full-time staff based in the school for the entire day, every school day. However, of these, Clontarf had been funded for 48 boys-only academies, in contrast to the 12 girls-only academies run by Role Models and Leaders Australia.¹²
- 4.13 The decision-making process regarding allocation of funding appears to be marked by a distinct lack of transparency and unwillingness to explain the basis upon which decisions were made. When asked about the funding disparity between girls programs and boys programs, Ms Liz Hefren-Webb, First Assistant Secretary, Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet (PM&C), explained that:

We are not resourced to fund activities for every Indigenous child in every school...[D]ecisions have to be made about allocation of resources, and that is what has been made.¹³

- 4.14 A further barrier for funding girls programs appears to be the requirement in some states for the engagement program to be a sports-based program. As Mr Alan Bradley, Board Member, SHINE, highlighted:

Even though we met all of the other criteria, we are not a sports-based program, so we did not meet the guidelines. There has not been an opportunity for state-based funding for us. Despite a number of different programs which have been sports based being funded through various means, we have not met any of the guidelines for those programs in order to receive state funding, which is an interesting point because the Federal Government has said to us: 'It's interesting that you don't have any state support. If

¹⁰ Mr Ricky Grace, Founder and Chief Executive Officer, Role Models and Leaders Australia, *Committee Hansard*, Perth, 4 May 2017, pp. 20–22.

¹¹ House Standing Committee on Indigenous Affairs, *Interim Report: First Steps for improving educational opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students*, 2016, pp. 19–23.

¹² Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet, *Supplementary Submission 43.1*, 44th Parliament, p. 6.

¹³ Ms Liz Hefren-Webb, First Assistant Secretary, Schools, Information and Evaluation, Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet, *Committee Hansard*, Canberra, 19 April 2016, p. 16.

you don't have state support, why should we support you?' So there is a question mark hanging over our IAS money there.¹⁴

- 4.15 Mr Grace told the committee of his shock at the discovery that inequity of funding was permissible under Australia law.¹⁵ He explained that many Indigenous girls face significant barriers to education:

Gender inequity and investment in programs for Aboriginal girls versus boys is of great community concern, and we seek to address this with the government, corporate and philanthropic sectors. Indeed, the barriers to education faced by girls around teen pregnancy, domestic violence and the carrying of domestic duties for parents, siblings and relatives present a strong case for girls requiring equal, if not more, support to that of boys.¹⁶

- 4.16 Ms Goddard agreed, noting that when she was General Manager for Development at the Clontarf Foundation the most common comment she received was 'this is great for boys but what about the girls?' She explained that:

...the boys would be going off on trips and engaging in lots of different activities and experiences and the girls would have to go and do a car wash to fundraise to drive to the next town...So it was a huge contrast in terms of the experiential opportunities that were available to the girls, when there was a highly established and full-time funded model for boys.¹⁷

- 4.17 After the committee visited Kununurra District High School and saw both the Clontarf and Girls Academies in action, the Principal, Mr Peter Thatcher, explained that 'it is on the record that the Girls Academy is not funded anywhere near the Clontarf program'. A fact which is clearly demonstrated by the difference in resources each academy enjoyed at the school. Clontarf has five staff, allowing for a 25 to 1 ratio; compared with the Girls Academy's two staff allowing for a 50 to 1 ratio. Mr Thatcher also noted that 'Clontarf has two troop carriers, a bus et cetera – they have got

¹⁴ Mr Alan Bradley, Board Member, SHINE Inspire Achieve Belong Inc., Committee Hansard, Geraldton, 2 May 2017, p. 36.

¹⁵ Mr Ricky Grace, Founder and Chief Executive Officer, Role Models and Leaders Australia, Committee Hansard, Perth, 4 May 2017, p. 18.

¹⁶ Mr Ricky Grace, Founder and Chief Executive Officer, Role Models and Leaders Australia, Committee Hansard, Perth, 4 May 2017, p. 22.

¹⁷ Ms Andrea Goddard, Executive Director, Stars Foundation, Proof Committee Hansard, Canberra, 19 April 2016, p. 3.

it all – whereas the Girls Academy at the moment is nowhere near as well funded'.¹⁸

- 4.18 Similarly, Ms Cath Winfield, Deputy Principal, Broome Senior High School, told the committee that the Clontarf Academy has seven staff for the 158 boys in the program, whereas the Girls Academy has three staff for its 127 girls.¹⁹
- 4.19 The Stars Foundation called for the Federal Government to ensure that, wherever funding is provided to boys programs such as Clontarf, equivalent funding be provided to girls programs, noting that 'to not do so leaves the Commonwealth open to the criticism of discriminatory policies and of failure to treat young Aboriginal women equitably'.²⁰
- 4.20 In June 2017, Dr Margaret (Marnie) O'Bryan noted with some consternation the continued discrepancy in funding between girls and boys programs stating that '\$40 million was granted to the mentoring and support of young men just last week, compared to \$9 million for young women'.²¹

Committee comment

- 4.21 The committee remains deeply troubled by the significant disparity between the availability and funding for engagement and mentoring programs for girls compared to that provided for boys. What is worse is that this disparity appears to be compounded by governments limiting funding for engagement and mentoring programs to sports-based programs.
- 4.22 It is essential that all coeducational schools that offer an engagement or mentoring program for boys also offer a comparable program for girls. These girls are the mothers and carers of the next generation of Indigenous students. As such, their education is critical to improving the health, education, and employment of not only themselves but their children and future generations.
- 4.23 The committee raised concerns regarding this matter in its interim report; however, to date, the committee has received no government response regarding its recommendations. The committee remains concerned that public funds are unintentionally contributing to the further entrenchment

¹⁸ Mr Peter Thatcher, Principal, Kununurra District High School, *Committee Hansard*, Kununurra, 28 June 2017, pp. 15-16.

¹⁹ Ms Cath Winfield, Deputy Principal, Broome Senior High School, *Committee Hansard*, Broome, 29 June 2017, p. 30.

²⁰ Stars Foundation, *Submission 57*, 44th Parliament, p. 13.

²¹ Dr Margaret (Marnie) O'Bryan, *Committee Hansard*, Canberra, 1 June 2017, p. 9.

of gender inequality for young Indigenous women and their access to educational opportunities.

- 4.24 The committee wishes to reiterate that it does not support any redirection of funding to girls programs at the expense of currently funded boys programs. The funding provided to Clontarf, and other organisations delivering boys programs, is vital and the results it has achieved emphasise the necessity of continuing this funding. The committee also acknowledges that the Federal Government has recently funded other programs targeting girls; however, these are not academy models and do not have the same full-time on-site mentoring staff.
- 4.25 The committee recommends that, in future rounds of grants applications under the Indigenous Advancement Strategy, the Federal Government ensure that the number and especially the type of boys' and girls' education engagement and mentoring programs are funded equitably, and if necessary, undertake to fund additional programs to rectify gender inequity.

Recommendation 9 (Priority)

- 4.26 **The committee recommends that, as a matter of urgency, the Federal Government review and reform its policy approach and processes for evaluating grant applications under the Indigenous Advancement Strategy to provide funding parity to education engagement and mentoring programs catering to girls, comparable to that of similar programs catering to boys, so as to ensure gender equity and equivalence of program provision.**

Attendance strategies

- 4.27 Regular attendance is directly linked to academic achievement. A 2013 report prepared for the Department of Education found that there is no 'safe threshold' of absence before academic achievement is impacted:

In all analyses, average academic achievement on NAPLAN tests declined with any absence from school and continued to decline as absence rates increased.²²

²² Kirsten Hancock et al, *Student Attendance and Educational Outcomes: Every Day Counts*, Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations, May, 2013, p. v.

- 4.28 Furthermore, the effects of absence accumulate over time. The report noted that ‘absence from school was related to academic achievement in numeracy, reading and writing not only in the current year, but in future years as well’.²³

Remote School Attendance Strategy

- 4.29 The Remote School Attendance Strategy (RSAS) is a Federal Government initiative that commenced in 2014. It is intended to lift school attendance levels in selected remote communities:

[RSAS] Team members are local people from the community. They may be mums, dads, caregivers, aunties, uncles or grandparents who want to help kids in the community get to school.

School attendance teams work closely with teachers, parents and the community to develop a community plan to identify ways to ensure all children in the community go to school every day.²⁴

- 4.30 PM&C advised that the RSAS is operating in 77 schools across 74 remote communities in the Northern Territory, Western Australia, Queensland, South Australia, and New South Wales, where attendance rates are below 70% or 80%.²⁵
- 4.31 PM&C advised the committee that ‘weekly attendance data show RSAS is having positive results in the majority of participating schools, particularly those in the Northern Territory and Queensland’. In the Northern Territory there was an overall 3.2% increase in the attendance rate across participating government schools from Term 2, 2013 to Term 2, 2015. In Queensland there was an overall 3% increase in the attendance rate across participating government schools from Term 2, 2013 to Term 2, 2015.²⁶

School Enrolment and Attendance Measure

- 4.32 The School Enrolment and Attendance Measure (SEAM) is a Federal Government initiative that commenced in 2013 in a number of communities in the Northern Territory. It is intended to support parents

²³ Kirsten Hancock et al, *Student Attendance and Educational Outcomes: Every Day Counts*, Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations, May 2013, p. v.

²⁴ Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet, ‘Remote School Attendance Strategy’, <https://www.pmc.gov.au/indigenous-affairs/education/remote-school-attendance-strategy>, accessed 15 September 2017.

²⁵ Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet, *Submission 43*, 44th Parliament, p. 9.

²⁶ Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet, *Submission 43*, 44th Parliament, pp. 9–10.

and carers to ensure that their school-age children are enrolled in school and attending school regularly.²⁷ SEAM has two elements:

- **enrolment:** under which, if parents or carers fail to provide information about their child's enrolment to the Department of Human Services, and do not have a reasonable excuse for doing so, welfare payments may be suspended; and
- **attendance:** under which, if a student is identified as having low school attendance within a SEAM community, their parents or carers, will be required to participate in a compulsory conference to discuss the barriers to regular attendance, and agree to improve their child's attendance under a school attendance plan. If these requirements are not met, certain welfare payments may be suspended.²⁸

Concerns

- 4.33 Some participants raised concerns regarding the effectiveness of RSAS and SEAM. The Central Land Council noted that 'policy initiatives aimed at improving remote attendance, such as the SEAM and the RSAS, have failed to considerably improve attendance'.²⁹
- 4.34 Ms Cheryl Pilkington, Team Leader, Save the Children in Wadeye, criticised the SEAM program, telling the committee that the program does not work as an incentive for attendance and only exacerbates food insecurity.³⁰
- 4.35 Ninti One was also critical of the SEAM program, stating that:
- Despite the lack of evidence for the effectiveness of this program and calls for evaluation (Australian National Audit Office, 2014), the program has continued.³¹

Committee comment

- 4.36 The committee notes the criticisms regarding the impact of the RSAS and the SEAM. The committee supports the aims of the programs, but is concerned about the lack of clarity regarding the effectiveness and

²⁷ Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet, 'School Enrolment and Attendance Measure', <https://www.pmc.gov.au/indigenous-affairs/education/school-enrolment-and-attendance-measure>, accessed 15 September 2017.

²⁸ Australian National Audit Office, *Improving School Enrolment and Attendance through Welfare Reform Measure*, Audit Report No. 51 (2013-14), pp. 14-15.

²⁹ Central Land Council, *Submission 41*, 44th Parliament, p. 16.

³⁰ Ms Cheryl Pilkington, Team Leader, Intensive Family Support Service, and Play2Learn Program, Save the Children, *Committee Hansard*, Wadeye, 5 April 2017, p. 26.

³¹ Ninti One Limited, *Submission 6*, 44th Parliament, p. 3.

performance of the programs. All federal programs and programs receiving federal funding should have appropriate systems and procedures in place for collecting, analysing and reporting information and data to measure performance.

Engagement programs

School-based 'academy-style' programs

- 4.37 Throughout the inquiry, the committee saw a number of 'academy-style' programs aimed at improving attendance and engagement. Many of these programs use sport as a 'hook' to engage students; however there are some aimed at students interested in certain careers.
- 4.38 Regardless of the 'hook', these engagement programs encourage attendance and provide wide-ranging support for students. Most programs only cater to either boys or girls, very few cater to both. In addition to providing mentoring and education support, these programs strengthen:
- **cultural safety:** providing culturally safe spaces, connections to community, and celebrating Indigenous identities and cultures;
 - **health and nutrition:** providing food and educating students about nutrition, providing drug and alcohol education, as well as encouraging physical activity and sport;
 - **wellbeing:** strengthening resilience, mental health, and building confidence and self-esteem, as well as teaching and modelling respect and valuing differences;
 - **community engagement and leadership:** providing opportunities to support and lead teams as well as encouraging volunteering and giving back to community; and
 - **life skills and careers:** encouraging and supporting students to achieve academically and set post-school goals, as well as providing work-readiness training and often supporting students even after graduation.

Girls

- 4.39 As noted above, there is a significant disparity in the support provided to girls, compared to what is available for boys. A variety of academy-style programs has developed to cater to girls, with hooks ranging from sports such as basketball and netball to career-focussed hooks such as hairdressing.

Case study – Girls Academy

4.40 The Role Models and Leaders Australia Girls Academy is the largest school-based ‘academy-style’ program for girls and caters to 2,500 girls in 34 schools across Western Australia, the Northern Territory and New South Wales. Mr Ricky Grace, Chief Executive Officer, Role Models and Leaders Australia, told the committee:

We are structured as an academy model, with a dedicated academy room in each of the schools where we operate. The room is a safe haven and sanctuary for the girls, where they know they can rely on our full-time professional staff to assist them in any way necessary, either through direct support or through referral, depending on the issue...The academy takes girls from 12 years old and works with them within the secondary school system until they complete their schooling. Girls receive up to six years of intensive mentoring and support from our team of skilled staff, 80% of whom are highly accomplished Aboriginal women.³²

4.41 Mr Grace told the committee that Girls Academy uses a ‘community-led locally-led approach’, explaining that ‘we work closely with local Aboriginal groups well before we go into the school...at every academy...there is an advisory committee [that] comprises local Aboriginal leaders, parents of the girls in that academy, and school leaders, as well as some corporate supporters’. Mr Grace explained that 80% of Girls Academy staff are local Aboriginal women who have been recommended as role models within the local community by the advisory committee. These women are then provided with professional development in a range of areas, including leadership development, conflict management, literacy, and financial literacy.³³

4.42 Mr Grace emphasised the importance of the strong relationships and trust that the girls have with the Girls Academy mentors:

If [the participants] are struggling with whatever issue, they tend to come to us because of that relationship that we have built. As you heard, it is a six-year mentoring program, so we build a really good relationship with these girls.³⁴

³² Mr Ricky Grace, Founder and Chief Executive Officer, Role Models and Leaders Australia, *Committee Hansard*, Perth, 4 May 2017, p. 18.

³³ Mr Ricky Grace, Founder and Chief Executive Officer, Role Models and Leaders Australia, *Committee Hansard*, Perth, 4 May 2017, p. 21.

³⁴ Mr Ricky Grace, Founder and Chief Executive Officer, Role Models and Leaders Australia, *Committee Hansard*, Perth, 4 May 2017, p. 19.

- 4.43 Mr Grace explained that Girls Academy is embedded in the school timetable, providing comprehensive support for girls throughout the school day, with programs tailored for the different age-groups of girls:

We provide breakfast programs. Some of the girls arrive maybe without having had breakfast, and it is hard I guess to have the energy to go through a full day and learn if you are not properly fed, so we provide breakfast programs. In most of the schools, we are embedded into the timetable. For instance, we will see the year 7s and year 8s twice a week; we will see the year 9s and year 10s at a different time; we will see the year 11s and year 12s at a different time. The programs that we provide for these year groups are made specifically to address the needs of that year group.

If there are students who are having trouble in school or having trouble settling in a classroom, our staff will oftentimes sit in the classroom with these girls just to help them settle in.³⁵

- 4.44 Role Models and Leaders Australia reported that, in its 5 years of operation of the Girls Academy program:
- over 5000 Indigenous girls have participated in the program;
 - Year 12 enrolments have increased by 276%;
 - Year 12 graduation rates have increased by 76%;
 - national academy attendance rates sat 11.2% higher than the all Indigenous student cohort; and
 - all participants graduated with a post-school plan, with 41% intending to undertake further education.³⁶

Case study – Stars Foundation

- 4.45 The Stars Foundation, based in the Northern Territory, offers similar academy-style support to female Indigenous students. The Stars Foundation, which commenced in mid-2015, after winning a tender against other providers, currently caters to approximately 450 girls in eight schools in the Northern Territory. The program is also due to commence in Townsville in 2018, catering for 250 girls across three high schools: Heatley Secondary College, Thuringowa State High School and Pimlico State High School over the next three years.³⁷

³⁵ Mr Ricky Grace, Founder and Chief Executive Officer, Role Models and Leaders Australia, *Committee Hansard*, Perth, 4 May 2017, p. 19.

³⁶ Role Models and Leaders Australia, *Prospectus: Girls Academy Program 2017*, p. 4.

³⁷ Ms Andrea Goddard, Executive Director, Stars Foundation, Correspondence, received 4 December 2017.

- 4.46 Ms Andrea Goddard, Executive Director, Stars Foundation, highlighted the importance of utilising both male and female role models:
- Certainly in respect of Stars it was critical for us that we had men involved in support programs for young women. More than 40% of Aboriginal kids are raised in single parent families. Most of those are raised by mums, nannas, aunties. They are raised by women, so men are largely absent from young people's lives, whether it is girls or boys. For us it was essential that the girls had the opportunity to develop respectful, trusting relationships with strong male role models so that they could feel, look at and hear what those relationships were like, as well as seeing men and women working together respectfully, in a professional capacity and at a very, very high level.³⁸
- 4.47 Ms Goddard emphasised the importance of the guidance and experiences of Indigenous peoples in setting up and running the Stars Foundation. She noted that the Stars Foundation board is Chaired by Ms Marion Scrymgour, a well-known Aboriginal women in the Northern Territory³⁹ and passionate advocate for Indigenous peoples. Ms Scrymgour is also a role model for young Indigenous women, as the first Indigenous woman to be a minister in any government in Australia.⁴⁰
- 4.48 During its site visit at Casuarina Secondary College, Stars participants hosted the committee. The girls were friendly, confident, and articulate when telling the committee about what they were learning, both at Stars and at school. The committee also met a range of Stars staff, including transition staff, whose job it is to assist girls into employment or further education and training.
- 4.49 During the visit, the Principal, Mr Paul Matthews, emphasised the value of the program and the significant impact that it has had on improving the girls' attendance and performance. He described the program as a catalyst in attracting young women to attend school and to strive to achieve, to do their best.
- 4.50 The committee was impressed by the program's unique focus on providing girls with both strong female and male role models. It is essential that girls, particularly those who may not have positive male role

³⁸ Ms Andrea Goddard, Executive Director, Stars Foundation, *Committee Hansard*, Darwin, 6 April 2017, p. 33.

³⁹ Ms Andrea Goddard, Executive Director, Stars Foundation, *Committee Hansard*, Darwin, 6 April 2017, p. 34.

⁴⁰ 'NT Deputy Scrymgour makes history', *The Age*, 26 November 2007, <http://www.theage.com.au/articles/2007/11/26/1196036806597.html>, accessed 30 November 2017.

models in the lives, be given the opportunity to develop respectful trusting relationships with male role models and to see positive and respectful interactions between men and women. These girls are the mothers and carers of the future and these experiences will assist them to develop and build positive relationships with the men in their lives.

- 4.51 The Stars Foundation advised that, in 2017, 47 of the 50 girls who commenced Year 12 with Stars completed Year 12, of which at least 32 are expected to achieve their Northern Territory Certificate of Education (NTCE). In addition, the majority of girls who did not achieve their NTCE are likely to return for Year 13 and complete the NTCE in 2018.⁴¹

Case study – SHINE

- 4.52 The SHINE program is based in Geraldton and currently has on-site salons at John Wilcock College and Geraldton Senior College. SHINE is a school-based engagement program for girls, which uses hairdressing as its ‘hook’.

- 4.53 Ms Mandy Jolley, Director, SHINE, told the committee that she founded the program after noticing a lack of services for the ‘large number of girls that were not interested in sport’ who were ‘lost, they had nothing to do and no one to talk to’.⁴² Ms Jolley explained that:

It is important too to make it clear that it is not about just hairdressing. That is just the hook. The girls are constantly complaining that they are not hitting the basins enough, because we are bringing in so many different dynamic presenters to ensure we are covering exactly what the girls need. The actual curriculum of the program changes and can be [tailored] for that particular group. There might be a high level of sexual assault, so there will be different presenters that will come in to address these situations. Being such a small group is very powerful, so we tend to break down a lot of the issues quite quickly. I think that is where the success is.⁴³

- 4.54 During its site visit at John Wilcock College, the SHINE participants hosted the committee in a tour of their salon and explained how they are taught, not only hairdressing, but how to run and work in a salon. The girls explained that they are given experience interacting with clients and

⁴¹ Ms Andrea Goddard, Executive Director, Stars Foundation, Correspondence, received 4 December 2017.

⁴² Ms Mandy Jolley, Director/Founder, SHINE Inspire Achieve Belong Inc., *Committee Hansard*, Geraldton, 2 May 2017, p. 30.

⁴³ Ms Mandy Jolley, Director/Founder, SHINE Inspire Achieve Belong Inc., *Committee Hansard*, Geraldton, 2 May 2017, p. 30.

are taught how to take and manage appointments both in person and over the phone. One girl told the committee that the program not only supported her at school but also taught her how to be confident, proud, and feel beautiful.

- 4.55 The committee was impressed by the program's model, which provided a school-based 'academy-style' program whilst also allowing the girls to experience and build confidence within a workplace environment. Not only does this increase the chances of employment after school, but it also caters to those young people who may not be interested in sport and would not be attracted by a sporting 'hook'.

Boys

- 4.56 There may be a smaller variety of school-based 'academy-style' programs directed at boys; however, the number of academies for boys significantly outnumbers those for girls.

Case study – Clontarf Academy

- 4.57 The Clontarf Foundation is by far the largest school-based 'academy-style' program in Australia. It currently caters to over 5,600 boys in 92 schools across Western Australia, the Northern Territory, Victoria, New South Wales, and Queensland. Mr Michael Lee, Director, Delroy Clontarf Academy, explained that:

In New South Wales it is based on Rugby League, in the western and southern states it is based on Aussie Rules, and the passion that the boys have for that is the carrot to get them interested in the program. It is completely voluntary... They come up and get a note and do that themselves, which gives them a buy-in... there is that carrot, but then they realise pretty quickly that it is not a football program and that it is about a lot more than that.⁴⁴

- 4.58 Any Indigenous boy enrolled at the school is eligible to participate in Clontarf Academy. However, in order to remain in the program, boys must endeavour to:
- attend school regularly;
 - apply themselves to the study of appropriate courses; and
 - embrace Clontarf's requirements for behaviour and self-discipline.⁴⁵

⁴⁴ Mr Michael Lee, Director, Delroy Clontarf Academy, Clontarf Foundation, *Committee Hansard*, Dubbo, 23 March 2016, p. 16.

⁴⁵ Clontarf Foundation, *Annual Report 2016*, p. 2.

- 4.59 Mr Lee told the committee that boys must maintain high attendance rates to play football games, attend camps and other activities. He explained that, if a boy is not at school, the Clontarf staff will 'go and see what is going on: send a text, make a call, do what we need to do'. Boys are held accountable for their attendance by both Clontarf staff and their fellow participants.⁴⁶
- 4.60 Mr Lee highlighted the important role that Clontarf plays in making boys feel welcome, valued and respected by the school. He explained that the boys 'know that they are getting respected and they pass that back in kind and then they start to enjoy school'. He noted that the boys 'start to feel as though they belong in Clontarf and they belong in school' and that this 'changes the entire dynamic of them turning up'.⁴⁷
- 4.61 Mr Christopher McDonald, Regional Manager, New South Wales, Clontarf Foundation, told the committee that Clontarf strengthens relationships within the school, particularly between boys and their teachers:
- Some teachers might be having issues with particular students. We open the door to all the staff at school and say: 'Come up and try and develop a different sort of relationship with that student. Give them a game of table tennis, come to our footy training, share a bacon and egg roll with them – have something in common with them, apart from, "I am your science teacher; sit down and do your science work.'" Our door is open for all staff to access. Those teachers who have developed or changed their relationship with their students have put in as well. We have got these kids back to school.⁴⁸
- 4.62 Mr Lee explained that Clontarf also strengthens and builds connections between the community, families, and the school:
- It is because of that contact and relationship we have with the families that they are all coming to the parent-teacher interviews and taking more of an interest in their children's education. So it is a real win that we have with communities, homes and schools that probably would not be there otherwise.⁴⁹

⁴⁶ Mr Michael Lee, Director, Delroy Clontarf Academy, Clontarf Foundation, *Committee Hansard*, Dubbo, 23 March 2016, pp. 19-20.

⁴⁷ Mr Michael Lee, Director, Delroy Clontarf Academy, Clontarf Foundation, *Committee Hansard*, Dubbo, 23 March 2016, p. 18.

⁴⁸ Mr Christopher McDonald, Regional Manager, New South Wales, Clontarf Foundation, *Committee Hansard*, Dubbo, 23 March 2016, p. 18.

⁴⁹ Mr Michael Lee, Director, Delroy Clontarf Academy, Clontarf Foundation, *Committee Hansard*, Dubbo, 23 March 2016, p. 17.

- 4.63 In 2016, the Clontarf Foundation reported that, the average annual cost per boy was \$7,350, against a budget of \$7,500, and that across all of its academies:
- there was a retention rate⁵⁰ of 92% against a target of 90%;
 - there was an attendance rate of 79% against a target of 80%, and that 61% of Academy members had an attendance rate of 80% or better;
 - 384 boys completed Year 12; and
 - 85% of the boys who completed Year 12 in 2015 remained in jobs or further education after 12 months of leaving school, against a target of 80%.⁵¹

Skills-focussed programs

- 4.64 Some programs focus on providing students with practical experience and qualifications to prepare them for employment and life after school. Many of the secondary schools that the committee visited throughout the inquiry provided opportunities for students to undertake vocational education and training (VET) courses during their studies.
- 4.65 However, as with ‘academy-style’ programs, many of these appeared to be providing greater opportunities for boys rather than girls. That said, some notable examples of skills-focussed engagement programs include:
- **Kimberley Education for Life:** delivered by Kununurra District High School, which incorporates a paid school-based traineeship comprising two days per week on the job experience and a Certificate II in their chosen industry;⁵² and
 - **EarthTec:** delivered by Yirara College, which provides training on heavy machinery, such as bobcats and excavators, using both simulators and actual machinery.⁵³ The college also offers a wide range of competency-based short courses with a focus on life and work skills, together with a number of VET classes as well as work experience through partnerships with a range of local businesses.⁵⁴

⁵⁰ The number of Academy members at the end of the year who are either still at the school, at another school or educational institution, or who are in employment or undertaking training, expressed as a percentage of the total number of boys enrolled in the Academy at the start of the year.

⁵¹ Clontarf Foundation, *Annual Report 2016*, p. 6.

⁵² Kununurra District High School, *Kimberley Education for Life*, <https://kununurradistricthigh.com/kefl/>, accessed 14 September 2017.

⁵³ Mr Roger Ashcroft, Principal, Yirara College, *Committee Hansard*, Alice Springs, 4 April 2017, pp. 14–15.

⁵⁴ Yirara College, *Submission 33*, 45th Parliament, pp. 2–3.

Case study – Learning on Country

- 4.66 A number of submissions highlighted the work of the Learning on Country Program (LoCP).⁵⁵ The program was established in 2013 and is primarily aimed at students from Year 10 to Year 12, with introductory activities for Year 7 to 9. It was initially run on four sites in Arnhem Land: Maningrida, Yirrkala, Laynhapuy Homelands (Yirrkala), and Galiwin'ku (Elcho Island).⁵⁶
- 4.67 LoCP provides an 'innovative educational approach that brings together Indigenous land and sea Rangers, schools, scientists, and Indigenous land owners "on country" and in classrooms to learn literacy and numeracy, science and work skills as well as local Indigenous knowledge'.⁵⁷ Dr William (Bill) Fogarty, Senior Research Fellow, National Centre for Indigenous Studies, Australian National University, told the committee that the LoCP utilises connections with communities, culture, and the land to engage students and improve attendance:
- But it is engagement in terms of community engaging in the educational program...about 65% of all the activities were done with community in some way or another, which is a big difference from perhaps your standard literacy and numeracy program that is delivered with chalk and talk but not a lot of context around it...this program certainly seems to be one that is engaging community in school in a new way and that has some good, solid pathways to further study and employment.⁵⁸
- 4.68 Dr Fogarty and Professor Mick Dodson, noted that the program was still in the early stages, but outlined key outcomes of the LoCP to date, including:
- improved attendance and retention of students;
 - increased awareness and access to pathways of employment for students;
 - intergenerational transfer of knowledge;

⁵⁵ For example: Dr Bill Fogarty and Professor Mick Dodson, *Submission 53*, 44th Parliament; Australian Education Union, *Submission 45*, 44th Parliament; Central Land Council, *Submission 41*, 44th Parliament; and Madjulla Inc., *Submission 25*, 45th Parliament.

⁵⁶ Dr William Fogarty et al, *Learning on Country Program: Progress Evaluation Report*, May 2015, p. 1.

⁵⁷ Dr William Fogarty et al, *Learning on Country Program: Progress Evaluation Report*, May 2015, p. 15.

⁵⁸ Dr William (Bill) Fogarty, Senior Research Fellow, National Centre for Indigenous Studies, Australian National University, *Committee Hansard*, Canberra, 4 February 2016, p. 7.

- improved engagement from the wider community in schooling; and
- demonstrable employment outcomes.⁵⁹

4.69 The progress evaluation report for the program, commissioned by PM&C, recommended that 'both the NT and Federal governments consider funding a staged rollout of the program beginning in January 2018', noting that:

The program has been well designed and early indications are that the model is capable of enduring common setbacks faced in remote circumstances (e.g. exponentially high staff turnover). Anecdotally, there is demand and support for the program in communities outside the trial sites.⁶⁰

Academic mentoring programs

4.70 Many of the secondary schools that the committee visited throughout the inquiry provided academic mentoring programs for students wishing to undertake university studies following secondary school. Below are a couple of examples of such programs.

Case study – Follow the Dream/Partnerships for Success

4.71 The Follow the Dream/Partnerships for Success program is operated by the Graham (Polly) Farmer Foundation, which caters to approximately 1,100 students, running 33 programs in 28 communities in Western Australia, South Australia, the Northern Territory and New South Wales.⁶¹ The program provides after school tuition, individual mentoring support, and case management in cooperation with schools:

It enables Aboriginal secondary school students who apply and are selected to participate to complete Year 12, enter tertiary studies or undertake other post school training or employment. These students are encouraged to go on to tertiary studies – university, TAFE, apprenticeships and traineeships and employment.⁶²

⁵⁹ Dr Bill Fogarty and Professor Mick Dodson, *Submission 53*, 44th Parliament, pp. 17–18.

⁶⁰ Dr William Fogarty et al, *Learning on Country Program: Progress Evaluation Report*, May 2015, pp. 1–4.

⁶¹ Graham (Polly) Farmer Foundation, <http://pff.com.au/locations/across-australia/>, accessed 14 September 2017.

⁶² Graham (Polly) Farmer Foundation, <http://pff.com.au/programs/follow-the-dream/>, accessed 14 September 2017.

Case study – Australian Indigenous Mentoring Experience Program

4.72 A number of submissions drew the committee’s attention to the success of the Australian Indigenous Mentoring Experience Program (AIME).⁶³ AIME provides a structured educational program that students can access throughout secondary school. Mr Benjamin Abbatangelo, Co-Chief Executive Officer, AIME, explained that:

The way the program works is that we sort of drop a school of life on top of the education system. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander kids come onto a university site for 50 one-hour sessions across their high school experience. The main foundation of this is that we're not saviours for the kids; we're simply a service stop for the kids that they can come to build their confidence, self-belief and strength in identity before going back to their schools to engage with the curriculum set out there and make the most of that. Importantly, throughout the year, we send university students out to the schools for 15 to 20 weeks to do one-on-one tutoring with the kids.⁶⁴

4.73 In 2015, AIME connected approximately 4,500 secondary students with more than 1,800 mentors across 37 locations, partnered with 18 Australian universities. By 2018, AIME is expected to cater to 10,000 Indigenous secondary students each year. AIME has three delivery modes:

- the AIME Institute delivered on campus at its partner universities;
- tutor squads deployed in schools with university student mentors; and
- one-to-one coaching, with post-school transition and career support.⁶⁵

4.74 The AIME program has achieved high rates of success whilst remaining cost effective. AIME told the committee that it is ‘the most cost-effective in Australia’, with a total annual cost of less than \$3,000 per student. AIME measures school progressions, Year 12 completion rates and university admissions of its participants, as well as tracks students who progress into further education, training or employment, reporting that:

- almost 100% of its participants progressed from Years 7 to 10;

⁶³ For example: Association of Independent Schools of New South Wales, *Submission 17*, 44th Parliament; Professor Jeannie Herbert AM, *Submission 8*, 44th Parliament; Reconciliation Australia, *Submission 36*, 44th Parliament; National Catholic Education Commission, *Supplementary Submission 18.2*, 44th Parliament; Dr Maryanne Macdonald, *Submission 11*, 45th Parliament; Balga Senior High School, *Submission 39*, 45th Parliament; and Association of Independent Schools of New South Wales, *Submission 23*, 44th Parliament.

⁶⁴ Mr Benjamin Abbatangelo, Mentor and Co-Chief Executive Officer, Australian Indigenous Mentoring Experience (AIME), *Proof Committee Hansard*, Brisbane, 29 August 2017, p. 8.

⁶⁵ Australian Indigenous Mentoring Experience (AIME) Indigenous Corporation, *Submission 3*, 44th Parliament, p. [4].

- 94.8% of its participants progressed from Year 10 to Year 11 – higher than the non-Indigenous rate of 94.7%; and
- 93.2% of its Year 12 participants completed school – 6.7% above the non-Indigenous rate of 86.5%.⁶⁶

Outside the safety nets

- 4.75 Despite the achievements of these programs, the evidence clearly demonstrated that there are many students who are sitting ‘outside the safety nets’.
- 4.76 The Association of Independent Schools of Western Australia explained that many states and territories have independent special assistance schools that cater for students at high educational risk, known in Western Australia as Curriculum and Reengagement in Education (CARE) Schools:
- ...some of the CARE schools have up to 70% Indigenous students...Often these students come from homes where meals and healthcare are irregular and the supportive home environment afforded most young Australians is often not their experience. Many of the young people in CARE schools have had a number of encounters with the justice system and the schools continue to support these students when in remand and in correctional facilities. The reason for this is that the school is often the only consistent thing in their lives and should a student be absent from school due to incarceration transition back to school is essential once they are released.⁶⁷
- 4.77 The Edmund Rice Education Australia’s Youth+ initiative operates a number of Flexible Learning Centres across Australia that cater to ‘the complex needs of young people who have been disenfranchised from mainstream education’.⁶⁸ Ms Amy Campbell, Head of Wellbeing, Geraldton Flexible Learning Centre, told the committee that:
- ...we are developing our relationship and our connections with the local schools that support the same cohort of young people as we do to try to work out where those young people are that are being missed in the system...The school principal will contact us themselves and say, 'We have a young person who might like support from the Flexible Learning Centre,' at which point we will go out and meet the family in their home and see if that is

⁶⁶ Australian Indigenous Mentoring Experience (AIME) Indigenous Corporation, *Submission 3*, 44th Parliament, p. [4].

⁶⁷ Association of Independent Schools (Western Australia), *Submission 32*, 44th Parliament, p. 2.

⁶⁸ Geraldton Flexible Learning Centre, *Submission 9*, 45th Parliament, p. 3.

something they want to pursue. Then we can follow on with the enrolment process from there.⁶⁹

- 4.78 In Brisbane, the committee spoke with Kurbingui Youth Development, which runs a range of programs that focus on addressing isolation, homelessness, poverty, discrimination and unemployment for Indigenous youth.⁷⁰ Mr Kevin Maund, Program Manager, Kurbingui explained that:

There were young kids coming in who were having trouble and they had other issues. They were couch surfing, not completing school and those sorts of things. Youth Development was established out of that.⁷¹

Committee comment

- 4.79 The committee supports programs and initiatives that seek to encourage regular attendance and engagement. However, all such programs and initiatives must be evidence-based and incorporate clear and effective performance measurement to ensure that they are effective.
- 4.80 School-based 'academy-style' programs that combine a wide range of wrap-around support and education elements, presented in a culturally safe environment, with a 'hook', such as hairdressing or sport, have proven to be an effective way of engaging and supporting students at school. These programs are achieving significant outcomes for Indigenous students and the committee commends these students as well as the staff that have worked diligently to support their students' achievements.
- 4.81 However, the committee was concerned to hear that programs which did not utilise a sport-based 'hook' were not being given the same recognition and support as those that did. A wide variety of 'hooks' are vital to ensure that all students are engaged, not only those who enjoy sport.
- 4.82 Many of the programs appeared to be working in isolation and without the benefit of the discoveries and experiences of similar programs operating elsewhere. It is important to ensure that the delivery of engagement programs is coordinated so that programs are first established in communities and schools that will most benefit from the programs and to avoid double delivery.

⁶⁹ Ms Amy Campbell, Head of Wellbeing, Geraldton Flexible Learning Centre, *Committee Hansard*, Geraldton, 2 May 2017, p. 20.

⁷⁰ Kurbingui Youth Development, <http://kurbingui.org.au/about/>, accessed 15 September 2017.

⁷¹ Mr Kevin Maund, Program Manager, Kurbingui Youth Development Ltd, *Committee Hansard*, Brisbane, 29 August 2017, p. 1.

- 4.83 The committee commends the success of ‘academy-style’ mentoring programs such as Stars, SHINE, Clontarf, and Girls Academy as successful examples of programs with full-time mentors in place in schools and sees the value in the expansion of these programs. The committee was also impressed by AIME’s academic mentoring model, in particular its remarkable outcomes and efficiency.
- 4.84 The committee is pleased by the progress and achievements of the Learning on Country program and supports the progress evaluation report’s recommendation that the Federal and Northern Territory governments fund a staged rollout of the program commencing in January 2018.

Recommendation 10

- 4.85 **The committee recommends that the Federal Government, in collaboration with states and territories, ensures that non-sports based school engagement and mentoring programs have the same opportunities to receive government funding as sports-based engagement and mentoring programs particularly where these programs are gender based. There must be equivalence of funding and opportunity.**