

Issues for Further Consideration

- 3.1 The Committee takes the opportunity to highlight in this Interim Report two further issues of concern raised during the inquiry, namely:
- Gender equity in the provision of education and leadership programs, and
 - The use of Direct Instruction and its affiliate, Explicit Direct Instruction, as a teaching methodology in schools.

Gender equity and opportunity

- 3.2 During the inquiry, the Committee had the opportunity to view Clontarf operations at Dubbo South College as well as AFL Cape York House in Cairns. Both organisations provide exceptional opportunities and environments for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander boys and young men to further their education, become role models and local leaders, and achieve their post-schooling goals. Clontarf Foundation in particular has a national reach with over 60 Clontarf academies established throughout Australia.
- 3.3 The Committee also received evidence regarding a select number of smaller-scale programs for girls, including the Girls Academy delivered by Role Models and Leaders Australia, and the former Indigenous Youth Leadership Program which operated in Dubbo (the Committee understands this program is now ceasing due to a lack of continuing funding). However, the Committee heard that there is a paucity of 'Clontarf-style' academies for girls where funded programs take place on school sites and are integrated into all aspects of schooling.

- 3.4 One integrated academy operating specifically for girls is the Stars Foundation, which is currently delivering programs to seven schools in the Northern Territory, reaching approximately 450 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander girls. The Stars Foundation submitted that over recent years significant Commonwealth investment has been directed at programs for young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander men, and has resulted in good outcomes for these students. However, the Foundation stated that ‘programs for boys far outweigh those for girls’.¹
- 3.5 The Foundation noted that in 2014 alone, an additional \$13.4 million in Commonwealth funding was allocated to create new boys’ programs and around 6 000 additional places for boys in these academies.² As a result, ‘retention and attainment levels for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander girls are now lagging behind that of Aboriginal boys’.³
- 3.6 Stars Foundation Executive Director, Ms Andrea Goddard stated:
- I think there are a number of factors for young women, but certainly I think the investment in young men has been very positive, and we would just like to see as much investment for young women. I suspect that we would then see far greater achievement in year 12 attainment for Aboriginal girls. It is not through lack of wanting to achieve and succeed; it is through, in my observation and experience, lack of support, and it has been starkly lacking for many, many years for young women.⁴
- 3.7 Ms Goddard, the former General Manager for Development at the Clontarf Foundation, recalled her experience whilst delivering boys-only programs when working for Clontarf:
- ...my experience with Clontarf was just that: in the 30 to 40-odd programs that I was involved in establishing, whether it was the girls themselves, the school representatives, the leadership team or community representatives, the most commonly asked question always was: this is great for boys but what about the girls, because the girls need this just as much if not more, sometimes, than the boys?... [S]ometimes that was even more of a contrast of what the girls were missing out on, because the boys would be going off on trips and engaging in lots of different activities and experiences
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1 Stars Foundation, *Submission 57*, p. 3.

2 Stars Foundation, *Submission 57*, p. 13 quoting Clontarf Foundation (2015), *Clontarf Foundation Annual Report 2014*.

3 Ms Andrea Goddard, Executive Director, Stars Foundation, *Proof Committee Hansard*, Canberra, 19 April 2016, p. 1.

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

and the girls would have to go and do a car wash to fundraise to drive to the next town, for instance. 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.⁵

- 3.8 At a public hearing, the Committee followed up community concerns regarding Government's funding disparity. The Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet explained that the Indigenous Advancement Strategy currently funds both boys and girls education programs and stated:

Government made decisions based on a range of applications it received, based on its assessment of need of different Indigenous girls and Indigenous boys – a range of issues... The Commonwealth is not responsible for funding all activities within schools. State governments have responsibilities for funding activities. 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.⁶

- 3.9 The Department advised that only two of the Academies funded in 2014 have full-time staff based in the school for the entire school day, every school day – the Clontarf Foundation (which only runs boys programs) and Role Model and Leaders Australia (which runs some girls programs). Of the two, the Clontarf Foundation had been funded for 48 boys-only academies, in contrast to 12 girls-only academies run by Role Models and Leaders Australia.⁷
- 3.10 Further, some 'academy'-style programs are funded from other sources. In response to questions, the Department noted that in 2014, 61 per cent of all 'academy'-style programs that were funded under the Sporting Chance Programme (such as that administered by Role Models and Leaders Australia) were for boys compared with only 39 per cent for girls.⁸ There may be other sources of Commonwealth funding for other academies and less-intensive programs and it is unclear whether these additional funding streams exacerbate or ameliorate the gender gap in Commonwealth funding.

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

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

7 Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet, *Submission 43.1*, p. 6.

8 Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet, *Submission 43.1*, p. 6.

Committee comment

- 3.11 Despite the Department's evidence, the Committee is left with great concern at the lack of parity in funding provided to girl's education programs in contrast to boy's programs.
- 3.12 During its inquiry, the Committee was able to visit a number of outstanding initiatives for boys including AFL Cape York House in Cairns as well as the Dubbo South Clontarf Academy. These programs are achieving significant outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander boys and the Committee commends these students as well as the staff that have worked so diligently to support their students' achievements.
- 3.13 Clontarf Foundation, for example, has a long and established history of delivering programs and well deserved excellent reputation. By contrast, there is currently no matching provider of integrated girls' programs with such national presence and long-term recognition of successful outcomes for students. In the context of government tender processes, this may have the perverse effect of making it more difficult to secure funding for girls programs, despite this being where the need is most pronounced.
- 3.14 The Committee wishes to emphasise that it does not support any redirection of funding to girls programs at the expense of currently funded boy's programs. The funding currently provided to Clontarf and other organisation delivering boys programs is vital and the results it has achieved emphasise the necessity of continuing this funding.
- 3.15 However 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.
- 3.16 The Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet advised the Committee that \$10 459 000 remains uncommitted in the Indigenous Advancement Strategy for Children and Schooling in the 2016-17 financial year.⁹ The Committee therefore recommends that remaining funding be prioritised for girls' education programs as a matter of urgency.

9 Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet, *Submission 43.1* p. 5.

Recommendation 2

The Committee recommends that, as a matter of urgency, the Australian Government allocate an additional portion of the remaining funds available through the Indigenous Advancement Strategy to girls' education programs, comparable to that of boys' programs previously allocated funding through the Strategy, so to ensure gender equity.

- 3.17 The Committee further identifies that Government tender criteria must be reformed to ensure gender equity in the provision of Commonwealth funding. The Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet informed the Committee that education programs were funded by the Indigenous Advancement Strategy after being selected in accordance with standard Commonwealth tender evaluation rules and regulations.¹⁰
- 3.18 The Committee is extremely concerned that public funds are unintentionally contributing to the further entrenchment in gender inequality for young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and their access to educational opportunities. The Committee therefore recommends that in future rounds of grant applications under the Indigenous Advancement Strategy, the Government ensure that the number and especially the type of boys' and girls' programs are funded equitably, and if necessary, undertake to fund additional programs to rectify gender inequality.

Recommendation 3

The Committee recommends that in evaluating future grant applications, the Australian Government ensure that there is equity in the number and especially the type of girls' and boys' education programs funded, and if necessary, undertake to fund additional programs to ensure gender equity.

- 3.19 During the inquiry, the Committee also visited the Cape York Girl Academy, one of a few schools in Australia specifically designed for students during and after their pregnancy. In addition to regular classes,

¹⁰ Ms Liz Hefren-Webb, First Assistant Secretary, Schools, Information and Evaluation, Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet, *Proof Committee Hansard*, Canberra, 19 April 2016, pp. 15-16.

the Academy provides boarding facilities for its Indigenous students and their babies, parenting classes, child care, as well as health and wellbeing programs. Teenage pregnancy is one of the most common reasons for young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women to drop out of school, yet the education and wellbeing of mothers is a determinant for the health and wellbeing of their children.

- 3.20 The Committee is therefore of the view that there is a chronic need for more dedicated schools for young Indigenous mothers and their children.

Direct Instruction and Explicit Direct Instruction

- 3.21 Direct Instruction and its affiliate, Explicit Direct Instruction, are ‘forms of explicit instruction pedagogy with a comprehensive curriculum, student assessment and scripted lessons’. Within these models ‘students are taught carefully sequenced and highly structured lessons and are required to “master” each lesson before advancing on to the next’.¹¹
- 3.22 This method of teaching is being used in a small number of schools in Queensland, the Northern Territory and Western Australia.

Committee comment

- 3.23 In March 2016 the Committee travelled to the Cape York area and observed lessons being delivered via Direct Instruction/Explicit Direct Instruction in schools in Coen and Aurukun. The Committee also received evidence about Direct Instruction in both submissions and hearings. In some instances, serious concerns were expressed by both parents and teachers that Direct Instruction was not effective as a teaching method in their schools.
- 3.24 In light of these observations and evidence, the Committee expresses its grave concern regarding the effectiveness of this teaching approach for students of all ages and the extent to which it can equip students for future opportunities. While acknowledging that the pedagogy may be of value in the earliest years in literacy and numeracy fundamentals, it appeared to be limiting for older students studying other subjects. Although it has not undertaken a comprehensive inquiry into this teaching practice, the Committee feels compelled to state its concerns in this Interim Report.

11 Good to Great Schools Australia, ‘Effective Instruction’, <<http://www.goodtogreatschools.org.au/OUR%20PROGRAM/effective-instruction>> accessed 26 April 2016.

- 3.25 The Committee notes that the Commonwealth is funding Direct Instruction in Australian schools and that there is currently an evaluation of the teaching method associated with that funding grant. The Committee sought further details regarding the breadth of this review. The Department of Education and Training advised that Good to Great Schools Australia selected the Centre for Program Evaluation, Melbourne Graduate School of Education at the University of Melbourne to evaluate the *Flexible literacy in remote primary schools programme*. The \$22 million program is funded over four years from 2013-14 to 2016-17. The Department advised that the evaluation will assess growth in:
- Teacher skills of explicit instruction pedagogy including the application of those skills;
 - The rate of student progress and achievement;
 - The relationship between student progress and:
 - ⇒ Fidelity of the programme - teachers' skills in delivering Direct Instruction or Explicit Direct Instruction
 - ⇒ Dosage - student attendance/lessons attended, student behaviour.¹²
- 3.26 The results from that evaluation will be made available in early 2017.¹³ However, the Committee is concerned that this evaluation is not comprehensive or independent from the organisation delivering the pedagogy, and notes that the evaluation focuses more on the delivery of Direct Instruction rather than its effectiveness or comparisons with other teaching methods. The Committee is therefore of the view that Direct Instruction and Explicit Direct Instruction should be reviewed by a truly independent evaluator, with comprehensive terms of reference that incorporate comparative studies and longitudinal measures of its effectiveness.
- 3.27 Phonics instruction, which is a key component of Direct Instruction but not the entirety of the pedagogy, was last reviewed by the Australian Government in 2004-2005 as part of a broader inquiry, the National Inquiry into the Teaching of Literacy, chaired by Dr Ken Rowe.¹⁴
- 3.28 Organisations such as Good to Great Schools Australia have been delivering Direct Instruction and Explicit Direct Instruction in Australian schools since 2010. The Committee is of the strong view that the efficacy of

12 Department of Education and Training, *Submission 43.4*, p. 1.

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

14 Ken Rowe, *Teaching Reading: National Inquiry into the Teaching of Literacy*, Australian Council for Educational Research, 2005, available at <http://research.acer.edu.au/tll_misc/5/>

this pedagogy should now be comprehensively reviewed. The Committee urges Commonwealth and State Education Ministers to carefully consider Direct Instruction in schools. From its observations and evidence, this Committee is unable to support the use of Direct Instruction in all schools for all grades. The Committee recommends that no additional financial support for Direct Instruction be available until an independent, comprehensive and longitudinal review finds the teaching method to be effective in delivering improved outcomes for the majority of students.

Resumption of the inquiry

- 3.29 As noted earlier, the Committee has determined to present this Interim Report given that a federal election is expected to be called before the Committee can conclude its full evidence gathering and reporting. The Committee considers this to be a vital inquiry and an important opportunity to shape educational opportunities for future generations of Indigenous students.
- 3.30 By 2020, an additional 100 000 Indigenous students will be enrolling for their first day of school. We owe it to those students beginning their schooling, and those students who are leaving school to seek employment or further training, to ensure that the educational system is adapted to their needs, delivering quality and accessible education, and preparing these students to be family, community and national leaders.
- 3.31 Education is about aspiring to and achieving personal goals. Currently our educational system is not always succeeding in providing the aspiration or the achievement levels that Indigenous students rightly deserve. Too often statistics cite the failures of Indigenous students – retention rates below their non-Indigenous counterparts, NAPLAN results below their non-Indigenous counterparts and rates of further education and employment below their non-Indigenous counterparts.
- 3.32 It is the strong belief of the Committee that these statistics indicate an education system that is failing many of its Indigenous students, rather than Indigenous students who are failing the education system.
- 3.33 The Committee acknowledges that many Indigenous students face challenges in their out of school lives and that a suite of social issues and disadvantage affect the capacity of some Indigenous families and communities to support children in their schooling. However, these challenges and these social issues do not diminish the responsibility of our education system to provide a quality and appropriate education – rather, it is the contention of this Committee that there is an increased onus on

our education system to ensure it provides the opportunities for students to emerge from these challenges and to have the capacity to choose their own future.

- 3.34 More specifically, in the Cape York area the Committee observed the use of teacher audio-enhancement equipment for students who have hearing loss. This Committee has previously identified hearing loss as a key issue for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people. In 2011, the Committee made two recommendations in its *Doing Time* report to ensure that police are appropriately trained to identify and respond to individuals with hearing loss, as well as improving access to the health system for all Indigenous youth with hearing loss who enter the criminal justice system.¹⁵ The same issues apply even more so in the education system. The Committee identified during its inquiry the need for more teacher-audio-enhancement equipment in schools as well as hearing aids for students. This equipment is vital to ensure that students with hearing loss are not at a disadvantage to their peers and have the equal opportunity to achieve at school.
- 3.35 Given the complexity of these issues and the broad scope of the terms of reference, the Committee does not consider it has yet completed the extent of evidence gathering required to develop a holistic set of recommendations for the future. However, the work undertaken to date has highlighted some areas of significant concern. In addition to those issues raised in this Interim Report, the Committee considers that detailed investigations into formal and informal boarding arrangements are required, in particular consideration of partnering opportunities with local and home communities to provide holistic care and education.
- 3.36 It is the strong desire of members of this Committee for the inquiry to be resumed in the 45th Parliament and for the Indigenous Affairs Committee of that parliament to continue this important inquiry, building on the work undertaken to date. Therefore the Committee recommends that the Minister for Indigenous Affairs refer to the Indigenous Affairs Committee in the 45th Parliament the inquiry into educational opportunities for Indigenous students and task the Committee with a focus on boarding arrangements.

15 House of Representatives Standing Committee on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs, *Doing Time – Time for Doing: Indigenous youth in the criminal justice system*, June 2011, Recommendations 13 and 15.

Recommendation 4

The Committee recommends that, in the 45th Parliament, the Minister for Indigenous Affairs refer to the Indigenous Affairs Committee the Inquiry into educational opportunities and boarding arrangements for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students.

The Hon Dr Sharman Stone MP

Chair

May 2016