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The Parliament of the Commonwealth of Australia

# Interim Report: First steps for improving educational opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students

House of Representatives  
Standing Committee on Indigenous Affairs

May 2016  
Canberra

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## Membership of the Committee

Chair	The Hon Dr Sharman Stone MP	
Deputy Chair	The Hon Mr Warren Snowdon MP	
Members	Ms Sharon Claydon MP <small>(from 19/10/15)</small>	Mr Bert van Manen MP <small>(to 19/10/15)</small>
	Mr Mark Coulton MP	The Hon Mr Shayne Neumann MP
	The Hon Warren Entsch MP	Mr Graham Perrett MP
	Mr Andrew Giles MP <small>(to 19/10/15)</small>	Ms Melissa Price MP <small>(to 11/11/15)</small>
	Mr Andrew Lamming MP	Mr Rowan Ramsey MP

## Committee Secretariat

Committee Secretary	Dr Anna Dacre
Senior Research Officer	Ms Lauren Wilson
Administrative Officer	Ms Jessica Hargreaves



# List of recommendations

## 2 ABSTUDY

### Recommendation 1

The Committee recommends that the Department of Human Services undertake an independent review of ABSTUDY with a view to the program being redesigned and the new system being fully operational at the latest by 30 June 2017.

## 3 Issues for Further Consideration

### 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.

### 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.

### Recommendation 4

The Committee recommends that, in the 45<sup>th</sup> 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.





## Introduction

- 1.1 Education is essential for providing Indigenous young people with opportunities and choices for the future. Addressing the gap in educational outcomes between Indigenous and non-Indigenous students is a critical element in improving the quality of life for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. In such a diverse country that is Australia, catering to the needs of regional, remote and metropolitan students requires flexible and responsive education delivery.
- 1.2 This inquiry has asked where the problems lie, given the gap remaining between Indigenous and non-Indigenous outcomes, and also what is working well. We wanted to know what schools are delivering positive outcomes for students, what programs have not worked and what lessons have been learnt? It has asked how we can move young people back into the system after they have dropped out – what works for girls, what works for young mothers and their children, and what works for boys.
- 1.3 What the Committee has heard so far is that there are some very effective programs that are successfully engaging Indigenous students in a myriad of different settings, from remote to regional, boarding, scholarship, community, independent and city schools. However, the Committee has also heard that there are widespread community concerns in some areas, most significantly in relation to ABSTUDY arrangements.
- 1.4 Given these concerns, and in anticipation of an election being held in July 2016, the Committee resolved to issue this Interim Report so that these issues were highlighted as soon as possible and action could be taken. This report is not intended to be a comprehensive consideration of all issues raised, nor a complete interrogation of the veracity of all concerns and

issues raised by stakeholders. There has not been sufficient time to complete this report.

- 1.5 The Committee believes however that the issues contained in this report are of such concern that the Minister's consideration of these significant issues cannot be postponed.
- 1.6 As this report highlights, this inquiry is unfinished business. It is imperative that this inquiry be resumed in the next Parliament to build on and complete the valuable work undertaken thus far by this Committee and to do justice to all of the evidence received.

## **Conduct of the inquiry**

- 1.7 On 16 September 2015, the Minister for Indigenous Affairs, Senator the Hon Nigel Scullion asked the Committee to inquire into and report on educational opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students.
- 1.8 The terms of reference called on the Committee to inquire into key aspects of educational opportunities and outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students up to school leaving age, including but not limited to:
  - access to, participation in and outcomes of pre-schooling;
  - the provision of boarding school education and its outcomes;
  - access to, participation in, and benefits of different school models for indigenous students in different parts of Australia;
  - engagement and achievement of students in remote areas;
  - impacts on, and support for, families and communities whose children experience different models of educational services;
  - best practice models, both domestically and internationally; and
  - comparisons of school models in the transition to further education and employment outcomes.
- 1.9 The Committee sought and received submissions from a wide range of individuals, education groups and state and territory governments. To date, the Committee has received 61 submissions and 11 supplementary submissions which are listed at Appendix A.
- 1.10 The Committee held fifteen public hearings in Queensland, South Australia, New South Wales and in Canberra, hearing from over 200 witnesses. Witnesses at public hearings are listed at Appendix B.

- 1.11 The Committee did not have an opportunity to fulfil its planned hearing program in the Northern Territory, Western Australia, Victoria or Tasmania. The opportunity to consider the specific needs of students and educators in regional and metropolitan Victoria and Tasmania in particular leaves a considerable gap in the inquiry.
- 1.12 The Committee did have the opportunity to visit schools in Brisbane, Adelaide, Cairns, Coen, Aurukun, Thursday Island, Newcastle, Sydney and Dubbo. The Committee offers its sincere thanks to those schools and the students it met with. These visits were invaluable to the inquiry and gave the Committee an appreciation of the scope of issues to be addressed, as well as the outstanding work being undertaken by many educators and students.
- 1.13 Recognising that it may not be easy for some to speak out about their education experiences, as well as calling for public submissions the Committee sought views by way of an anonymous online questionnaire. The questionnaire was promoted on the Committee's website and advertised through social media. The Committee also understands that many schools which the Committee visited used the questionnaire in preparation for students' meetings with Committee Members.
- 1.14 At the time of reporting, almost 550 questionnaire responses had been received. These responses have been invaluable in guiding the Committee's deliberations throughout the inquiry.

## Structure of the report

- 1.15 Chapter 2 puts on record the extensive community concerns regarding ABSTUDY arrangements. It raises matters for the Minister's consideration as a matter of priority.
- 1.16 Chapter 3 makes some preliminary observations regarding gender equity and Direct Instruction teaching method. It also discusses the importance of this inquiry being continued by the Committee's successor in the 45<sup>th</sup> Parliament.
- 1.17 Although it is not usual for an interim report to list all submissions and exhibits received and public hearings held, as this report is being issued close to the conclusion of the 44<sup>th</sup> Parliament, these are listed at the appendices as noted above for the completeness of the inquiry record.



## ABSTUDY

### Introduction

2.1 The ABSTUDY Policy Manual, produced by the Australian Government Department of Social Services, states that:

ABSTUDY ... signals the Australian Government's recognition that education will be a key to the Government's objective of reconciliation with the Indigenous community, and a prime measure by which its overall performance in this area will be measured.

The main objectives of the ABSTUDY Scheme are to:

- encourage Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to take full advantage of the educational opportunities available;
- promote equity of educational opportunity; and
- improve educational outcomes.<sup>1</sup>

2.2 The scheme aims to address educational disadvantage by assisting with the costs associated with study, housing, living expenses and travelling to or from a place of study, if study must be away from home.

2.3 ABSTUDY is made up of a range of payment types which are supposed to respond to the particular needs of students and their families, and as such, 'there is no single per student ABSTUDY rate'.<sup>2</sup> The Scheme includes multiple supplementary payments and benefits that can affect the total

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1 Department of Social Services, *ABSTUDY Policy Manual*, available at <[http://guides.dss.gov.au/sites/default/files/files/2016\\_ABSTUDY\\_Policy\\_Manual.pdf](http://guides.dss.gov.au/sites/default/files/files/2016_ABSTUDY_Policy_Manual.pdf)>.

2 Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet, Department of Education and Training, Department of Human Services, Department of Social Services, Department of Communications and the Arts, *Submission 43*, p. 12.

rate of assistance. These include living away from home allowances, travel allowances and additional incidentals.

- 2.4 In 2014-2015, nearly \$150 million was paid in secondary schooling ABSTUDY awards to 19 000 secondary school students alone. In the same year a further 9 500 students were in receipt of an ABSTUDY tertiary award.<sup>3</sup>
- 2.5 The provision and administration of ABSTUDY was of central concern to the Committee's inquiry. Indeed, a majority of participants in the inquiry expressed concern about the policies or administration arrangements of ABSTUDY, with many recounting very unfortunate personal experiences with the system.
- 2.6 This chapter does not recite ABSTUDY policy. Rather, the purpose of this chapter is to report the community's significant concerns about access to and implementation of ABSTUDY.
- 2.7 Broadly, concerns can be grouped into the following:
- Concerns regarding the ABSTUDY arrangements for students who board, including:
    - ⇒ Census dates,
    - ⇒ Retention of students, and
    - ⇒ Ensuring quality outcomes
  - Administrative concerns, including language and literacy challenges when completing application forms, as well as significant time delays in processing forms, leaving children without access to a school.

## Community concerns

### Boarding and ABSTUDY

- 2.8 A principal concern related to ABSTUDY arrangements was for students who board. Students who live away from home in order to access schooling may stay with other family members, in group houses, in hostels, at boarding schools, or at residential schools. ABSTUDY can be paid in all of these circumstances, and assists with the costs of travel, accommodation and the associated costs of going to school.
- 2.9 The maximum amount a secondary school student can have approved for funding to live away from home is \$25,356.36 per annum (as of 1 July
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3 Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet, the Department of Education and Training, the Department of Human Services, the Department of Social Services and the Department of Communications and the Arts, *Submission 43*, pp. 11-12.

2015).<sup>4</sup> These payments may be paid to the hostel or boarding school directly on the students' behalf. Alternatively, students boarding privately usually receive payments fortnightly and can choose for them to be directed to the student, the parent, or the boarding provider.<sup>5</sup>

- 2.10 The community expressed concerns regarding school census dates, retention of students and the consequences for payments and ensuring quality outcomes. Each of these is addressed below.

### Census dates

- 2.11 Where a student is boarding, ABSTUDY payments are made to the school at the beginning of the term, following the census date (the third Friday of the new term). Two issues were raised by the community about census dates.
- 2.12 The first of these concerns was the lack of flexibility in circumstances where a student moves after the census date from one school to another school. A student may commence a term at boarding school but due to the personal challenges, may soon leave. In such situations, the new school enrolling the student is not being appropriately resourced to supply that education for the remainder of a school term.<sup>6</sup>
- 2.13 In 2014, ABSTUDY benefits were paid to over 200 boarding schools and hostels on behalf of over 4 300 students.<sup>7</sup> However, a joint submission from the Departments of the Prime Minister and Cabinet, Education and Training, Human Services, Social Services and Communications and the Arts noted that 'while many students thrive in the boarding school environment, some do not', and consequently 'around one third of ABSTUDY school students in formal boarding arrangements move on and off payments during a school year'.<sup>8</sup> This in itself is a serious problem.

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4 Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet, the Department of Education and Training, the Department of Human Services, the Department of Social Services and the Department of Communications and the Arts , *Submission 43*, p. 19

5 Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet, the Department of Education and Training, the Department of Human Services, the Department of Social Services and the Department of Communications and the Arts , *Submission 43*, p. 20.

6 Mr Anthony Gerard Bennett, Manager, Wiltja Boarding, Department for Education and Child Development, *Proof Committee Hansard*, 26 February 2016, p. 24.

7 Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet, the Department of Education and Training, the Department of Human Services, the Department of Social Services and the Department of Communications and the Arts , *Submission 43*, p. 11.

8 Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet, the Department of Education and Training, the Department of Human Services, the Department of Social Services and the Department of Communications and the Arts , *Submission 43*, p. 13.

2.14 The second concern raised by the community was that students may not be able to arrive at the school prior to the census date and therefore the school is required to absorb the costs for the remainder of the term.

2.15 The Association of Independent Schools of the Northern Territory commented that bad weather can prevent students from enrolling in school because they have no transport access between remote communities:

The conditions imposed by ABSTUDY having a census day in the third week of every term means that invariably a significant percentage of students are not counted and each boarding school is only funded for the time that a student is present. Almost always these delays in students arriving are not within the control of the schools. Yet the schools must have their full teaching and boarding staff in place from the beginning of term. We are unable to be flexible enough with staffing to meet the staggered return of students. Schools are punished due to circumstances that are beyond their control.

We have been advised that where the delay to a student commencing school is due to a weather or cultural event outside of the schools control the school can seek a waiver from DHS/Centrelink on the census date requirement. As yet no school has successfully achieved such a waiver.<sup>9</sup>

2.16 Responding to these concerns, the Department of Human Services advised the Committee:

The current policy that we adhere to is that we pay the term in advance to a boarding school or hostel on the basis that the student has commenced study by the third Friday of the school term. If there are some extenuating circumstances, we can look at those reasons or, similarly, if they could not commence in the first three weeks of term we can pay a pro rata amount to the school as well.<sup>10</sup>

2.17 The Committee asked the Department of Human Services to confirm whether any school had successfully received a waiver. In writing, the Department provided the following partial response:

The department does consider exceptional circumstances that lead to the late commencement of secondary studies and has paid

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9 Association of Independent Schools of the Northern Territory, *Submission 9*, p. 7.

10 Mrs Melissa Ryan, Participation Division, Department of Human Services, *Proof Committee Hansard*, Canberra, 19 April 2016, p. 11.



ABSTUDY to education institutions for the full school term in these circumstances.<sup>11</sup>

- 2.18 The Department did not provide any further details about these arrangements, or the numbers involved.

### Retention of students

- 2.19 To ensure that ABSTUDY funding is provided to the school where the student is currently enrolled, Boarding Australia recommended that a 'retention supplement' or 'staged payments according to outcomes' could overcome these challenges.<sup>12</sup>

- 2.20 Boarding Australia also expressed frustration that existing ABSTUDY arrangements provide very little support to schools to ensure boarding students return to school after visiting home during school holidays or for leaving to attend cultural activities during the school term. Boarding Australia stated:

ABSTUDY at the moment provides a very perverse incentive. Each student is allowed two cultural trips per year. I am not saying that is a bad thing. There needs to be some mechanism, but at the moment the kids know and families know that twice a year they can go home for cultural reasons. It is often very unhelpful, and often the kids do not come back. When it is used appropriately, it is brilliant, but there is room there for a perverse outcome.<sup>13</sup>

- 2.21 The Departments did not respond to these concerns or suggestions at public hearings or in supplementary submissions to the inquiry.
- 2.22 One boarding facility, Wiltja, has now overcome the constant demands that students return home for extended family funerals by developing a formal letter of sympathy which has satisfied all parties.

### Ensuring quality outcomes

- 2.23 As currently administered, ABSTUDY payments for boarding arrangements are not tied to engagement or retention of students nor the provision of quality of education and support. ABSTUDY 'simply provides access' to education.<sup>14</sup> This was a concern for Boarding Australia:

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11 Department of Human Services, *Submission 43.2*, p. 1.

12 Boarding Australia, *Submission 7*, p. 2.

13 Mr Anthony Gerard Bennett, Manager, Wiltja Boarding, Department for Education and Child Development, *Proof Committee Hansard*, Adelaide, 26 February 2016, p. 26.

14 Mr Anthony Gerard Bennett, Manager, Wiltja Boarding, Department for Education and Child Development, *Proof Committee Hansard*, Adelaide, 26 February 2016, p. 24.

ABSTUDY, as great a facilitator as it is, has not made that jump yet to say, 'We will pay for the outcome of that access, not just the access.'<sup>15</sup>

...

The ABSTUDY system simply provides access to secondary education. It is not linked or tied to engagement or retention. None of that is factored into the current system. My belief is that the system basically has not been reviewed since the 1970s, when it was set up to provide access. It is a laudable notion, but it needs to be linked very clearly to engagement and, therefore, retention and outcomes. There are a number of policy settings at the minute within ABSTUDY which in fact encourage the revolving door of Indigenous boarding and cherry picking.<sup>16</sup>

- 2.24 Furthermore, the absence of enforced standards has meant that a number of informal boarding arrangements operate with very little or no regulation. Boarding Australia stated that it was aware of a number of providers of 'pseudo-boarding' – 'private individuals who offer accommodation to Indigenous students in return for payments provided by ABSTUDY'. Boarding Australia reflected that 'the quality and safety of these operations, delivered outside of any formal scrutiny or accreditation, cannot be assured'.<sup>17</sup> The organisation commented:

At the minute anybody can make application to ABSTUDY to acquire funding. There is no audit; there is no check – nothing. There are no standards upon which a check could be made.<sup>18</sup>

- 2.25 The Committee raised the issue of 'informal' boarding arrangements with the Department of Social Services. The Department advised it was aware of approximately 300 such arrangements and that:

We do not have any role in looking at the quality of that particular arrangement. It is the parent who decides to direct the funding that goes to that family. They decide to direct a portion of that to another party. Then there is an administrative arrangement

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15 Mr Daniel Cox, Chief Executive Officer, Boarding Australia, *Proof Committee Hansard*, Adelaide, 26 February 2016, p. 22.

16 Mr Anthony Gerard Bennett, Manager, Wiltja Boarding, Department for Education and Child Development, *Proof Committee Hansard*, Adelaide, 26 February 2016, p. 24.

17 Boarding Australia, *Submission 7*, p. 2.

18 Mr Anthony Gerard Bennett, Manager, Wiltja Boarding, Department for Education and Child Development, *Proof Committee Hansard*, Adelaide, 26 February 2016, p. 23.

through Human Services to make that happen. But, from a quality standard point of view, no, we do not.<sup>19</sup>

- 2.26 The Department further reported that while some states have regulations to ensure police checks and/or working with children checks, not all states and territories had such arrangements.<sup>20</sup> The Department informed the Committee that it was aware of the concerns about informal boarding arrangements that had been raised during the inquiry, and that it was 'certainly something that we are thinking about'.<sup>21</sup>

## Administrative concerns

- 2.27 A large number of participants in the Committee's inquiry stated that many families have difficulty completing ABSTUDY forms,<sup>22</sup> with some recommending better support be provided by government to assist families seeking to access ABSTUDY for their children.<sup>23</sup>

- 2.28 For example, the Association of Independent Schools of the Northern Territory stated:

the ABSTUDY process in the Northern Territory is asking people who are partly nomadic, marginally literate in the English language and with negligible understanding of the use of money or its value to operate within the ABSTUDY application process and its ongoing processes. No matter how the process is modified within the requirements of [the Department of Human Services] DHS, the processes will still be designed for the dominant user group and remain mystifying for the vast majority of remote Indigenous families. Even with support offered by DHS officers and the Principals of local government primary schools, applications are still rejected because they are not correctly completed to DHS requirements.<sup>24</sup>

- 2.29 More specifically, the community also reported difficulties to the Committee because birth certificates and permanent street addresses were

19 Ms Emma-Kate McGuirk, Branch Manager, Work and Study Payments, Department of Social Services, *Proof Committee Hansard*, Canberra, 19 April 2016, p. 11.

20 Ms Emma-Kate McGuirk, Branch Manager, Work and Study Payments, Department of Social Services, *Proof Committee Hansard*, Canberra, 19 April 2016, p. 11; Mr Andrew Whitecross, Branch Manager, Rates and Means Testing Policy Branch, Department of Social Services, *Proof Committee Hansard*, Canberra, 19 April 2016, p. 11.

21 Ms Emma-Kate McGuirk, Branch Manager, Work and Study Payments, Department of Social Services, *Proof Committee Hansard*, Canberra, 19 April 2016, p. 11.

22 For example: Catholic Agricultural College, *Submission 5*, p. 1; Association of Independent Schools of the Northern Territory, *Submission 9*, p. 6.

23 For example: Catholic Agricultural College, *Submission 5*, p. 1.

24 Association of Independent Schools of the Northern Territory, *Submission 9*, p. 6.

required by ABSTUDY application processes, and in some cases this had made application processes much more difficult for students and their families.<sup>25</sup> The Department of Human Services informed the Committee that birth certificates are no longer required where the student is under 16 years of age. Where the student is over 16, alternative identifications are accepted by the Department.<sup>26</sup>

- 2.30 At a public hearing, the Department of Human Services was eager to promote its 'staff-assisted claim' process whereby ABSTUDY applications could be made completely over the phone:

a parent can phone a 1800 number, and our trained staff can help them, with the aid of interpreters as well, work through and answer the relevant questions to fast-track the processing of that claim. There may be some delays in processing, usually because we need a customer declaration form to come back, to certify that the information that we have collected on behalf of that parent is actually correct. But we will do follow-up calls as well to say, 'Send this declaration in, and then we can finalise your claim.' We have agents and we have Indigenous service officers around Australia to help facilitate the processing of those claims. The latest advice I have is that the majority, in excess of 80 per cent, of the claims are now done through staff-assisted claims over the phone.<sup>27</sup>

- 2.31 The Department of Human Services informed the Committee that it promotes the 'staff-assisted claim' process and the 1800 number online and on the front page of the ABSTUDY form.<sup>28</sup>
- 2.32 Following the hearing, the Department advised the Committee in writing that in the current financial year to date, 76.2 per cent of ABSTUDY claims have been processed via the staff-assisted channel. However the Department advised that it could not provide the geographical location of these applications as the data was not captured.<sup>29</sup> No evidence taken from

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25 For example, Mr Greg Cousins, Co-ordinator, Wiltja Secondary College, Windsor Gardens, *Proof Committee Hansard*, Adelaide, 26 February 2016, p. 5.

26 Mrs Melissa Ryan, Participation Division, Department of Human Services, *Proof Committee Hansard*, Canberra, 19 April 2016, p. 9.

27 Mrs Melissa Ryan, Participation Division, Department of Human Services, *Proof Committee Hansard*, Canberra, 19 April 2016, p. 8. See also Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet, the Department of Education and Training, the Department of Human Services, the Department of Social Services and the Department of Communications and the Arts, *Submission 43*, p. 13.

28 Mrs Melissa Ryan, Participation Division, Department of Human Services, *Proof Committee Hansard*, Canberra, 19 April 2016, p. 9.

29 Department of Human Services, *Submission 43.3*, p. 1.

parents indicated they were aware of or had used the staff assisted channel.

2.33 In addition to these challenges, the Committee repeatedly heard that the time taken to process ABSTUDY forms had meant that children were not able to commence the 2016 school year. For example, the Committee heard on Thursday Island that secondary school students were prevented from commencing the new school year because ABSTUDY application processes had not been finalised by the Department of Human Services. The Committee heard this evidence in week five of the school year, meaning that students had missed a considerable part of the first term.

2.34 These concerns were echoed by Boarding Australia:

we also have a situation at the moment, which has been going on for quite some years, that the administrative structure, the bureaucracy of ABSTUDY, is causing extremely long delays in the processing system. The details do not matter, but it effectively means that many kids are being denied access to secondary education for periods of up to six months.<sup>30</sup>

2.35 The Department also advised that the average number of days to process a claim has been 21 days in the current financial year to date.<sup>31</sup>

2.36 At a public hearing in April, the Departments of the Prime Minister and Cabinet, Human Services and Social Services reported that they were working collaboratively to rectify some of these issues.<sup>32</sup> The Departments' joint submission similarly stated:

The Departments of Social Services, Human Services and the Prime Minister and Cabinet are currently looking into ways to further simplify ABSTUDY as part of the Government's response to recommendations in the Creating Parity and McClure Welfare Review reports.<sup>33</sup>

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30 Mr Anthony Gerard Bennett, Manager, Wiltja Boarding, Department for Education and Child Development, *Proof Committee Hansard*, Adelaide, 26 February 2016, p. 28.

31 Department of Human Services, *Submission 43.3*, p. 1.

32 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. 7.

33 Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet, the Department of Education and Training, the Department of Human Services, the Department of Social Services and the Department of Communications and the Arts, *Submission 43*, p. 13.

## Reviews of ABSTUDY

- 2.37 Gains in Indigenous educational outcomes are subject to regular monitoring through the annual Closing the Gap reporting. While the stated objective of ABSTUDY is to improve Indigenous educational outcomes, there has been little change to its eligibility criteria or administration, and little analysis of its effectiveness over the last decade.
- 2.38 Several Australian National Audit Office reports have addressed broader issues such as Indigenous service delivery and the provision of boarding facilities by the Commonwealth.<sup>34</sup> These reports make mention of the ABSTUDY scheme but evaluation of its administration is not part of the audit inquiry.
- 2.39 There have been a number of Departmental reports which have reported on Indigenous education outcomes and included a review on some aspects of the ABSTUDY scheme. For example, in 2006 the Department of Finance and Administration released the report *Evaluation of the Indigenous Education Strategic Initiatives Programme*<sup>35</sup> which considered ABSTUDY in the context of reviewing the effectiveness of providing travel allowances and fares to Indigenous students participating in distance education.
- 2.40 Similarly, in 2006 the Department of Education, Science and Training released its review into the impact of ABSTUDY policy changes that came into effect in 2000.<sup>36</sup> Also in 2006, the Department of Education, Science and Training released a further report *Improving indigenous outcomes and enhancing indigenous culture and knowledge in Australian higher education*.<sup>37</sup>
- 2.41 These reports do not appear to have resulted in any significant changes to ABSTUDY to improve its administration or outcomes.
- 2.42 In 2012, the Department of Industry, Innovation, Science, Research and Tertiary Education released the *Review of Higher Education Access and*

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34 ANAO, *Audit Report: Initiatives to Support the Delivery of Services to Indigenous Australians*, June 2014, available at <<https://www.anao.gov.au/work/performance-audit/initiatives-support-delivery-services-indigenous-australians>>; ANAO, *Audit Report: Indigenous Secondary Student Accommodation Initiatives*, October 2011, available at <<https://www.anao.gov.au/work/performance-audit/indigenous-secondary-student-accommodation-initiatives>>.

35 Department of Finance and Administration, *Evaluation of the Indigenous Education Strategic Initiatives Programme - Away-from-Base for 'Mixed-Mode' Delivery (IESIP-AFB)*, Office of Finance and Audit, Report No. 1-2006, Canberra, 2006.

36 Department of Education, Science and Training, *Review into the impact of ABSTUDY policy changes that came into effect in 2000*, Strategic Analysis and Evaluation Group, Department of Education, Science and Training, Canberra, 2006.

37 Department of Education, Science and Training, *Improving indigenous outcomes and enhancing indigenous culture and knowledge in Australian higher education: report to the Minister for Education, Science and Training, Indigenous Higher Education Advisory Council*, Canberra.

*Outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People.* While not considering ABSTUDY in detail, this report did find that:

Changes to ABSTUDY with the aim of aligning the means tests and payment rates with those of Youth Allowance and Newstart took effect from 1 January 2000. There was a sharp decline in higher education Indigenous enrolments in 2000 and ABSTUDY recipient numbers in higher education declined significantly in 2002 and 2003 (DEST, 2004). It is likely that both the means test and the payment rates need urgent reconsideration.<sup>38</sup>

## Committee comment

- 2.43 For a program whose objective suggests it is an integral component of the Government response to addressing Indigenous educational disadvantage, it is concerning that there has been no serious comprehensive evaluation of the scheme's administration, eligibility criteria, delivery or outcomes.
- 2.44 Although this Committee has not been able to complete its full inquiry, the repeated concerns raised by the community in relation to ABSTUDY are of such critical importance that the Minister's consideration of these issues should not be postponed.
- 2.45 The Committee is extremely concerned that government programs are preventing children from attending school for up to six months. The seriousness of this situation is magnified when considering the national efforts from governments and communities alike to increase attendance at school under the Closing the Gap targets.
- 2.46 The Committee also believes that ABSTUDY should not just facilitate access to schooling. Rather, the Committee fully supports the comment made by Boarding Australia that ABSTUDY has the potential to be 'a lever for quality'.<sup>39</sup> The Committee is concerned that current ABSTUDY arrangements leave the program open to private, informal or 'pseudo-boarding' facilities with little assurances offered to parents as to their quality or safety despite receiving public funds from the Commonwealth. This problem is exacerbated by the absence of regulations of boarding facilities in some states and territories.

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38 L Behrendt et al, *Review of Higher Education Access and Outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People: Final Report*, Department of Industry, Innovation, Science, Research and Tertiary Education, Canberra, 2012 p.16

39 Mr Daniel Cox, Chief Executive Officer, Boarding Australia, *Proof Committee Hansard*, Adelaide, 26 February 2016, p. 22.

- 2.47 The Committee notes positive initiatives such as outreach services and telephone assisted application service, and appreciates that this services is being used by over 76 per cent of applicants. However, it is clear from the Committee's travel to numerous urban, regional and remote locations around Australia, that many communities and schools are not aware of the service and may not be submitting applications due to complexity of forms and language barriers.
- 2.48 It is the view of the Committee that the success of this and other outreach services should not be measured by the percentage that use assisted services. These figures do not capture those unaware of the services, those intimidated by the application process and language barriers, or lack of information technology skills or those utilising teachers or other private assistance to aid completion.
- 2.49 The Committee sought further information from the Department which would have shown the geographical location of those using the telephone assisted and outreach services. The Department advised the Committee that it did not hold this data. The Committee believes that such data would not only show where the Department's initiatives were having the greatest effect, but also show where more concentrated awareness raising and assistance should be focussed.
- 2.50 Furthermore the Committee finds it absurd that when Departmental officers were advised that numerous remote communities and regional schools appeared unaware of these services, their response was to reiterate that the provision of specialist assistance (including language and translator support) is promoted online and on the cover of the 63 page application form. Clearly, promotion of these vital assisted services needs a more targeted and appropriate delivery.
- 2.51 The Committee notes that officers from Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet chair an interdepartmental committee with representatives from the Department of Social Services, the Department of Human Services and the Department of Education and Training. This interdepartmental committee has been meeting for the 'last six to nine months' and has been working to follow up with issues that have been raised by the community through this inquiry process.<sup>40</sup> Importantly however, there is no certainty, transparency or community consultation about the outcomes or timeframes of initiatives that might address the concerns raised.
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40 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. 7.



- 2.52 ABSTUDY has proved to be an important facilitator for access to education, and secondary and tertiary education in particular. Yet, as noted above, significant problems exist and no formal, targeted review of the system has been undertaken in recent memory. The Committee notes that some of the issues raised relate to the administrative complexity of the scheme, others suggest that the scheme is not responsive to actual need and circumstances of students, and some issues reflect community perceptions, misunderstandings or lack of awareness regarding assistance available.
- 2.53 While acknowledging the existence of the interdepartmental committee and that it has monitored the issues raised to date in this inquiry, the Committee considers that the scope of failings of ABSTUDY demands a more formal review and redesign of how Government successfully assists with the costs associated with study away from home and addresses Indigenous educational disadvantage.
- 2.54 Therefore the Committee recommends a formal review and overhaul of ABSTUDY, with a view to the program being redesigned and submitted to Government for approval. Following the Government's approval, a six month implementation and public education period should commence, with the new system being fully operational by at least 30 June 2017.

### **Recommendation 1**

**The Committee recommends that the Department of Human Services undertake an independent review of ABSTUDY with a view to the program being redesigned and the new system being fully operational at the latest by 30 June 2017.**



## 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’.<sup>1</sup>
- 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.<sup>2</sup> As a result, ‘retention and attainment levels for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander girls are now lagging behind that of Aboriginal boys’.<sup>3</sup>
- 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.<sup>4</sup>
- 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.<sup>5</sup>

- 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.<sup>6</sup>

- 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.<sup>7</sup>
- 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.<sup>8</sup> 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.

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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.<sup>9</sup> The Committee therefore recommends that remaining funding be prioritised for girls' education programs as a matter of urgency.

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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.<sup>10</sup>
- 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,

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<sup>10</sup> 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’.<sup>11</sup>
- 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.

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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.<sup>12</sup>
- 3.26 The results from that evaluation will be made available in early 2017.<sup>13</sup> 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.<sup>14</sup>
- 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

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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/](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.<sup>15</sup> 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 45<sup>th</sup> 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 45<sup>th</sup> Parliament the inquiry into educational opportunities for Indigenous students and task the Committee with a focus on boarding arrangements.

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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 45<sup>th</sup> 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



## Appendix A – Submissions and Exhibits

### **Submissions**

1. Ms Tracey de Grussa
2. Prime Minister's Indigenous Advisory Council
3. Australian Indigenous Mentoring Experience (AIME) Indigenous Corporation
  - 3.1 Supplementary
4. Mirima Dawang Worrlab-gerring Language and Culture Centre
5. Catholic Agricultural College
6. Ninti One
7. Boarding Australia
  - 7.1 Supplementary
8. Professor Jeannie Herbert AM
9. Association of Independent Schools Northern Territory
10. Independent Education Union of Australia (Queensland and Northern Territory Branch)
  - 10.1 Supplementary
11. Boarding Training Australia
12. World Vision Australia
13. The Department of Education (Tasmania)
14. Dr Nicholas Biddle and Jessa Rogers
15. The Wollotuka Institute, University of Newcastle
16. Independent Schools Council of Australia
  - 16.1 Supplementary

17. The Association of Independent Schools of New South Wales
18. National Catholic Education Commission
  - 18.1 Supplementary
  - 18.2 Supplementary
  - 18.3 Supplementary
19. Independent Schools Queensland
20. Queensland Catholic Education Commission
21. St Brigid's College
22. Independent Education Union of Australia
23. Office of the Guardian for Children and Young People (South Australia)
24. Australian Literacy and Numeracy Foundation
25. Geraldton Universities Centre
26. Richard Stewart and Rachel Elphick
27. NT Christian Schools
28. Kurungkurl Katitjin, Centre for Indigenous Australian Education and Research, Edith Cowan University
29. Independent Schools Victoria
30. Commissioner for Children and Young People (Western Australia)
31. National Rural Health Alliance
32. The Association of Independent Schools (Western Australia)
33. Stronger Smarter Institute Limited
34. Marninwarntikura Fitzroy Women's Resource Centre
35. Australian Indigenous Education Foundation
36. Reconciliation Australia
37. Wongutha CAPS
38. Aboriginal Hostels Limited
  - 38.1 Supplementary
39. Department of Education (Northern Territory)
40. Department for Education and Child Development (South Australia)
41. Central Land Council
42. Aboriginal Peak Organisations of the Northern Territory
43. Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet, the Department of Education and Training, the Department of Human Services, the Department of Social Services and the Department of Communications and the Arts
  - 43.1 Supplementary (Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet)

- 43.2 Supplementary (Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet)
- 43.3 Supplementary (Department of Human Services)
- 43.4 Supplementary (Department of Education and Training)
- 44. The Smith Family
- 45. Australian Education Union
- 46. Association of Heads of Independent Schools of Australia
  - 46.1 Supplementary
- 47. Remote Indigenous Parents Association (Roper-Gulf Branch)
- 48. Reconciliation Victoria
- 49. North Queensland Cowboys Rugby League Football Club
- 50. The Aboriginal & Islander Independent Community School Inc (Murri School)
- 51. Australian Primary Principals Association
- 52. Deakin University
- 53. Dr Bill Fogarty and Professor Mick Dodson
- 54. National Rural Health Student Network
- 55. Cape York Partnership
- 56. Martu Schools Alliance
- 57. Stars Foundation
- 58. Informed Solutions NT
- 59. Save the Children
- 60. Good to Great Schools Australia
- 61. Torres Strait Islanders' Regional Education Council
  - 61.1 Supplementary

## Exhibits

1. Good to Great Schools  
Gary Adams, *Project Follow Through: In-depth and Beyond*, Winter 1996.
2. Louise Lawler  
Louise Lawler, *A Will and A Way: Program Evaluation (Activity No 58156)*, August 2008.
3. Louise Lawler  
Louise Lawler, *A Will and A Way – saving millions and lives*, 2007.

4. Louise Lawler  
Louise Lawler, *Closing the gap through secondary school education*, 2009.
5. Clontarf Foundation  
Clontarf Foundation, *Overview of operations*, October 2015.
6. AFL Cape York House  
AFL Cape York House, *House Brief*, March 2015.
7. National Catholic Education Commission  
Annotated map of Australia.
8. Cape York Academy  
Cape York Academy, *Get ready. Work hard. Be good* (Pamphlet).
9. Cape York Aboriginal Australian Academy  
Dr Annie Holden, *Case studies: Impact of Cape York Aboriginal Australian Academy*, March 2013.
10. Good to Great Schools Australia  
Noel Pearson, Bernadine Denigan, Jan Gotesson, *The most important reform – Position Paper: An agenda for completing ‘learning demand’ side reforms effected by the Cape York Welfare Reforms with ‘teaching supply’ side reforms, through the establishment of a specialist K-7 remote schools provider under the aegis of a statutory board led by Noel Pearson which has legislative delegation within Queensland public schools system to provide education where parent communities support alternative provisioning*, June 2009.





## Appendix B - Witnesses appearing at public hearings and private hearings

**Thursday, 12 November 2015 – Canberra, ACT (Public hearing)**

Yarauna Centre, Canberra Institute of Technology

Mrs Roxanne Brown, Teacher

Ms Dearne Brown, Student

Mrs Lynnice (Letty) Church, Teacher

Ms Felicity Corbin, Student

Mrs Caroline Hughes, Director

Mr Kelvin Marr, Student

Miss Cara Smith, Student support coordinator

Mr Wayne Woods, Student

**Thursday, 26 November 2015 – Canberra, ACT (Private hearing)**

ACT Aboriginal Education Consultative Group

Ms Fiona Petersen, Chairperson

NSW Aboriginal Education Consultative Group

Ms Cindy Berwick, President

Mr Merv Donovan, Executive Officer

South Australian Aboriginal Education and Training Consultative Body

Ms Jo Anne Ashford, Deputy Chairperson

Victorian Aboriginal Education Association Inc

Ms Geraldine Atkinson, President

Mr Lionel Bamblett, General Manager

Miss Karina Wei-Inn Lee, Policy and Research Officer

**Thursday, 4 February 2016 – Canberra, ACT (Public hearing)**

Ms Marnie O'Bryan, private capacity

**Friday, 5 February 2016 – Brisbane, QLD (Public hearing)**

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Mathematics Alliance

Dr Chris Matthews, Chair

Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation (CSIRO)

Ms Marian Heard, Director (outgoing)

Ms Therese Postma, Director (incoming)

Mr Joe Sambono, Manager

Independent Education Union, Queensland and Northern Territory Branch

Ms Thersa Nunn, Member and Indigenous support officer

Dr Adele Schmidt, Research officer

Institute for Urban Indigenous Health

Dr Alison Nelson, Director

Mrs Cassie Powell, Traineeship coordinator and Workforce support officer

Stronger Smarter Institute

Mr Darren Godwell, Chief Executive Officer

YuMi Deadly Centre, Queensland University of Technology

Professor Tom Cooper, Director

Mr James Lowe, Research Associate

**Thursday, 11 February 2016 – Canberra, ACT (Public hearing)**

Australian Indigenous Education Foundation

Mr Andrew Penfold, Executive Director

Ms Renee Steenstra, Projects Director

Prime Minister's Indigenous Advisory Council

Mrs Leah Armstrong, Member

Mr Djambawa Marawili AM, Member

Mr Nyunggai Warren Mundine, Chairman

Mr Andrew Penfold, Member

### Thursday, 25 February 2016 – Canberra, ACT (Public hearing)

#### Tjabal Indigenous Higher Education Centre, Australian National University

Ms Anne Martin, Director

Mrs Fiona Petersen, Administration Manager

Mr Rory Larkin, student

Mr Kieren Murray, student

Mr Sam Provost, student

Ms Chloe Simpson, student

### Friday, 26 February 2016 – Adelaide, SA (Public hearing)

#### Boarding Australia

Mr Daniel Cox, Chief Executive Officer

#### Department for Education and Child Development (SA)

Ms Patricia Strachan, Executive Director, Statewide Services and Child Development

Ms Vicki Wilson, Manager, Aboriginal Services

#### Remote Indigenous Parents Association

Ms Lorraine Bennett, Beswick Community representative

Mr Bjorn Christie-Johnson, Program Manager

Ms Anita Painter, Barunga Community representative

#### Wiltja

Mr Anthony Bennett, Manager, Wiltja Boarding

Mr Greg Cousins, Coordinator, Wiltja Secondary College, Windsor Gardens

Ms Ashley Dorr, Principal, Wiltja Secondary College

### Thursday, 3 March 2016 – Canberra, ACT (Public hearing)

#### Reconciliation Australia

Mr Alex Shain, General Manager, Narragunnawali

**Independent Schools Council of Australia**

Ms Colette Colman, Executive Director

Mr Barry Wallett, Deputy Executive Director

**Monday, 7 March 2016 – Cairns, QLD (Public hearing)****AFL Cape York House**

Mrs Rachel Elphick, Education Manager

Mr Ricky Hanlon, Program Manager

Mr Richard Stewart, General Manager (previous)

**Cape York Girl Academy**

Ms Jessa Rogers, Principal

**Cape York Partnership**

Mr James Fa'aoso, Head of Leadership

Ms Fiona Jose, Executive General Manager

Mr Duncan Murray, Chief Executive Officer

**Djarragun College**

Mr Don Anderson, Principal

**Good to Great Schools Australia**

Ms Lyn McKenzie, Director

**Tuesday 8 March 2016 – Coen and Aurukun, QLD (Private hearing)****Cape York Aboriginal Australian Academy**

Mr Glenn White, Principal, Coen Campus

**Individuals (parents and community elders)**

Mr Allan Creek

Mrs Emma Hicks

Mr Tim Jaffer

Ms Kirsten Kulka

Ms Maureen Liddy

Michelle

Ms Joanne Nelson

Ms Louise Pratt

Ms Charlene Sellars

Tamara

### **Wednesday 9 March 2016 – Thursday Island, QLD (Public hearing)**

#### **Aboriginal Hostels Ltd**

Mr Brendan Moyle, General Manager, Operations

Ms Joy Savage, Chief Executive Officer

Mr Charles Turner, Regional Manager Queensland

#### **Individuals**

Mrs Bertha Natanielu

Ms Ramena Fuji

#### **Tagai State College**

Mr Steve Foster, Associate Principal

Ms Judith Ketchell, Executive Principal

Mr Jeff Waia, Teacher

#### **Torres Strait Regional Authority**

Ms Margaret Cowley

Mr Joseph Elu, Chairperson

#### **Torres Strait Islanders' Regional Education Council**

Mr Ned David, Chair

Ms Ganala Gibuma, Representative

### **Wednesday 16 March 2016 – Canberra, ACT**

#### **National Centre for Indigenous Studies, Australian National University**

Professor Michael Dodson, Director

Dr William Fogarty, Senior Research Fellow

### **Thursday 17 March 2016 – Canberra, ACT**

Professor Peter Buckskin

Emeritus Professor Paul Hughes

**Monday 21 March 2016 – Newcastle, NSW****Australian Council of Deans of Education**

Professor Brenda Cherednichenko, President

Mr David Templeman, Executive Director

**Board of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education and Training**

Professor John Evans, Deputy Chair

Dr Laurel Williams, Member

**Darkinjung Aboriginal Land Council**

Mr Sean Gordon, Chief Executive Officer

**Kunnar Ngarrama, Aboriginal Education Consultative Group**

Mrs Deidre Heitmeyer, President

**MATSITI Evaluation Panel**

Mr Peter Johnson, Chair

**University of Newcastle**

Ms Chloe Barwick, Student teacher

Dr Margot Ford, Senior Lecturer, School of Education

James, Student teacher

Ms Lauren Johnson, Student teacher

Ms Samantha McNeill, Student teacher

Mr Nigel Millgate, Student teacher

Ms Kyara Nean, Student teacher

Dr Robert Parkes, Senior Lecturer, School of Education

**Wollotuka Institute, University of Newcastle**

Mrs Bronwyn Chambers, Elder in Residence

Ms Madelene Davy, Community Engagement Coordinator

Mr Michael Donovan, Lecturer

Associate Professor Maree Gruppetta, Associate Professor

Ms Belinda Huntriss, Indigenous Academic Engagement Officer

Mr Derek Kinchela, Student Engagement and Experience Coordinator

Professor Bob Morgan, International Engagement Officer

Mrs Colleen Perry, Elders in Residence Program

**Tuesday 22 March 2016 – Sydney, NSW****Aurora Education Foundation**

Ms Lorraine Efeturk, Director of Education

Mr Richard Potok, Chief Executive Officer

**Australian Education Union**

Ms Correna Haythorpe, Federal President

Mr Maurie Mulheron, Deputy Federal President

**Australian Indigenous Mentoring Experience**

Mr Adam Linforth, Director, Finance and Partnering

Ms Marlee Silva, co-Chief Executive Officer

Mr Jake Thomson, Program Manager, University of Western Sydney

**National Catholic Education Commission**

Mr Michael Avery (Northern Territory)

Ms Sharon Cooke (New South Wales)

Ms Sharon Davis (Western Australia)

Mr Ross Fox, Executive Director

Ms Kellie McDonald (Northern Territory)

Mr Ren Perkins (Queensland)

Mr David Wood (Western Australia)

**University of Sydney**

Professor Edward Shane Houston, Deputy Vice Chancellor

**Wednesday 23 March 2016 – Dubbo, NSW****Charles Sturt University**

Professor Heather Herbert AM, Pro-Vice Chancellor, Indigenous Education and Foundation Chair of Indigenous Studies

**Clontarf Foundation**

Mr Michael Lee, Director, Delroy Clontarf Academy

Mr Chris McDonald, Regional Manager, New South Wales

**Get Real Program**

Ms Louise Lawler, Executive Officer

**TAFE Western**

Ms Connie Ah See, Head Teacher, Yarradamarra Centre

Ms Susan Carey, Director for VET Delivery

**Tuesday 19 April 2016 – Canberra ACT****Department Human Services**

Mr Paul Creech, National Manager

Mrs Melissa Ryan, General Manager, Participation Division

**Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet**

Mr Glen Hansen, Senior Adviser, Schools and Territory Education Reform

Ms Liz Hefren-Webb, First Assistant Secretary, Schools, Information and Evaluation

**Department Social Services**

Ms Emma-Kate McGuirk, General Manager, Participation Division

Mr Andrew Whitecross, Branch Manager, Rates and Means Testing Policy

**Stars Foundation**

Ms Andrea Goddard, Executive Director