Australian Government

Prime Minister's Indigenous Advisory Council

19 October 2015

Committee Secretary
House of Representatives Standing Committee on Indigenous Affairs
PO Box 6021
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Dear Committee Secretary

Inquiry into Educational Opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Students

I write in my capacity as Chairman of the Prime Minister's Indigenous Advisory Council (IAC).

I understand that the Standing Committee on Indigenous Affairs is presently inquiring into and reporting on key aspects of educational opportunities and outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students up to school leaving age.

In October 2014, the IAC prepared a paper entitled *Improving Quality Teaching in Remote Australian Schools*. With my colleagues' permission, I attach a copy of the paper here as it addresses several key points from the Committee's Terms of Reference (ToR) for this inquiry.

Most relevant to the inquiry's ToR:

1. **"Engagement and achievement of students in remote areas"** – the paper explores how high levels of student engagement and achievement can be attained through quality teaching and other related means in remote Australian schools; and

2. **"Access to, participation in, and benefits of different school models for indigenous students in different parts of Australia"** and **"Best practice models, both domestically and internationally"** – the paper advocates for a comparative analysis be undertaken of a number of case study remote or disadvantaged schools already achieving good results to identify features driving success.

Thank you for providing the opportunity to contribute. My colleagues on the IAC and I would be happy to participate in any further discussion or clarification.

Yours sincerely

Warren Mundine

Improving Quality Teaching in Remote Australian Schools

Prime Minister's Indigenous Advisory Council

October 2014

"the quality of teaching and teachers cannot exceed the quality of the work organisation in which teachers find themselves, the quality of the teacher selection and education, the quality of teacher careers and the quality of teacher evaluation".

OECD 2012

PART 1 – DEVELOP A CLEAR CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

1. Refer to 'quality teaching' rather than 'quality teachers'

Quality teaching describes a holistic system involving teachers, principals, students, education workers, community leaders, families and parents, rather than alienating or stigmatising individual teachers.

2. Define 'quality teaching'

How can we measure 'quality teaching' objectively? ('If you can't measure it then you can't manage it').

3. Define 'educational attainment'

Educational attainment is the fundamental educational outcome we are trying to achieve. Educational attainment should be defined as an objective and measurable outcome in its own right such as achieving Year 12 completion and/or a measureable increase in the academic skills of a student in literacy or numeracy etc. If we don't define success correctly it's hard to achieve it.

4. Business model for success – Innovate, Fail, Learn, Scale

Building on the foundations and learnings of a trialled, implemented and successful approach allows lessons to be drawn to enable a more successful large scale roll out to have a more profound and far reaching impact in the long term.

5. Incentives to recruit and retain teachers should focus on quality teaching and educational outcomes - not tenure

Incentives for attracting teachers to remote areas need to be targeted at attracting and rewarding *high quality teaching* and the *educational outcomes* the teachers achieve, not how long they serve.

6. Change the narrative – Success in remote education a fast-track to promotion, leadership and advancement - not 'serving time'

As well as changing the structure of the incentive schemes, there is also a need to change the narrative underlying incentive programs in relation to what the remote experience can add to an educator's professional experience and career prospects.

PART 2 – FORMALLY IDENTIFY THE FEATURES OF HIGH PERFORMING REMOTE OR DISADVANTAGED SCHOOLS

7. Undertake a comparative analysis of a number of case study remote or disadvantaged schools already achieving good results to identify features driving success

A number of remote and disadvantaged schools appear to be demonstrating improved educational outcomes and should be analysed more closely to see how they operate, distil features of success and adapt what could work in other remote schools, in particular - how these schools achieve and sustain quality teaching and educational attainment, and also examine best practice in high performing mainstream boarding schools, analyse the components of their success and identify learnings that may be applicable for adaption in remote schools.

PART 3 – PRACTICAL MODELS FOR EXPLORATION

8. City-Remote School Partnerships

Council recommends the Commonwealth support the development of a program to create formal and long-term partnerships between remote schools and high performing schools in major cities. This should be started on a relatively small basis initially (e.g. 4-5 different partnership clusters in the Northern Territory) so that the model can be developed and adapted effectively before any large scale roll out. Bringing the cities to the bush instead of sending all kids from the bush to the cities.

9. Charter Schools: A model of autonomy and accountability

In most Australian government schools the leaders are expected to achieve and be accountable for results without the authority to make the most important decisions. The most important authority and controls sit with senior bureaucrats in education departments even though they are not accountable for the schools' results. A better approach is the charter school model where the leaders and governors of the school have accountability and control and the people with no accountability have no control.

10. Recruiting experienced principals and senior teachers to remote schools or mentoring remote school teaching staff – A Remote Teacher Corps

A *Remote Teacher Corps* could help to build a stable rotational pool of experienced staff (similar to the Remote Area Health Corps (RAHC) model) where senior teachers visit the same schools to support, orientate, mentor and provide breaks for teachers in remote school over the longer term.

11. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staffing in remote schools

While Aboriginal and Islander Education Workers (AIEWs) are often referred to in the literature there do not appear to be significant studies or focused analysis about their roles in remote schools, their range of duties and their methods of educational practice. Given the Government's stated vision to engage more Aboriginal and Islander people in employment (and teaching as one profession) it would be timely to examine this.

12. Final word

"The first and most important is to normalize the education of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and raise the expectations of families, communities, teachers and educators about Indigenous students complying with school attendance; undertaking the standard curriculum; performing all normal school work and assessment; and participating in school events." Marcia Langton 2012

PART 1 – DEVELOP A CLEAR CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

1. Refer to 'quality teaching' rather than 'quality teachers'

Council prefers to refer to "quality teaching" rather than "quality teachers".

The reference to quality of "teachers" runs the risk of stigmatising or judging teachers personally and individually, potentially alienating them in the process. A positive strengths based approach should refer to improving teaching quality rather than an inference that teachers will be classified as a "good" or "poor" quality teacher. Negative stereotyping and alienation of the broader teaching profession is counterproductive for all stakeholders.

All teachers should understand they are valued and appreciated and that any investment to improve ability and professional capability is for the purpose of delivering *high quality teaching*.

When we talk about "quality teaching" we encompass a holistic community approach encompassing teachers, Principals, Aboriginal and Islander Education Workers, community leaders, families and parents. We also encompass the structural environment in which teaching occurs including government, universities and employers.

A 'quality teaching' concept also enables a holistic approach to the education life cycle - early childhood learning (child care workers and families as first teachers), primary and secondary learning (principals, teachers, education workers, parents). Quality teaching helps to engage students and families which in return help to influence both school attendance and educational outcomes.

2. Define 'quality teaching'

The dialogue would benefit from a clear and unambiguous definition of what we mean by "quality teaching" to encourage a holistic understanding of what quality teaching professionals and models bring to the education sector. If we are ambiguous about what we mean by "quality teaching" the strategies we adopt to achieve it will most likely be wrongly targeted – and therefore fail.

- How do we define "quality teaching" to be objective and capture the range of academic, technical and human resource qualities that education professionals, and others, bring to schooling?[1]; and
- How can we measure 'quality teaching' objectively? ('If you can't measure it you can't manage it').

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[1] An example from Professor Marcia Langton: "By good teaching I mean professional teaching engagement with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students in the classroom". See Section 12 below.

3. Define 'educational attainment'

We need to be clear about what we mean by "educational attainment". School attendance *per se* is not an educational "outcome" but rather a vital input and Key Performance Indicator (KPI) towards the achievement of educational attainment - i.e. parents don't believe the purpose of the education system is for their children to "show up" at school. While school attendance is necessary to facilitate educational outcomes we need to ensure that the definition of educational success and the outcome we are working towards is to lift educational attainment more broadly. If we don't define success correctly it's hard to achieve it.

Educational attainment is the fundamental educational outcome we are trying to achieve. Educational attainment should be defined as an objective and measurable outcome in its own right such as achieving Year 12 completion and/or a measureable increase in the academic skills of a student in literacy or numeracy etc. Educational attainment such as Year 12 completion should not be confused with important ancillary benefits which are by-products of educational attainment (such as social behaviours and skills that contribute to a person's capacity to participate in community and society more generally once they are educated).

The range of methods to achieve "educational attainment" may be different at each school depending on factors such as the existing level of achievement within the school, community engagement, social and economic issues in the community. Stakeholders should work together to identify and negotiate measurable educational attainments to define what success looks like and how it will be measured.

- Ensure there is a clear measurable definition of 'educational attainment' when we use the expression; and
- Ensure there is a strong focus on achieving and measuring specific and defined educational attainment in all program and policy design.

4. Business model for success – Innovate, Fail, Learn, Scale

In dealing with any social challenge, the greatest mistake we can make is to do nothing because we can't do everything. On the other hand, it is equally erroneous to try and do everything at once. The sweet spot of success is in between - start small, fail, learn and build on success to scale.

A common characteristic of many successful programs is they start small, experiment, learn and adapt. A lot of trial and error is required to get it right. Entrepreneurial and creative leadership adapts quickly, learns from failures and builds on success. Hence the entrepreneur's mantra – *'fail cheap, fail fast, and fail often'*. Building on the foundations

and learnings of a trialled, implemented and successful approach allows lessons to be drawn to enable a more successful large scale roll out to have a more profound and far reaching impact in the long term.

There are many examples of this approach. For instance:

- The Principal of the successful Roseworth Independent Public School observed that their success resulted from a very gradual process, not a complete system change;
- The Challis Early Learning Centre in Perth started five years ago in one school driven by innovative leadership and the results in that one site are so successful that the Forrest Review recommends it be rolled out on a larger basis in schools across Australia; and
- The St Joseph's College Indigenous Fund built a scholarship program in partnership with the private sector raising $8 million at one school through the voluntary work of the founders and then built on that success to expand nationally though the Australian Indigenous Education Foundation in a partnership with the Australian Government – raising nearly $100 million in five years to offer 500 scholarships a year at 35 leading schools across Australia with successful educational outcomes.

In looking at innovative policy approaches, whether it be with quality teaching, educational attainment, direct instruction, empowered communities or other innovation, Council supports the Commonwealth approach in resisting short term solutions and taking a longer term view by investing in innovative and creative models on a smaller scale in order to learn from failures and build on successes that can be replicated and scaled further for more effective long term impact.

5. Incentives to recruit and retain teachers should focus on quality teaching and educational outcomes - not tenure

One of the challenges for Indigenous education in remote areas is teacher tenure – for example according to the Forrest Review, in the Northern Territory teachers stay an average of seven months before leaving. However the greatest challenge is attracting *quality teaching* to such schools and *quality does not result from tenure*. Tenure in itself is a significant *cause* of inferior performance in some of the world's worst schools (see *Waiting for Superman*).

Incentives for attracting teachers to remote areas need to be targeted at attracting and rewarding *high quality teaching* and the *educational outcomes* the teachers achieve. Incentives should not be available to retain or reward inferior teaching or tenure by itself. If there is inferior teaching we need to rid the community of it - not incentivise it and perpetuate the problem by rewarding retention (tenure) of it.

If incentive schemes are used to attract quality teaching, the incentives should scale up based on achievement of outcomes in educational attainment. Since achievement of educational outcomes necessarily involves a reasonable period of time to measure, there would be no need to incentivise tenure if we are rewarding outcomes. We therefore take the issue of tenure out of the equation and instead focus on quality and results. This way the focus is not on the input of how long they "serve" in the community but the *quality* of teaching and what is *achieved* in the school.

The issue we are trying to address here is *quality* of teaching not *quantity* of teaching in remote schools and therefore the incentive programs need to focus on the recruitment and retention of teachers that have capacity to contribute to the achievement of identified educational outcomes. The existing suite of incentives appears to be structured around recruitment and retention of *any teachers* without any focus on quality teaching or improving educational outcomes. Perhaps this is why the incentives don't seem to work – they are not targeting the teachers they are seeking to attract.

There is a scarcity of evidence demonstrating how incentive strategies to recruit and retain remote teachers contribute to increasing quality teaching or improving educational outcomes in remote schools.

There needs to be a fundamental shift in the idea of "serving time" to an understanding that quality teaching and educational attainment in remote schools will be rewarded not just by pecuniary benefits but also being rewarded with fast-track opportunities for leadership, promotion and career advancement, and perhaps even rebalancing the system so that quality teaching and successful results becomes a requirement for promotion and leadership positions. This could be similar to service models where overseas postings are seen as beneficial to career advancement.

If we acknowledge that lifting educational attainment in remote communities is one of the toughest and most complex challenges a teacher can face, why wouldn't we ensure that future leaders in the teaching profession and those who get fast-tracked in their career are those with proven track-records of achieving success in such challenging situations?

If we are serious in believing the current situation in remote Indigenous communities is one of the biggest challenges facing the nation and serious about heeding the pleas of Indigenous leaders that education is the number one priority, why shouldn't our most marginalised children in Australia get the highest quality teaching the nation has to offer?

Increasing quality teaching means *decreasing* inferior teaching. This is the elephant in the room. If we want to *increase quality teaching* in remote schools, we must also *decrease inferior teaching* at the same time. This could be achieved through implementing performance management tools. Alongside incentives to reward the attainment of agreed outcomes, where those outcomes are not met, teachers could be offered professional

development and other opportunities to address skills deficits. If such measures are not successful, it is important that there are means to manage out inferior teaching – something that to date, has been practically impossible and can only perpetuate the remote Indigenous education challenges.

Some suggestions for incentivising and rewarding quality teaching and results include:

- Rewards could be built into a salary structure as a specialised tier approach tied to salary increments;
- 'Specialist' accreditation resulting from quality teaching and educational outcomes in remote schools, culturally diverse schools or disadvantaged schools. This might take the form of awarding a Master's Degree in Remote Indigenous Education (or similar qualification) to teachers who achieve defined quality benchmarks and demonstrable improvements in educational attainment;
- A national elite accreditation or recognition by the Commonwealth for teachers who produce quality teaching and educational outcomes in remote schools signifying such teachers as elite level experts with successful track-records – something that all teachers would want to aspire to which gives special status among the teaching profession and with additional benefits provided by the Commonwealth;
- Waiving of a portion (or all) of a HECS debt tiered against defined quality benchmarks and demonstrable improvements in educational attainment in a remote school. A cost-benefit analysis could be undertaken to estimate the offset of the debt against forecasted educational and employment outcomes of remote students.
- Fast-track opportunities for leadership, promotion and career advancement, and perhaps even rebalancing the system so that quality teaching and successful results becomes a requirement for promotion and leadership positions; and
- Incentives and rewards for education faculties at universities which have high proportions of their top teaching graduates go to work in remote school or other disadvantaged schools. For example, the Queensland University of Technology (QUT) Exceptional Teachers for Disadvantaged Schools (ETDS)[2] where the top 10% of teaching graduates go and work in disadvantaged schools.

These sorts of programs and features should also be included in a comparative analysis that looks at the features of what works as part of building a specific remote education evidence base and for the purpose of cost-benefit modelling.

Professional development and support networks

Wilson noted the absence of a consistent and system-wide approach to improvement in the quality of teaching in Northern Territory classrooms. It is worthwhile exploring the potential of consortium approaches for regional and remote support and professional development.

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[2] https://www.qut.edu.au/education/about/projects/exceptional-teachers-for-disadvantaged-schools

Consortiums could be made up of expert providers and resources from the education sector (for example, Principals Australia, What Works, Visible Learning) and/or other organisations (such as Australian Indigenous Education Foundation) to develop cohesive, and relevant, professional development and support services for remote teachers.

A network consortium could contribute to thinking around credentialing and developing accredited pathways, or courses, for specialist remote teachers and Indigenous workers in the education sector. This could be built into the NGO project management role discussed in Section 9 about City-Remote Partnership Schools or a *Remote Teacher Corps* similar to the RACH model.

Wilson also suggested the need for an audit to identify current skills levels and training and coaching requirements in the Northern Territory and a consortium may be well placed to undertake this work as part of their focus on supporting and developing specialised remote education workers.

6. Change the narrative – Success in remote education a fast-track to promotion, leadership and advancement - not 'serving time'

Whilst there are many inspiring and committed teachers in remote schools, the other side of the coin is a perception that teaching in a remote community can be a sufferance to bear by serving time in order to get extra points to take up positions in more favourable areas or to obtain other rewards linked to tenure. This approach is perpetuated by the current incentive schemes that reward tenure rather than rewarding quality teaching and achievement of educational outcomes. Much of this problem would be addressed by changing the focus of the incentive programs away from tenure and onto quality and success (see Section 5 above).

As well as changing the structure of the incentive schemes, there is also a need to change the narrative underlying incentive programs in relation to what the remote experience can add to an educator's professional experience and career prospects.

PART 2 – FORMALLY IDENTIFY THE FEATURES OF HIGH PERFORMING REMOTE OR DISADVANTAGED SCHOOLS

7. Undertake a comparative analysis of a number of case study remote or disadvantaged schools already achieving good results to identify features driving success

A number of schools appear to be demonstrating improved educational outcomes and should be analysed more closely to see how they operate, distil features of success and adapt what could work in remote schools, in particular - how these schools achieve and sustain quality teaching and educational attainment. Some examples that have been suggested include:

- Cape York education model – regional/remote model across a number of schools
- Challis Early Childhood Education Centre – Perth
- Kuranda District State School QLD;
- Warrego Primary School NT;
- Minimbah Aboriginal School - regional in Armidale NSW – Independent Aboriginal School;
- Mimili and Indulkana SA APY lands;
- Our Lady of Mount Carmel (inner Sydney primary with 70% Aboriginal students);
- A selection of the schools from the publication "*Success in Remote Schools: A research study of eleven improving remote schools*" (July 2012 – What Works).

A preliminary exercise would need to be undertaken to clarify what 'successful' outcomes these schools actually achieved to warrant selection for a closer comparative analysis. Such an analysis that looks holistically at the range of features of quality teaching and successful educational outcomes in their various place-based settings would help to identify best practice and successful strategies for quality teaching to produce quality educational outcomes.

- Suggestion: Undertake a comparative analysis of a number of selected remote schools where success is clearly defined and measurable and which are already achieving good results to identify common features for success;
- As part of this analysis, examine best practice in high performing mainstream boarding schools, analyse the components of their success and identify learnings that may be applicable for adaption in remote schools; and
- Develop a national resource to promote sharing, support and development of success factors in remote schools.

Teach for Australia:
While the general concept appears to attract young graduates, it has had limited roll-out in remote areas and it does not extend to primary schooling. We will need to look at

measurement of educational outcomes to see if the program has generally led to better outcomes. For example, it appears that few of the Teach for Australia Program graduates have remained in the teaching profession.

- There needs to be some work done that clearly identifies where these incentives have been successful in recruitment, retention *and* improving educational outcomes and if so whether it can expanded to remote communities and secondary education or whether other initiatives discussed here are likely to be more effective (e.g. incentives for quality teaching and city-remote school partnerships).

PART 3 – PRACTICAL MODELS FOR EXPLORATION

8. City-Remote School Partnerships

Council recommends the Commonwealth support the development of a program to create formal and long-term joint venture partnerships between remote schools and high performing schools in major cities. This should be started on a relatively small basis initially (e.g. 4-5 different partnership clusters in the Northern Territory) so that the model can be developed and adapted effectively before any large scale roll out (see comments about Business models of success in Section 4 above).

Importantly these City-Remote School Partnerships (CRSP) need to be - and be seen to be:

- Serious, hard-headed and down-to-business rather than just a fun cultural experience for the children;
- outcomes-focussed with accountability built in; and
- mutually balanced in terms of outcomes for both remote and city schools.

Measurable and Accountable Priority Outcomes
- **Education attainment:** Increase in education attainment for Indigenous children in remote community (i.e. improvement in numeracy and literacy and Year 12 attainment either in community school or boarding at city school). *Also an IAS objective.*
- **School attendance:** Increase in school attendance rates for Indigenous children in community. *Also an IAS objective.*
- **Transition:** Increase in employment and further study for Indigenous children upon completion of education. *Also an IAS objective.*
- **Parental engagement:** Increase in the engagement of Indigenous families and the community to engage with remote school and other education providers. *Also an IAS objective.*
- **Employment:** Increase in number of Indigenous employees in the school from local community in roles in the school (e.g. AIEWs) and services outside the school (accommodation, construction, cleaning, maintenance etc). *Also an IAS objective.*
  Teachers: Increase in number of Indigenous teachers in the community and increase in their professional capabilities. *Also an IAS objective.*

Ancillary outcomes and benefits
- **Lifting aspirations and expectations:** Providing opportunities for Indigenous students and community members in remote communities to visit city schools and build relationships with the city school students will broaden their world view and lift aspirations and expectations.
- **Community role models:** Education and career transition success by the students in remote communities will set them up as role models for younger students in the remote communities to follow in their footsteps.

- **Cultural:** Local Indigenous children and non-Indigenous children (and their respective parents and teachers) learn from each other, both academically and culturally from a range of place-based perspectives. *Also an IAS objective.*
- **Tourism:** Parents of the city students invited to the remote community to spend a few days and learn about the experiences and learnings of their children and their new cultural competency, independence and relationships with local Indigenous children and families at the end of city student visits. This could provide employment and business opportunities in tourism, accommodation, cleaning and laundry services etc. *Also an IAS objective.*
- **Influence:** Many of the parents of the non-Indigenous children at the city schools may provide opportunities for networking in their corporate, media, government, philanthropic and non-government organisational networks.
- **Engagement:** Indigenous children and parents in remote school community more engaged in schooling and see school as fun place to learn and build relationships with city children and aspire to potential rewards of trips to city. *Also an IAS objective.*

Rationale

The concept of school partnerships based on identified community need sits logically against the practical vision of the new Indigenous Advancement Strategy to engage communities in their own development and in setting their own goals – and this City-Remote Partnership School would be a voluntary opt-in arrangement for both schools who would tender to be part of the initiative.

Remote communities have consistently pleaded to have more say and autonomy in the education of their children. For example, Galarrwuy Yunupingu to Prime Minister Rudd: "We, the united clans of East Arnhem land, through our most senior delak, do humbly petition you, the 26th Prime Minister of Australia…to secure….our full and complete right to…control of our lives and responsibility for our children's future." The Prime Minister's Indigenous Advisory Council heard similar messages in Yirrkala School during the meetings in North East Arnhem Land in September 2014.

The Northern Territory Government also supports the concept of independent 'Community Driven Schools'.

Not all Indigenous families in remote communities will want to send their children to boarding schools so instead of sending all remote Indigenous kids to the cities we can also bring some of the cities to the remote communities.

The City-Remote School Partnership concept is a potential game changer to address many of the known issues in remote Indigenous education. For example we know that:

- Evidence shows that the main strategies needed to address school performance issues involve quality teaching, school autonomy, parental engagement and curriculum (and accordingly the Government's *Students First* approach focuses on

four key areas that will make a difference to students: teacher quality, school autonomy, parental engagement and strengthening the curriculum);

- Indigenous students in remote communities have particularly poor educational outcomes and that the solution lies in better attendance, higher levels of expectation, interest and engagement in education by families and communities; higher participation and aspiration by Indigenous students; high quality standard curriculum and addressing language issues; performing normal school work and assessment; high quality teaching; a five-day-a-week work ethic; strong leadership and governance accountable to the community;

- the best results stem from a combination of good teaching and management on the school side, teamed with support and determination on the community side;

- high performing schools in cities want to engage in achieving better outcomes for Indigenous children;

- many parents in cities want their children to experience more diversity and with a different relationship with Indigenous Australians than they had themselves;

- nothing succeeds in remote Indigenous communities unless there is local ownership of and participation in the change;

- it is necessary to build the capacity of local teachers in remote communities and the capacity of remote communities to manage and operate schools in their own communities;

- global educational system comparisons, such as the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) show consistently that schools in high performing education systems tend to have considerable leadership discretion with regard to how they set their academic direction and how they manage their resources;

- there is significant appetite and interest from corporates, philanthropy and the media for focused and innovative approaches to improving Indigenous educational outcomes in remote communities; and

- following the Wilson Review the Northern Territory Government will cease the provision of senior secondary education in remote communities.

Structure

The partnership would be formalised through a non-profit joint venture or incorporated entity which would specify the main responsibilities of all parties based on their area of expertise. The parties to the joint venture would include:

- a local Aboriginal Corporation (or other agreed entity) representing the community;

- the city school or schools (could be more than one e.g. one boys school and one girls school);

- a non-profit organisation as the project manager to coordinate across sites, liaise with governments, corporates, philanthropy and other stakeholders, manage partnership acquittals and provide scholarships for those students choosing to board

at city schools, career pathway transition and case management support, post-school destination tracking and other development opportunities. The Australian Indigenous Education Foundation (AIEF) has been working on similar initiatives with Professor Marcia Langton and others for over 18 months and is interested in being involved as project manager for this initiative.

Role of Governments

- The Northern Territory Government would need to consent to the establishment of the arrangement, the roles of the parties and reporting and measurement of outcomes but the project would be managed on the ground by the project manager partner.
- The Northern Territory Government and Commonwealth Government would need to negotiate regarding respective responsibility and funding around the provision of infrastructure and services such as internet, utilities, transportation and accommodation in remote community.
- Both governments required to fund the project at the beginning under a long-term contract (at least 15 years) that has funding contributed at the start of the contract and no termination for convenience or ability to instruct or direct the implementation of the project.
- Ongoing funding thereafter would be dependent on meeting agreed outcomes.

Roles of Schools and Program Coordinator NGO
Both schools in the partnership would be required to commit:

- for the long term (at least 15 years)
- to agreed, measurable KPIs and outcomes which both parties are accountable for;
- an allocation of time by the principals towards establishing and sustaining the partnership;
- an additional senior coordinator in each school to act as the main point of liaison with the other parties in the partnership;
- to agreed and explicit additional resources which will vary between schools; and
- to a strict reporting schedule.

The different roles of the parties could include the following as outlined in the Table below.

Roles of Schools and Program Coordinator NGO

	Remote School	City School	Program Coordinator NGO
Leadership	• Peer-to-peer mentoring between remote and city principals • Remote principal and senior leadership team visit city school • Co-principal models	• Peer-to-peer mentoring between remote and city principals • City principal and senior leadership team visit remote school • Co-principal models	• Liaison with city and remote schools • Liaison with other city-remote school partnerships in other communities under this project • Liaison with governments, corporates and philanthropy
Educational	• Jointly accountable for the educational attainment and broader educational outcomes of students in remote school • Remote students receive instruction from high-performing city teachers in their own schools • Remote students supported by numeracy and literacy activities with city students. • Remote students provided with opportunity for experience visits and in class participation in city schools	• Jointly accountable for the educational attainment and broader educational outcomes of students in remote school. • City students get to learn existing subjects 'on country' – e.g. biology examining native plants etc. in remote Australia • City students receive cultural awareness training • City students mentor peer or younger remote students • City students work with teachers and students at the remote school to assist younger students with learning, literacy, reading and numeracy	• Guarantee scholarships and career transition case management support for any Indigenous students in remote communities enrolling as boarders at the city school for secondary schooling.
Teaching	• Teachers, AIEWs and principals from remote schools assist in training and mentoring staff from city school in different ways of learning and cultural competencies • Remote teachers receive training and mentoring from high-performing city teachers • Remote teachers visit city schools and undertake professional development opportunities • Joint recruitment and retention of quality teaching for permanent teaching staff in remote schools	• City school teachers actively collaborate and mentor teachers and other education workers in remote school, including teaching in front of skilled observers both ways. • City teachers receive cultural awareness training • City teachers undertake a term (or more) of remote service and rotation scheme. • Joint recruitment and retention of quality teaching for permanent teaching staff in remote school	• Develop and share best practice resources across all CRSP sites for teacher recruitment

	Remote School	City School	Program Coordinator NGO
Cultural and Co-Curricular	• Community members and students teach city school students and staff about Indigenous culture and traditions • Rewarding remote students with reciprocal excursion, visiting and student leadership activities with visit to city school, potentially with their families and billet with a local family to expand and reconcile their world-view and value of western education and leadership capacity • Remote students engage in sporting, social and cultural activities with similar aged city children • Agreed enforceable 'Compact' about protocols for absences for cultural purposes	• Rewarding city students with reciprocal excursion, visiting and student leadership activities with visits to remote community to expand and reconcile their world-view and value of Indigenous culture and leadership capacity. • City students engage in sporting, social and cultural activities with similar aged remote children • City students undertake learning program about Indigenous culture and the holistic relationship Indigenous peoples experience with land, culture and identity • Agreed enforceable 'Compact' about protocols for absences for cultural purposes	• Regular engagement and evaluation visits to community • Participate in community events
Operational and Governance	• City school responsible for financial management, payroll, human resources, IT and training locals in the remote community to build capacity of the remote school staff in these areas	• City school responsible for financial management, payroll, human resources, IT and training locals in the remote community to build capacity of remote school staff in these areas	• Fostering collaboration and knowledge sharing between the city-remote partnership sites in other communities across NT participating in CRSPs • Developing best practice resources and evidence of successful strategies to enable continuous improvement across all CRSP sites
Other	• Schools share, swap and loan resources • Indigenous students and parents visit city in school holidays for vacations and stay in boarding accommodation at city school.	• Schools share, swap and loan resources • Host Indigenous students and families from remote community in boarding house for vacations in school holidays	• Monitor, evaluate and report on progress and outcomes • Provide post-school case management support for career pathways into employment and tertiary study • Longitudinal tracking of post-school destinations and outcomes • Coordinate with NT Government to offer boarding school scholarships at the city schools for Indigenous students in other remote communities • Engage with corporates, volunteers, media and governments • Offer opportunities to corporates to send employees to spend time working as a volunteer in the remote school.

Longer-term student exchanges: Longer term city student exchanges might be included when relationships are established. For example, each school term a group of students and teachers from the participating city school could attend the remote community school. A learning curriculum could be specifically designed by a working group of teachers and other stakeholders (e.g. AIEWs) including features such as:

- a normal five-day school week academic program;
- a learning program about Indigenous culture and the holistic relationship Indigenous peoples experience with land, culture and identity and how these are contextualised through a blended 'on country learning' component;
- outreach service learning where city students and teachers spend time each day working with teachers and students at the remote school to assist younger students with learning, literacy, reading and numeracy; and
- Teaching peer and younger local Indigenous students about a range of disciplines such as information technology, science and arts. For example students could work together on film/digital or science projects to showcase the results of their collaboration. This type of joint collaboration can help in making school fun, interesting and dynamic for the local Indigenous children hopefully contributing to sustained attendance and improved academic outcomes.

Role of corporates and philanthropy – the NGO partner

The non-profit NGO partner would have responsibility for engaging with external stakeholders such as corporates, governments, volunteers and philanthropy to ensure that the city and remote schools can focus their time and resources in the areas of their core competency and expertise as outlined in the above table – i.e. education, teaching, parental and community engagement etc. To lift educational outcomes it is vital that schools spend more time on this and less time on administration and coordination. For example, the Grattan Institute noted that "unfortunately, most teachers spend too little time on active collaboration and too much time on administration and coordination[3]."

The work required around project administration and engagement with external stakeholders should be undertaken by a non-profit NGO with a proven track-record in this core competency so that these issues don't become a distraction for the priority education outcomes.

Corporates and philanthropists would be coordinated by the NGO partner to participate in the project in ways that add value without creating distraction and interference. Potential engagement could include:

- Skilled or unskilled volunteering and mentoring;
- Provision of goods or services related to their business – e.g. a computer company might provide IT hardware, software or IT consulting expertise; a bank might provide financial literacy programs; etc.;

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[3] Grattan Institute 2014.

- Employment opportunities for remote students such as work experience, post-school employment, cadetships, graduate employment, school-based traineeships etc.;
- Financial support for additional opportunities such as scholarships, project funding, evaluation and capacity building etc;
- Participation in specialised educational offering matched to employment needs (for example in New York, the Pathways in Technology Early College High School project is a collaboration between New York public schools, the City University of New York, and IBM. This project takes students in the ninth grade and aims to have them graduate six years later with both a high school diploma and an associate degree in computers or engineering. The Prime Minister visited this in New York in July 2014).

Suggestion: Undertake feasibility and cost-benefit analysis of a structured program to create formal and long-term partnerships between remote schools and high performing schools in major cities. This analysis could examine a variety of existing partnership models with a focus on what educational outcomes are being achieved, why and where there is room for improvement. This might include a closer look at partnership projects such as:

- Victorian Department of Early Childhood and Education – Teacher Academies partnership project;
- Roseworth Primary in Western Australia – partners with Smith Family, Edith Cowan University, Fogarty Foundation;
- Mimili SA APY Lands – partners with Basket Range Primary and Mercedes College in Adelaide; and
- existing formal and informal partnership arrangements and other relationships and engagement involving large city schools and smaller remote Indigenous schools.

9. Charter Schools: A model of autonomy and accountability

It is unreasonable to expect the leaders or governors of any organisation to be accountable for achieving results without having the authority to make the important decisions. The most important levers are (a) the ability to control the allocation of funds and use of assets; and (b) people management - the ability to put the right people on the bus, get the wrong people off the bus and make sure the right people are in the right seats on the bus (to use the analogy from the *Good to Great* book).

Global educational system comparisons, such as the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) show consistently that schools in high performing education systems tend to have considerable leadership authority with regard to how they set their academic direction and how they manage their resources.

In most Australian public schools the leaders are expected to achieve and be accountable for results without the authority to make the most important decisions. The most

important authority and controls sit with senior bureaucrats in education departments even though they are not accountable for the schools' results.[4]

The perverse – even bizarre - outcome of this approach is that the people with accountability have no control and the people with control have no accountability.

One way to address this perverse outcome would be to simply make the powerful bureaucrats personally accountable for the outcomes of a school.

A better approach is the charter school model where the leaders and governors of the school have accountability and control and the people with no accountability have no control.

This charter school approach better aligns with the Indigenous Advancement Strategy concept of enabling communities to make decisions about designing their own projects, taking accountability for decision making and improving their own capacity. It is therefore worth considering the viability, cost-benefits and potential value add of charter schools in Australia.

Like Australian public schools, charter schools are publicly funded, without charge to students and without selective student admissions. But like a non-government school, they operate independently with legal and financial autonomy and the leader and governors are accountable for the results and have the control they need to achieve them.

This model has been successful in the United States (Charter Schools) and the United Kingdom (City Academies).

This approach could also be a more effective and enduring way to implement the remote-city school partnerships model (referred to in Section 8 above).

Part of any "charter" could include conditions around enrolment policies to guarantee that the schools are open to all students within a particular geographic or other demographic constituency of the school. Other conditions might include requirements to employ and train Aboriginal or Islander Education Workers and, where possible, local Aboriginal teachers in the communities where the schools operate. While they would have no tuition fees or selective enrolments, they may include structures for support such as capacity to raise money from parents, communities and philanthropy.

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[4] Even in the WA Independent Public School model in Western Australia, the authority and autonomy is limited. In his review of Northern Territory education, Wilson notes that "the principal of each school should have an enhanced role in staff selection. It is also valuable for local Indigenous community members, preferably those involved closely with the school through governance arrangements, to share this role". One Principal (at Mimili APY) notes that flexibility to design professional development and support into teacher recruitment packages is central to attracting good quality staff.

A charter school model could also incorporate features of an integrated service hub model, much like the Challis School, where coordinated services are co-located and integrated in the school as a community hub.

Suggestion: As part of the assessment of the City-Remote Partnership School model in Section 8 above, examine the feasibility of developing a charter school model in Australia.[5]

10. Recruiting experienced principals and senior teachers to remote schools or mentoring remote school teaching staff

Much of the literature focuses on attracting the best teaching students out of university to work in the hardest schools. The Forrest Review highlights that "all too often, we send the least experienced or poorest performing teachers to work with students who have the greatest needs. It is not uncommon for teachers fresh from university, with little experience working with first Australian communities, to be sent to remote first Australian schools."

There is also an untapped resource at the other end of the career spectrum with highly experienced senior teachers who have a lifetime of experience and who may still have a lot to contribute by going to work in a remote community. Such teachers may have personal and family circumstances favourable to working in a remote community (for example, their own children may have finished school and grown up and they therefore have more mobility).

Such teachers could also help to build a stable rotational pool of experienced staff through a *Remote Teacher Corps* (similar to the Remote Area Health Corps (RAHC) model) where senior teachers visit the same schools to support, orientate, mentor and provide breaks for teachers in remote school over the longer term.   This pool of staff would build trusted relationships with communities over time and teach best practice in school administration, engaging communities and building a better understanding of school operational issues.

There are also potential cost-benefits over time, as evidenced in the RAHC, where savings have been gained from building and using a remote specialist team of staff who stay on the books for the longer term.

11. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staffing in remote schools

While Aboriginal and Islander Education Workers (AIEWs) are often referred to in the literature there do not appear to be significant studies or focused analysis about their roles in remote schools, their range of duties and their methods of educational practice. Given the Government's stated vision to engage more Aboriginal and Islander people in employment (and teaching as one profession) it would be timely to examine this.

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[5] Note "The Country Liberals encourage and support the ongoing development and maintenance of independent educational institutions" (Philosophy and Platform of the NT Country Liberals).

There are emerging opportunities for School Attendance Officers and others to undertake training and engage in education worker roles in local communities. Historically we have seen, for example, Child Care Workers and Primary Dispute Resolution Mediators gain professional accreditation and recognition of their work as specialised and the development of graduate diploma and tertiary qualifications.

The Wilson Report notes that a traditional pathway to teaching is often via assistant teaching so efforts to understand how to target and develop AIEWs into professional qualifications should be a key focus. A great example is Mimilli in the APY Lands which has developed a "teacher team" model where AIEWs work in class alongside teachers, at the front of the classroom (not sitting at the back) and help to plan lessons and student learning programs. However, none of their AIEWs have formal qualifications. If we want to encourage more Indigenous people to take up teaching as a career path we need to think about alternative teacher training approaches and how the current contributions AIEWs impact on educational outcomes. For instance, it is evident that AIEWs in remote environments undertake different work to their counterparts in city schools.

AIEWs are largely community based, often long term community residents offering potential for the development of stable pools of culturally responsive and skilled community based staff. There may also be potential for AIEWs to develop professional skills in the delivery of direct literacy and numeracy education, to fill gaps when teachers are not available, orientate new teachers and bridge pathways between parents, communities and schools. However, we are not advocating approaches like some Homeland Learning Centres where unqualified teaching assistants are employed from the community to operate the school day to day and qualified teachers visit periodically[6].

A national exercise to investigate, and analyse, the duties and skills of AIEWs and their roles in schools and communities may add depth to the development of education policy more generally. It may also provide a better understanding of the development of employment and training opportunities for Aboriginal and Islander people in remote communities, including the potential for part-time School Attendance Officers to look to wider employment opportunities.

A significant feature of the RAHC is the provision of cultural training and it will be important to ensure teachers receive training in cultural competency and the remote community experience. Some remote schools link new teachers to AIEWs for mentoring as a way of orientation and building local cultural awareness.

Suggestion: Undertake a broad exploration of the roles, duties and contributions of AIEWs, what impact they have on improving school attendance and educational outcomes and opportunities to develop formal qualifications.

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[6] See Warren Mundine's speech on 18 September 2014 "Human Capital: Utilising our greatest asset".

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Teachers

As an element of the City-Remote Partnership School model outlined above and also as a stand-alone initiative, greater focus is required for recruiting, training and upskilling more Indigenous teachers to work in schools in their own remote communities. As outlined above the AIEW pathway should be explored as a potential career and mentoring pathway into teaching.

As part of this initiative, also review alternative employment-based pathways into teaching for highly skilled professionals outside conventional teacher training. Whilst there were challenges with the Teach Next initiative of the Australian Government (which was designed for this alternate pathway), consideration could be given for the Commonwealth to have a national teacher accreditation scheme – not to employ teachers but to accredit teachers nationally (this could be looked at as part of the White Paper on the Reform of the Federation and in conjunction with issues around national curriculum).

Building Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural awareness and specialist skills

New standards now exist to consistently measure teacher proficiency at graduate, proficient, highly accomplished and lead teacher level. The Australian Institute of Teaching and School Leadership (AITSL) is the national organisation that has determined these new standards. The intention behind the standards is to raise the professionalism of teachers and provide consistency around the support provided to teachers both pre and in-service.

The Australian Professional Standards for Teachers include two focus areas on the theme of reconciliation and teachers and professional learning providers require assistance to meaningfully meet the standards:

- Focus Area 1.4 Strategies for teaching Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students
- Focus Area 2.4 Understand and respect Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to promote reconciliation between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians.

Consideration should be given to offering incentives to Universities to offer dedicated streams in the teaching curriculum reflecting those already in the Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership. These include a focus on strategies for teaching Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students and building capacity to understand and respect Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to promote reconciliation between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians. We also suggest that Indigenous education and/or cultural bodies are involved in the assessment of any streams. Additionally, Government could consider specific funding incentives to universities that offer dedicated streams to send their top performing students to undertake their practicum in remote schools.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander liaison staff

All schools with a threshold number of Indigenous students should have an Indigenous education support liaison person from the relevant community who works within the schools with Indigenous students and their families.

Building Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural awareness and specialist skills

Consideration should also be given to offering incentives to Universities to offer dedicated streams in the teaching curriculum reflecting those already in the Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership. These include a focus on strategies for teaching Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students and building capacity to understand and respect Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to promote reconciliation between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians.

We also suggest that Indigenous education and/or cultural bodies are involved in the assessment of any streams. Additionally, Government could consider specific funding incentives to universities that offer dedicated streams to send their top performing students to undertake their practicum in remote schools.

Reference to the More Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Teachers Initiative's (MATSITI) submission to the Teacher Education Ministerial Advisory Group Consultation 2014 focused on five priority areas for reform:

- Increased cultural diversity of education graduates;
- Increased cultural knowledge and skills for all graduates;
- Stronger School-University-Indigenous partnerships;
- Evidence-based curriculum, pedagogy and cultural responsiveness; and
- Improved policy advice, co-ordination and accountability.

12. Final word

Professor Marcia Langton[7] answers the question of what needs to be fixed to improve Indigenous education outcomes for Year 12 attainment in remote communities:

"The first and most important is to normalize the education of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and raise the expectations of families, communities, teachers and educators about Indigenous students complying with school attendance; undertaking the standard curriculum; performing all normal school work and assessment; and participating in school events. This does not exclude bilingual and Aboriginal language and culture classes. But it emphasizes the necessity for Indigenous students to be treated not as incommensurately different, but as students like all other students who are required to become competent in the national curriculum.

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[7] Centre for Independent Studies Occasional Paper 2013

We also know that along with regular full-time attendance, good teaching is essential to improving educational outcomes (by good teaching I mean professional teaching engagement with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students in the classroom). We know that explicit instruction—that is, making each step of the curriculum explicit to the student in a 'brick-by-brick' approach—also helps improve outcomes. Similar approaches are direct instruction, accelerated literacy, and many more. Kirsten Storry, a former researcher at The Centre for Independent Studies, asked some years ago: What is working in good schools in remote Indigenous communities? Her findings are so familiar to those of us who have been to these schools, we could write a song about them:

In remote community schools, children often miss one or two days of school a week. A majority cannot do maths or read at their age level, and few ever do so beyond the level of an eight year old. As many as half do not make the transition to secondary school and only a handful obtain a Year 12 certificate. School attendance, achievement and retention are among the minimum requirements for a good school education. Children who leave school unable to read or write at their age level and unused to a five-day-a-week work ethic will find only limited social and economic opportunities open to them.

Knowing how schools perform on these most basic measures allows us to recognise and replicate successful programmes and to jettison programmes that might look good but are ineffective. Too often, schools are making excuses. They say that even well managed schools with good teachers have little influence over attendance, are unable to disguise the plain hard work involved in phonics and times tables, and have little chance of overcoming the results of family dysfunction, violence and chronic poor health. But some remote schools are reporting much higher rates of attendance, achievement and retention. So what is working in good schools in remote Indigenous communities? On the school side, evidence-based remedial skills programmes, secondary school readiness programmes, and secondary boarding schools are some initiatives that have shown the potential to achieve results.

In the case of literacy programmes, for example, research has shown that whole language instruction alone is not effective for 20 to 25% of children, who need intensive, systematic, skills-based instruction. Some good schools are already seeing results from evidence-based programmes like 'Scaffolding Literacy' and MULTILIT.

On the community side, school readiness and attendance initiatives have shown promise, at least in the short term. Some school readiness programmes are now helping to develop the positive parenting behaviours that they need to achieve the mainstream outcomes to which they aspire for their children. We need to stop making excuses for poor school education in communities and to start learning from what is working, inside and outside communities."