SUBMISSION TO THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES STANDING COMMITTEE ON ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER AFFAIRS – INQUIRY INTO INDIGENOUS EMPLOYMENT

The Department of Education, Science and Training (DEST) welcomes the opportunity to make this submission to the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs, concerning Indigenous employment.

This submission deals with two elements:

1. DEST's contributions towards Indigenous employment: - raising education outcomes for Indigenous students; and

2. DEST's own Indigenous employment initiative, *Yarrangi.*

DEST'S CONTRIBUTION TOWARDS INDIGENOUS EMPLOYMENT – POLICY CONTEXT

Indigenous education is a national priority for the Australian Government. Improved educational outcomes for Indigenous Australians contribute directly to improvements in a range of other spheres of life, including health, employment, home ownership, civic responsibility and reduced substance abuse. Education contributes to economic growth through its effect on labour productivity, technological innovation and adaptation, economic, organisational and individual flexibility and the investment environment.

Closing the educational divide between Indigenous peoples and other Australians remains one of the Australian Government's highest educational priorities.

The Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs (MCEETYA) also agreed on 12 May 2005 that improving outcomes for Indigenous students is the top priority issue for MCEETYA for the quadrennium 2005 – 2008.

Responsibility for the funding and delivery of education for all students, including Indigenous students, is primarily the responsibility of state and territory governments. Indigenous specific funding provided by the Australian Government is supplementary to other mainstream funds. It is intended to complement mainstream effort to accelerate Indigenous students' learning outcomes, and for targeted strategic interventions toward this objective.

The National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Educational Policy (AEP), reflected in the objects of the *Indigenous Education (Targeted Assistance) Act 2000*, guides programme initiatives in continuing efforts to achieve equity between Indigenous and other Australian students.

From 2005 to 2008, the Australian Government is providing $2.1 billion for Indigenous-specific supplementary assistance to preschools, schools, tertiary providers for Indigenous education over the next four years.

The Australian Government's approach for 2005-2008 is to:

- direct its resources to programmes that have demonstrably improved outcomes;

- provide greater weighting of resources toward those Indigenous students of greatest disadvantage – those in remote areas; and
- make mainstream programmes work better for Indigenous students.

Initiatives are being directed towards promoting systemic change and developing flexible whole-of-government approaches to education delivery, particularly:

- preparing young Indigenous children for formal schooling;
- improving attendance, and literacy and numeracy achievement, particularly in primary schools;
- helping to re-engage and retain more indigenous students to year 12, or its vocational education equivalent;
- lifting the effectiveness of teachers and their support staff;
- improving the quality of teaching and teacher practice; and
- strengthened monitoring and reporting of educational outcomes, particularly at regional levels.

INDIGENOUS DEMOGRAPHY

Indigenous demography is markedly different from that of non-Indigenous Australians in that one half of Indigenous people are aged less than 20 years; fertility rates are higher; deaths occur at younger ages; and one in four (25%) of Indigenous persons live in remote or very remote regions, compared with just 2% of non-Indigenous Australians.

The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population was estimated (at 30 June 2001) to be 458,520, or 2.4% of total population.
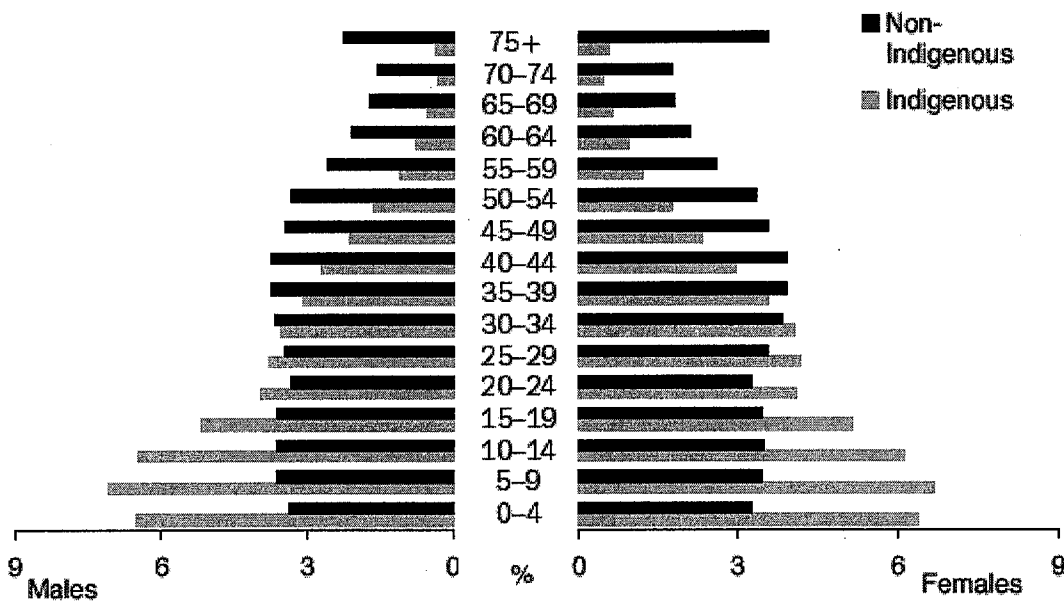
Source: Final rebased experimental Indigenous estimated resident population as at 30 June 2001, ABS data available on request, 2001 Census of Population and Housing.

SCHOOL EDUCATION

Building sound educational foundations and early intervention strategies, along with strong family and community support, are amongst the keys to improving the educational outcome for Indigenous students. An overview of key data on Indigenous school education, 2003, is outlined below.

Indigenous school education, 2003

Indigenous primary school enrolments		Indigenous secondary school enrolments	
• Government	75,209 (89.5%)	• Government	34,944 (83.6%)
• Non-Government	8,869 (10.5%)	• Non-Government	6,870 (16.4%)
Total	84,078	Total	41,814
Gender		**Gender**	
• Male	43,159 (51.3%)	• Male	20,986 (50.2%)
• Female	40,919 (48.7%)	• Female	20,828 (49.8%)

In 2003 there were 125,892 Indigenous students - 4.4% of all primary students, 3.0% of all secondary students and overall 3.8% of total school enrolments in Australia.

Distribution	Government	Non-government	All
• NSW	33,619 (26.7%)	3,499 (2.8%)	29.5%
• Victoria	6,136 (4.9%)	554 (0.4%)	5.3%
• Queensland	30,629 (24.3%)	4,608 (3.7%)	28.0%
• South Australia	6,597 (5.2%)	661 (0.5%)	5.8%
• Western Australia	16,517 (13.1%)	3,394 (2.7%)	15.8%
• Tasmania	4,408 (3.5%)	507 (0.4%)	3.9%
• Northern Territory	11,394 (9.1%)	2,320 (1.8%)	10.9%
• ACT	853 (0.7%)	196 (0.2%)	0.8%
Totals	**110,153 (87.5%)**	**15,739 (12.5%)**	**125,892 (100%)**

Source: DEST derived from ABS National Schools Statistics Collection, 2003

While progress is being made in improving educational outcomes for Indigenous students, gaps between Indigenous and non-Indigenous students' outcomes remain substantial. They are most pronounced in remote areas.

Some key statistics showing the progress being made for Indigenous students in early childhood and school education are:

- Indigenous preschool enrolments increased by 21.8% between 2001 and 2004.

Indigenous enrolments	2001	2002	2003	2004
Preschool	7,434	8,731	9,051	9,055

Source: National Indigenous Preschool Census: all years.

- A continuous improvement in Indigenous retention rates across most year levels in 2003 with the highest Year 12 retention rate (39.5%) reported so far.

	Apparent Retention Rate	Year 7/8 – 10 %	Year 7/8 – 11 %	Year 7/8 – 12 %
1999	Indigenous	82.0	56.0	34.7
	Non-Indigenous	97.9	86.4	73.2
2000	Indigenous	83.0	53.6	36.4
	Non-Indigenous	98.0	86.2	73.3
2001	Indigenous	85.7	56.1	35.7
	Non-Indigenous	98.4	87.6	74.5
2002	Indigenous	86.4	58.9	38.0
	Non-Indigenous	98.5	88.7	76.3
2003	Indigenous	87.2	61.4	39.1
	Non-Indigenous	98.9	89.5	76.5
2004	Indigenous	86.4	61.4	39.5
	Non-Indigenous	98.5	89.5	76.8

Source: ABS Schools Australia 2004 Cat. No. 4221.0

- Literacy and numeracy benchmarking results over the period from 1999 to 2003 show improvements in Indigenous achievements in most areas, particularly in Year 5 and Year 7 reading.

  In 2003, three of the nine Year 3, 5 and 7 literacy and numeracy benchmarking results were the highest yet, and four results equal the best performance so far. For instance, the proportion of Indigenous students reaching the Year 5 numeracy benchmark rose from 62.8% in 2000 to 67.6% in 2003; the proportion of Indigenous students reaching the Year 7 reading benchmark rose from 60.1% in 2001 to 66.5% in 2003.

Benchmark	1999		2000		2001		2002		2003	
	Indigenous	All Students	Indigenous	All Students	Indigenous	All Students	Indigenous	All Students	Indigenous	All Students
Year 3 reading	73.4 (±6.2)	89.7 (±2.5)	76.9 (±6.5)	92.5 (±2.2)	72.0 (±4.8)	90.3 (±2.0)	76.7 (±4.1)	92.3 (±1.7)	78.8 (±6.9)	92.4 (±1.7)
Year 5 reading	58.7 (±4.2)	85.6 (±2.0)	62.0 (±4.8)	87.4 (±2.1)	66.9 (±3.6)	89.8 (±1.3)	68.0 (±3.5)	89.3 (±1.4)	67.7 (±4.1)	89.0 (±1.5)
Year 3 writing	66.9 (±4.8)	91.9 (±1.8)	65.0 (±5.4)	90.0 (±2.6)	67.8 (±4.9)	89.5 (±2.3)	77.1 (±3.5)	93.6 (±1.2)	75.2 (±4.1)	92.2 (±1.5)
Year 5 writing	74.6 (±3.6)	93.0 (±1.1)	74.3 (±3.7)	92.5 (±1.3)	79.9 (±3.3)	94.0 (±1.0)	76.4 (±3.8)	93.6 (±1.1)	79.6 (±3.8)	94.1 (±1.1)
Year 3 numeracy	Not tested	Not tested	73.7 (±7.1)	92.7 (±2.0)	80.2 (±3.9)	93.9 (±1.2)	77.6 (±3.6)	92.8 (±1.3)	80.5 (±3.7)	94.2 (±1.1)
Year 5 numeracy	Not tested	Not tested	62.8 (±4.5)	89.6 (±1.7)	63.2 (±3.7)	89.6 (±1.3)	65.6 (±3.7)	90.0 (±1.3)	67.6 (±3.9)	90.8 (±1.2)
Year 7 Reading	Not tested	Not tested	Not tested	Not tested	60.1 (±3.1)	88.4 (±0.9)	65.3 (±2.9)	89.1 (±0.8)	66.5 (±3.1)	89.4 (±0.9)
Year 7 Writing	Not tested	Not tested	Not tested	Not tested	74.3 (±4.6)	92.6 (±1.6)	71.6 (±4.8)	90.7 (±1.7)	74.4 (±4.4)	92.1 (±1.7)
Year 7 Numeracy	Not tested	Not tested	Not tested	Not tested	48.6 (±2.8)	82.0 (±0.9)	51.9 (±3.0)	83.5 (±0.9)	49.3 (±2.9)	81.3 (±0.8)

Note: The achievement percentages reported in this table include 95% confidence intervals, for example, 80% ± 2.7%.
All Students = the total of Indigenous and non-Indigenous students who sat the test.   Source: Australian National Report on Schooling 2003.

While there has been some encouraging progress more effort needs to be made to accelerate the pace of change in order to close the education divide between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians. For example:

- Year 12 retention rates have risen to record levels, but they are still only around half that of non-Indigenous Australians;
- although numeracy and literacy results have improved, one in four Indigenous students in Year 3, and one in three in Years 5 and 7, cannot pass basic reading tests; and
- while the pattern of Indigenous achievement generally mirrors that of all students, in every case, there are large gaps between the achievement of Indigenous and all students.

Many of the initiatives the Australian Government is supporting to improve outcomes for Indigenous students reflect acknowledged characteristics of highly effective schools as identified in research conducted by the ACER. These characteristics include:

- strong and effective school leaders;
- learning as the central purpose of the school;
- teachers who are well trained;
- strong school culture;
- parent and community involvement; and
- well developed systems to monitor and evaluate performance.

EXAMPLES OF AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT INITIATIVES

Scaffolding Literacy

Scaffolding Literacy (or Accelerated Literacy) is a structured approach to teaching literacy that assists low achieving students to catch up to the average level of the rest of their class. The method aims to develop reading, writing, comprehension and spelling skills to a high level very quickly, using age appropriate books. Analysis by Charles Darwin University shows that students undertaking Accelerated Literacy improve their reading ability at an average rate of 1.73 year levels per year. An independent evaluation by the Australian Council of Educational Research (ACER) found that students achieve at a much higher level than if they had not participated and concluded that the results were 'little short of sensational'.

The Australian Government has allocated $14 million for Scaffolding Literacy over the 2005-2008 quadrennium. To date, $11.8 million has been approved for four Scaffolding Literacy projects. The National Accelerated Literacy Project (NALP) will see Scaffolding Literacy delivered to 10,000 students across 100 schools (90% remote) and the retraining of 700 teachers in the NT. The Aboriginal Independent Community Schools in WA will build on a successful pilot by providing Scaffolding Literacy to 1,010 students in 15 schools. Shalom Christian College in Queensland will continue to support primary students and also extend the methodology to the secondary students (340 students many of whom are boarding students from remote communities). The Catholic Education Office will introduce Scaffolding Literacy to 459 students in six Catholic schools in the East Kimberely Region of Western Australia.

Dare To Lead

The *Dare to Lead* project has been successful in driving sustained, systemic change by engaging principals from around Australia to form an ongoing Coalition of schools who commit to improving educational outcomes for their Indigenous students. Coalition members undertake to achieve a 10% improvement in Year 5 literacy and Year 12 completion rates. In addition, all principals sign up to revising their academic curricula and other school programmes with a view to ensuring that students develop an understanding of Indigenous culture.

In May 2005, the Australian Government announced ongoing support for the *Dare to Lead* project with funding of $8 million over four years. This builds on funding of $1.06 million in 2000-2001 and $3.2 million in 2002-2004. The Australian Principals Association's Professional Development Council will continue to deliver this project nationally, targeting those schools with significant Indigenous populations, particularly in remote and regional areas. The current phase of the *Dare to Lead – Making the Difference,* has a target for Coalition membership of 5,000 schools and 200 institutional members by the end of 2007.

What Works

The *What Works* project delivers professional development workshops and shares best practice in Indigenous education with Australia's teachers. The project has been very successful in embedding change in schools, with the primary aim of providing in-service training for teachers to ensure their teaching focuses on improving outcomes for Indigenous students. During 2003-2004, some 340 workshops involving 12,400 participant educators were held and over 50 case studies of best practice in Indigenous education were on the website, with an increasing emphasis on the ways in which schools use *What Works* materials to effect change.

In April 2005, the Australian Government announced ongoing support for the *What Works* project with funding of $3.61 million over four years. This builds on funding of $2.6 million during 2003-2004. The current phase of the *What Works project* will deliver 400 professional development workshops to approximately 14,500 educators of Indigenous students and prepare new supplementary professional development materials based on needs identified by schools with significant numbers of Indigenous students.

Deadly Vibe

The Australian Government contributes toward the cost of producing and distributing the *Deadly Vibe magazine*. The magazine has an identified readership as high as 200,000 from a print run of 40,000 per month. Evaluation of the magazine by the Australian Council for Educational Research (ACER) acknowledged the magazine as a unique educational resource for both students and teachers; identified its success as remarkable, and attributed that success – in remote, regional and urban locations – to the very strong emphasis on high achievement by Indigenous people.

The ACER found that Indigenous student self-report data shows:
- 85% learn new things; and 71% have become more interested in reading;
- 76% are more aware of careers; 68% inspired to complete secondary school;
- 43% encouraged to attend school more often; and that
- 73% are more aware of the dangers of taking drugs, 72% of the dangers of sniffing substances and 68% of the risks of drinking alcohol.

Education and addictions and substance abuse were two of the three most important issues affecting Indigenous young people in communities identified by the National Indigenous Youth Leadership Group in its 2004-05 survey.

In-Class Tuition

Initially trialled in 2000 in 10 NSW Government primary schools, by 2001 the pilot operated in 40 schools. A 2001 evaluation found the pilot a success and most pilot schools included In-Class Tuition into their school management plans. By 2003, a total of 3,199 Indigenous students had received In-Class Tuition.

The *2003 In-Class Tuition Evaluation Report* found that, of the participating schools, 96% considered that In-Class Tuition had impacted positively on Indigenous students' achievement in literacy and numeracy and 90% considered it had increased attendance.

The programme ($106 million over four years) is being rolled out nationally from 2005 as part of the Indigenous Tutorial Assistance Scheme. It will enable all Indigenous students in remote schools, and most Indigenous student in non-remote schools, who do not meet the national literacy and numeracy benchmarks in Year 3, 5 and 7, to access up to 2.5 hours supplementary In-Class Tuition for up to 32 weeks per annum.

Whole of School Intervention

The *Whole of School Intervention Strategy* ($101 million over four years) encourages parents of Indigenous children and communities and schools to partner in developing innovative strategies aimed at overcoming local barriers affecting Indigenous educational outcomes. The Parent School Partnership Initiative (PSPI) element aims to improve school attendance, literacy and numeracy outcomes, increase retention of Indigenous students from Years 10 to 12 as well as increase the level of successful Year 12 completions.

Approvals at 29 July 2005

State	Funding Approved $	Whole of School Initiative Projects No.	Leveraged funding other sources $
NSW & ACT	3,319,098.02	206	2,550,279.17
VIC	190,697.86	28	395,179.00
QLD	2,619,389.00	37	2,784,431.41
SA	1,005,492.24	61	793,677.00
WA	2,106,329.00	128	3,448,165.50
TAS	241,613.00	10	81,600.00
NT	4,275,731.09	283	3,369,608.58
TOTAL	$13,758,350.21	753	$13,422,940.66

The Australian Government also funds specific initiatives and programmes that assist young people make successful transition through school, and from school to work, further education and employment. Indigenous students are supported through these initiatives and programmes, either as a specified target group, or as a consequence of the general parameters for assistance – including through weightings that provide higher levels of funding support to remote locations.

The Australian Network of Industry Careers Advisers

The *Australian Network of Industry Careers Advisers* (ANICA) initiative aims to support all young people from 13-19 years of age. To assist them achieve a successful transition through school, and from school to further education, training and employment. The initiative builds on a range of existing programmes and services, and will provide for the first time a national system of career and transition support.

From 2006, the role of Local Community Partnerships (LCPs) will be expanded. They will continue to deliver the Structured Workplace Learning Programme (SWL), facilitate access to quality career and transition support, and manage the Adopt a School Programme (ASP).

LCPs will facilitate a range of activities at the local level to support all young people 13-19 years (including Indigenous young people) and are expected to tailor and target programme services to meet community needs. A loading of 80% is being accorded to the service fees in remote locations in recognition of difficulties in servicing remote areas.

Jobs Pathway Programme

From 2006 the *Jobs Pathway Programme* (JPP) will be known as *Youth Pathways.* Youth Pathways will complement ANICA by addressing the needs of those young people most at risk of not making a successful transition through school and from school to further education, training and work. Youth Pathways will aim to retain or re-engage these young people in school through to Year 12 or its vocational equivalent.

VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING

Whilst schools provide strong foundational skills to equip Indigenous students to succeed in further education and employment, vocational education and training (VET) has a diverse and far-reaching role. It aims to build the vocational skills to enable Indigenous students to progress, succeed and compete in the employment market. This is equally important for Indigenous students moving into VET immediately after leaving school as it is for older Indigenous students using VET as their 'second chance' at learning.

Improving employment outcomes for Indigenous people in VET, delivering training to remote communities, addressing the non-completion of VET courses, and increasing the number of Indigenous people undertaking higher level courses, remain some of the major challenges for VET providers.

Activities at the national level that seek to address these issues include agreement in June 2003 to focus on Indigenous people in *Shaping Our Future: a national strategy for VET for 2004-2010*. A key objective of the strategy is 'Indigenous Australians will have the skills for viable jobs and their learning culture will be shared'.

This strategy will guide the direction for VET in coming years and aims to ensure that VET helps increase employment and business development opportunities for Indigenous people and communities, providing a foundation for greater economic independence.

Through employment and training measures the Australian Government is promoting the value of training to Indigenous Australians. Focussing attention on the specific training needs of Indigenous communities is important in maximising outcomes for Indigenous Australians. Targeting training to provide skills in building maintenance, administration, essential services, health and education could enable more Indigenous Australians to take up employment opportunities within communities. All governments continue to examine ways to improve the responsiveness of training programmes to Indigenous Australians through processes such as the COAG framework.

An overview of key data on Indigenous VET education, in 2003, is outlined below.

Indigenous VET education, 2003

Indigenous enrolments		Age distribution	
• Government	39,174	• 17 and under	17.9%
• Community	2,768	• 18-20	15.9%
• Indigenous controlled	5,600	• 21-25	15.5%
• Other providers	10,545	• 26-30	12.0%
Total	58,087	• over 30	38.7%
Highest school level achieved		**Home location**	
• Year 9 or lower	32.9%	• capital cities	26.4%
• Year 10	35.7%	• other metro	5.6%
• Year 11	13.3%	• rural	40.2%
• Year 12	18.1%	• remote	27.8%
Gender			
• male	53.2%		
• female	46.8%		

Sources: DEST - IESIP performance reports and NCVER National VET provider collection

- The percentage of VET students who were Indigenous increased from 3.1% to 3.4% between 1999 and 2003.

Year	Non-Indigenous	Not Known	Indigenous
1999	79.5%	17.5%	**3.1%**
2000	76.1%	20.9%	**3.0%**
2001	79.4%	17.3%	**3.3%**
2002	76.2%	20.3%	**3.5%**
2003	77.2%	19.5%	**3.4%**

NCVER data.

- The number of Indigenous New Apprenticeships has increased significantly (61%) from 6,260 to 10,100 since 2001 and, since 2000, the proportions of Indigenous New Apprentices in higher levels of training have increased.

Indigenous students	2001	2002	2003	2004
New Apprenticeships	6,260	6,960	8,481	10,100

Source: NCVER March 2004, and December 2004.

Indigenous students in New Apprenticeships	2000 (%)	2001 (%)	2002 (%)	2003 (%)
AQF Certificates I and II	39.0	38.2	36.5	34.6
AQF Certificate III	58.5	57.8	59.0	60.0
AQF Certificates IV and higherl	2.5	4.0	4.5	5.3

Source: NCVER National VET Provider collection: 2000-2003

- Over 2001 to 2003 the number of Indigenous VET students enrolled in AQF Certificate III increased by 13% and in AQF Certificate IV by 4%.

Indigenous students	2001	2002	2003
AQF Cert III	13,691	15,424	15,468
AQF Cert IV	5,058	5,447	5,260

Source: NCVER National VET Provider collection: 2001-2003

- Over 1999 to 2003 the completion rates for Indigenous VET students in all modules/competencies increased and the fail rate decreased.

Indigenous students	1999 (%)	2000 (%)	2001 (%)	2002 (%)	2003 (%)
Completion rate	62.9	64.8	65.7	68.5	68.8
Pass rate	58.2	60.8	62.3	64.2	63.9
Fail rate	19.6	18.6	18.5	14.7	13.7
Withdrawal rate	16.7	16.0	15.3	16.4	16.8

Source: NCVER National VET Provider collection: 1999-2003

Whilst overall the results in VET are encouraging:

- there is scope for improvement in course completions and better employment outcomes for Indigenous students;
- between 2002 and 2003 there was an overall decline in the number of Indigenous people employed in most government VET systems; and
- during this time there was a decline in the number of Indigenous employees in government VET systems in the teaching and other professional category from 452 to 375 (17%).

EXAMPLES OF AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT INITIATIVES

Increasing Vocational Learning Outcomes for Indigenous Students

Increasing Vocational Learning Outcomes for Indigenous Students (IVLOIS) was funded as part of the Australians Working Together initiative. Designed to provide young Indigenous Australians with the skills to become productive and employable workers, projects include important career aspects such as mentoring, work experience, careers information, computer learning programmes and intensive literacy support. In 2005 34 projects are providing vocational learning opportunities for 3,015 Indigenous secondary school students in 135 schools across all States and Territories, in a range of locally-based vocational learning environments. Several projects of national significance have also been developed. These seek to influence systemic change in the approach to service delivery for Indigenous youth.

Pathways to Employment Project

The *Pathways to Employment Project* (PEP) for Community Development Employment Project (CDEP) seeks to identify and respond to the VET needs of Indigenous participants in a way that will assist in gaining sustainable employment or in taking up business opportunities.

Working with 16 CDEP organisations nationally, the project is seeking to identify the training needs of CDEP participants to enable them to: take up opportunities outside the CDEP; develop models able to be replicated across CDEPs; and develop sustainable links between CDEP, the VET system and mainstream employment.

There are 16 CDEP organisations involved in PEP in locations such as Bundaberg and Burnett in Queensland; Illawarra and Wallaga Lakes in New South Wales; Bairnsdale in Victoria; Launceston in Tasmania; Adelaide and the York Peninsula in South Australia; Tiwi Islands and Borroloola in the Northern Territory; and Perth, Geraldton and Fitzroy Crossing in Western Australia.

Indigenous Youth Mobility Programme

The *Indigenous Youth Mobility Programme* (IYMP) ($23.1 m) will encourage at least 600 young people from remote Australia to take up training and employment opportunities. With the support of their families and communities young people can elect to relocate to one of ten IYMP host locations to develop their skills.

The IYMP will support the development of local economic opportunities in remote areas by focussing on New Apprenticeships and other training and employment including in occupations such as nursing, accountancy, business management and teaching. Participants will be assisted to maintain contact with their home communities and to return home to take up skilled positions once their training is complete.

The IYMP may cover:

- New Apprenticeships;
- Diploma or higher qualification;
- Certificate III or IV level training not linked to a New Apprenticeship; and
- pre-vocational training and other training at Certificate I or II.

The elements of the IYMP include:

- training and employment services to be delivered in Cairns, Townsville, Toowoomba, Dubbo, Newcastle/ Hunter Valley, Canberra, Shepparton, Adelaide, Perth and Darwin;
- safe and supported accommodation through Aboriginal Hostels Limited; and
- mentor support.

Group Training New Apprenticeships Targeted Initiatives Programme

The *Group Training New Apprenticeships Targeted Initiatives Programme* (TIP) funds projects that help group training organisations to create sustainable New Apprenticeships in priority areas — namely in markets that are critical, under-serviced or challenging. Priority is given to projects that target participation by School based New Apprentices; mature aged people, particularly those over 45 years of age; and/or Indigenous people and people with disabilities, particularly arrangements that increase the completion rate and/or are at higher Certificate levels.

New Apprenticeships Access Programme

The *New Apprenticeships Access Programme* (NAAP) provides job seekers who experience barriers to skilled employment, with pre-vocational training, support and assistance to obtain and maintain a New Apprenticeship. Alternatively, a job seeker may be supported into employment, further education or training. From July 2005, the NAAP is being extended by an additional 5,000 places targeting industries and regions experiencing skills shortages

Basic IT Enabling Skills for Older Workers

The *Basic IT Enabling Skills for Older Workers* programme provides workers aged 45 years and older with the opportunity to undergo nationally accredited training in information technology. The programme is designed to help older people on a low income, who are in the labour force, to gain nationally accredited skills in information and communication technology, so they can operate more effectively in the workforce.

Workplace English Language and Literacy Programme

The *Workplace English Language and Literacy Programme* provides workers with English language, literacy and numeracy skills. Funding is available for language and literacy training that is integrated with vocational training to enable workers to meet their current and future employment and training needs.

HIGHER EDUCATION

The Australian Government is the primary funding source for higher education. Australian Government funds are allocated to higher education institutions for operating, capital development and research purposes. Funds are also made available for particular priorities, including Indigenous education.

The higher education reforms introduced as a result of the 2002 review are based on four key principles – sustainability, quality, equity and diversity. Systemic barriers to participation of historically disadvantaged groups, in particular Indigenous Australians, are being addressed. Targeted intervention measures and new approaches to student financing encourage participation and retention of under-represented groups.

An overview of the key data on Indigenous higher education, in 2003, is outlined below.

Indigenous higher education, 2003

Higher Education institutions
- 39 institutions received Indigenous Support Programme funding totalling $24.263m

Indigenous students in 2003
- Commencing students   4,111 persons – 1,516 males, 2,595 females
- All students   8,988 persons – 3,294 males, 5,694 females
- Average age   Commencing – 30 years, All – 31 years
- Type of attendance   64.7% full-time; 35.3% part-time
- Delivery mode   64.7% internal; 28.2% external; 7.1% multi-modal

Award course completions for Indigenous students in 2002
- Higher degree   104 – 46 males, 58 females
- Other postgraduate   122 – 40 males, 82 females
- Bachelor level   733 – 247 males, 486 females
- Other undergraduate   169 – 53 males, 116 females
- Total   1,128 – 386 males, 742 females

Higher Education Performance Indicators, 2003
- Access   1.52%   Retention   0.76
- Participation   1.20%   Success rate   0.76

Indigenous staff in 2003
- Academic   261 – 103 males, 158 females
- Other   372 – 101 males, 271 females
- Total staff   633 – 204 males, 429 females

Some key statistics showing the progress being made for Indigenous students are as follows.

- Indigenous student higher education numbers increased from 8,661 in 2001 to 8,895 in 2004

Indigenous students	2001*	2002	2003	2004
Higher education	8,661	8,871	8,988	8,895

* Counted using the 2002 scope.
Source: Selected Higher Education Statistics: 2001 to 2004

- The percentage of Indigenous students studying at bachelor level or above rose from 67.4% in 2001 to 76.4% in 2004.

Indigenous students	2001*	2002	2003	2004
Number	5,840	6,238	6,537	6,794
%	67.4%	70.3%	72.7%	76.4%

Counted using the 2002 scope.
Source: Selected Higher Education Statistics: 2001 to 2004

- There has been a continuing increase in the number of award course completions by Indigenous students (up 13.2% from 2001 to 2003), particularly at the bachelor degree level.

Indigenous students	2001	2002	2003
Higher education	1,052	1,128	1,191

Source: Selected Higher Education Statistics: 2001 to 2004

- An increase in the take-up rate of full-time employment and higher average starting salary for Indigenous graduates than non-Indigenous graduates in 2003.

Full-time employment	1998 (%)	1999 (%)	2000 (%)	2001 (%)	2002 (%)	2003 (%)
Indigenous students	82.9	82.8	84.8	82.2	83.7	83.8
Non-Indigenous students	82.2	83.4	85.9	82.9	81.0	80.0

Source: GCCA Graduate Destination Survey, 1998 – 2003

Mean starting salary	2002 ($)	2003 ($)
Indigenous students	37,673	39,320
Non-Indigenous students	37,000	37,745

Source: GCCA Graduate Destination Survey, 2002 – 2003

Whilst overall the results in higher education are encouraging:

- in 2003, the number of Indigenous commencing students fell in 2003, particularly for Indigenous males. At the same time, the number of non-Indigenous commencing students also declined. The decline in commencing student numbers was greatest in Western Australia and Northern Territory;
- the number of award course completions by Indigenous students increased in 2002, although a corresponding increase in non-Indigenous completions meant there was no progress towards Indigenous students attaining the same graduation rates as other Australians; and
- in 2003 some progress was made in specific areas of Indigenous participation, the momentum of progress to close gaps between outcomes for Indigenous and non-Indigenous students remains a challenge.

EXAMPLES OF AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT INITIATIVES

Indigenous Support Programme

The Australian Government supports activities to improve the participation and success of Indigenous people in higher education through the *Indigenous Support Programme* (ISP). From 2005 this fund was increased by a total of $10.4 million over three years to some $27 million per annum to enable institutions to provide greater support for Indigenous people in higher education. Additional eligibility requirements are being introduced which require institutions to: provide evidence of participation of Indigenous people in the decision making processes of the institution; have an institutional Indigenous Employment Strategy; and provide evidence of enabling strategies for improving participation and completions of Indigenous students. Institutions are required to report on their expenditure of ISP funds and indicate the amount of money provided to an Indigenous Support Centre (should one exist at the institution).

Indigenous Higher Education Advisory Council

An *Indigenous Higher Education Advisory Council* (IHEAC) has been established (2004) as a formal mechanism for the Commonwealth to receive Indigenous advice on higher education issues. IHEAC provides policy advice to the Minister for Education, Science and Training aimed at improving successful outcomes for Indigenous students and staff in relation to their participation, progression and retention in both study and employment in higher education. Advice can extend to identifying enabling strategies such as Indigenous staff and student engagement in University decision-making and with Indigenous communities and stakeholders.

The Council, which meets up to three times a year, also:

- critically monitors student academic outcomes and staff participation;
- makes recommendations to the Minister for awards under the Indigenous Staff Scholarship Programme; and
- convenes an annual conference on Indigenous education, to:
    - o discuss policy issues, research developments, sector and institutional achievements, successful innovations and best practice measures;
    - o present Indigenous staff scholarships; and
    - o present the Neville Bonner student scholarship.

Indigenous Staff Scholarship Programme

The *Indigenous Staff Scholarships Programme* provides professional development opportunities for academic or general Indigenous staff at higher education institutions. The outstanding efforts of staff from Australian universities who encourage greater Indigenous participation in higher education are recognised with the awarding of five Indigenous Staff Scholarships. The scholarships enable Indigenous staff to take one year of leave from their university employment to undertake full-time higher education study in their chosen academic or professional area.

Commonwealth Learning Scholarships

Commonwealth Learning Scholarships (CLS), introduced in 2004, assist rural and regional, low socio-economic status (SES) and Indigenous students with the costs associated with higher education. There are two scholarships – one for educational costs and one for accommodation costs. Both target students from low income backgrounds. CLS's are distributed to institutions on the basis of their proportion of low-SES students. A provider's selection policy must specify that special consideration will be given to Indigenous students to ensure a fair proportion of the provider's CLS are awarded to Indigenous students.

DEST'S INDIGENOUS EMPLOYMENT INITIATIVE, *YARRANGI*

DEST is a significant employer of Indigenous Australians. At June 2005 DEST employed 195 Indigenous staff, representing 9.8% of DEST's total staffing. Indigenous Australians constitute 2.6% of total staff in DEST's National Office, and 44% of total staff in DEST's network of state offices. The proportion of Indigenous staff to total staff in the various states is as follows: Queensland – 55%; Northern Territory – 47%; New South Wales – 54%; Tasmania – 38%; Western Australia – 40%; South Australia – 22%; and Victoria – 22%.

Yarrangi is DEST's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Recruitment and Career Development Plan. *Yarrangi* also refers to the Yarrangi Steering Committee, which oversees this Plan, and the local networks of Indigenous Australian staff in DEST.

The Yarrangi Plan 2003-2005 provides a broad framework with the main objectives of attracting Indigenous Australians to work in DEST, providing development opportunities, and offering ongoing support for existing Indigenous Australian employees. It contains outcomes against which to determine DEST's effectiveness in achieving these objectives. It is designed to be short, easy to read, and accessible. The Plan belongs to everyone in DEST and benefits everyone in DEST.

The Yarrangi Plan has evolved over a number of years and has objectives to:

- attract Indigenous Australians to employment opportunities in DEST by:
  o effectively promoting employment opportunities;
  o improving access to "entry level" positions e.g. Cadetships, New Apprenticeships and Graduate positions; and
  o making support available to Indigenous Australian employees in DEST through our employment framework and *Yarrangi*;

- develop Indigenous Australian employees in DEST through:
  o understanding the career development needs of Indigenous Australian employees;
  o providing input into learning and development strategies and initiatives in DEST to ensure they are flexible enough to meet the needs of Indigenous Australian employees; and
  o actively promoting learning and development opportunities; and

- retain Indigenous Australian employees by:
  o encouraging an environment that understands, supports and promotes Indigenous Australian culture;
  o maintaining an Indigenous Australian employee support network in DEST;
  o ensuring induction arrangements meet the needs of Indigenous Australian employees; and
  o promoting career opportunities through mobility.

There is continued recognition of Indigenous Australian employees' needs and skills in the DEST Certified Agreement. Examples include access to Ceremonial Leave, the Indigenous Australian Study Award program and the Indigenous Australian Languages Allowance.

DEST also nominates Indigenous employees for the National Indigenous Cadetship Programme, which aims to increase representation of Indigenous Australians in the APS. The Cadetship programme is aimed at recruiting external Indigenous Australians to DEST and provides the opportunity to undertake full-time study (on leave from the Department during this study) to obtain an approved undergraduate degree.