



MINISTER FOR EDUCATION, SCIENCE AND TRAINING
THE HON DR BRENDAN NELSON MP

CAPACITY BUILDING
INQUIRY
Submission No. ...20.....

29 AUG 2002

Mr Barry Wakelin MP
Chair
House of Representatives Standing Committee
on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600


Dear Mr Wakelin

Thank you for your letter of 2 July 2002 inviting me to make a submission to the inquiry into capacity building in Indigenous communities which will be undertaken by the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs.

I enclose a submission to the inquiry providing information on the programmes administered by my Department regarding working with communities, parents and organisations in order to achieve improved educational outcomes for Indigenous students.

Thank you for bringing this to my attention.

Yours sincerely


BRENDAN NELSON

Submission to the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs - Capacity Building in Indigenous Communities.

The Department of Education, Science and Training administers and delivers a number of programmes and services for Indigenous Australians. Integral to the programmes that the Department has developed is building community capacity and encouraging the involvement of Indigenous parents and community members in education matters and educational decision-making.

The Department has recently undergone substantive change – the implications of this reorganisation for Indigenous education and training are extremely positive. The enhancement of the Indigenous area as a stand-alone Group reflects the increased importance attached to the most challenging equity area faced by the Department. The new Indigenous Group provides support to develop policies and programmes for Indigenous people across preschool, school, vocational education and training and the higher education sectors. The Indigenous Group has absorbed functions previously managed by the Higher Education and Vocational Education and Training Groups. The programmes and services for Indigenous education and training are not restricted to those administered by the Indigenous Group of the Department, but rather are Department wide. The Department is supporting capacity building in Indigenous communities through the following programmes.

Education

Effective educational outcomes are central to the achievement of capacity building in Indigenous communities. Despite some progress over recent years, educational outcomes for Indigenous people remain poor, and the scale of educational disadvantage large.

The National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Policy (AEP) continues to be the cornerstone of change for Indigenous education and is periodically revisited to ensure that it will make significant progress in closing the gaps in educational outcomes between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians. The AEP has 21 goals supported by all Australian governments that focus primarily on measurably raising the educational outcomes achieved by Indigenous students. The policy builds on a high level of State and Territory Ministerial goodwill and commitment.

The Department of Education, Science and Training administers a number of education programmes specifically targeted at improving educational outcomes for Indigenous people. These programmes are in addition to the mainstream education programmes.

Indigenous Education Strategic Initiatives Programme (IESIP)

Under the Indigenous Education Strategic Initiatives Programme (IESIP), supplementary funding is available to education providers on a per capita basis in order to improve educational outcomes for Indigenous people. Funding is available at the preschool, school, and vocational education and training levels. The funding is provided to State and Territory education and training departments, as well as non-government schools and vocational education and training providers. Apart from the supplementary recurrent funding, the programme provides funding for travel, accommodation, and related activities for distance education students in the tertiary sector to attend compulsory residential schools as part of their course of study. The National Indigenous English Literacy and Numeracy Strategy (NIELNS) is part of IESIP.

Each agreement with an education provider under IESIP identifies annual achievement targets across a comprehensive range of performance targets. Providers report annually on their outcomes against these targets. In funding improvements to educational outcomes for Indigenous people, the programme is assisting in the capacity building of Indigenous communities.

An integral part of the development of initiatives under the NIELNS was the building of strong partnerships between education and training providers and families and communities. The Commonwealth funded 267 initiatives under this strategy. These initiatives are delivered by 90 education providers across the preschool, school and vocational education and training sectors. The first report of the NIELNS initiatives is due at the end of 2003.

Indigenous Education Direct Assistance (IEDA) programme

The Indigenous Education Direct Assistance (IEDA) programme has three elements:

- the Aboriginal Student Support and Parent Awareness (ASSPA) programme;
- the Aboriginal Tutorial Assistance Scheme (ATAS); and
- the Vocational and Educational Guidance for Aboriginals Scheme (VEGAS).

Aboriginal Student Support and Parent Awareness (ASSPA) programme

The ASSPA element of this programme has a particular focus on Indigenous involvement and decision-making. ASSPA promotes Indigenous ownership of education and parental support for Indigenous student's learning aspirations.

ASSPA plays a coordinating role in the delivery of Indigenous education programmes and encourages dialogue between schools and preschools and the Indigenous community. The ASSPA committees are encouraged to form the management group that is required to operate a homework centre funded under the ATAS element of this programme. Many ASSPA committees also develop projects funded under the VEGAS element as they are well placed to understand student needs. The Department is also encouraging ASSPA Committee involvement in new bulk-funding arrangements for in-class tuition funded under ATAS for the development of literacy and numeracy.

Under ASSPA, the Commonwealth provides per capita funding to preschool and school-based parent committees for each Indigenous student at the preschool or school. The level of schooling and the remoteness of the locality determine the funding that is provided. Secondary students attract \$315 in remote locations and \$160 in non-remote locations. Primary and preschool students attract funding of \$215 in remote locations and \$110 in non-remote locations. Locations are considered to be remote when they are 300 kilometres by road from a city of 50,000 persons or fall within one of several geographic or social remoteness categories.

Aboriginal Tutorial Assistance Scheme (ATAS)

ATAS provides supplementary tuition and other study assistance to Indigenous students from primary schooling through to higher education through the provision of qualified tutors or other study assistance. As previously stated, ASSPA Committees are encouraged by the Department to play an integral role in the management of homework centres where Indigenous students can access support for homework assignments and the new in-class tuition arrangements for the development of literacy and numeracy skills.

Vocational and Educational Guidance for Aboriginals Scheme (VEGAS)

Under VEGAS, grants are provided to sponsoring organisations to conduct projects for Indigenous school students, their parents, and Indigenous prisoners that provide them with information about their career and study options. As previously stated, ASSPA Committees are well placed to sponsor such projects.

Vocational Education and Training

The Department of Education, Science and Training has funded the development of an interactive CD-ROM to support education and training of Indigenous learners. The *Deadly Bay – Open for Work* project has been designed to develop the language, literacy and numeracy skills required to meet vocational education and training competency standards. The project, managed by the Australian National Training Authority (ANTA), is part of a larger Commonwealth initiative to develop training package support materials.

Deadly Bay - Open for Work offers learner support tools in the areas of the seafood industry, horticulture, community recreation, tourism and hospitality, as well as cross-industry business service skills. The CD-ROM was released in June 2002.

A number of endorsed training packages in the vocational education and training sector have qualifications designed to meet the training needs of individuals working in Indigenous communities. These include qualifications in the Public Safety Training Package on Indigenous policing, and the Tourism Training Package on Indigenous cultural guiding. Additionally, the Health Training Package is currently being expanded to incorporate an Indigenous Health Worker section, developed by the national Industry Training Advisory Body under contract with ANTA.

The Business Services Training Package endorsed in August 2001 includes the Governance (Indigenous Organisations) sector with 32 units of competency developed in consultation with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission (ATSIC). At the ANTA Ministerial Council meeting on 24 May 2002 the Commonwealth, State and Territory Ministers agreed to support early implementation of those qualifications. ANTA has engaged Business Services Training Australia (BSTA) to manage the development of training resources to assist with the delivery of the Indigenous governance qualifications. BSTA will work closely with ATSIC on this project.

An Online Products for Equity Groups project, designed to support training for targeted equity groups including Indigenous learners, commenced in 2001. The project was developed under the Australian Flexible Learning Framework in VET 2000-2004 initiative managed by ANTA with Commonwealth funds. The online training support material, known as 'toolboxes', developed specifically for Indigenous learners include a modification of Flexible Learning Horticulture Toolboxes, and an online resource for Indigenous communities on issues relating to Native Title. It is anticipated that these toolboxes will be available online in the second half of 2002. A toolbox to support the Certificate IV in Tourism – Indigenous Eco Tourism was released in May 2002.

Partners in a Learning Culture

The *National Strategy for Vocational Education and Training 1998-2003*, agreed by all States and Territories and the Commonwealth, sets out the major objectives for the national vocational education and training system. One of the key objectives is "achieving equitable outcomes in VET for all Australians", including Indigenous Australians. In relation to Indigenous people, a specific priority is to increase participation by Indigenous people in vocational education and training, particularly in higher-level award programmes, improve retention and completion rates and improve employment outcomes.

To complement this, in June 2000, Commonwealth, State and Territory Ministers of training, as members of the Australian National Training Authority (ANTA) Ministerial Council, agreed to *Partners in a Learning Culture*, a National Strategy and Blueprint to improve training outcomes for Indigenous people, from 2000 until 2005. These documents outline strategies and actions at national, State and Territory level to increase opportunities for Indigenous people in vocational education and training. The needs and barriers that constrain Indigenous people from accessing and

participating in vocational education and training were identified in the consultation process that was undertaken in the development of the Strategy.

An Australian Indigenous Training Advisory Council (AITAC) was established in 2000 and consists of Indigenous people and representatives from stakeholder groups, including industry, unions, the Commonwealth and all State and Territory governments. AITAC provides advice to the ANTA Board on Indigenous training issues, and monitors the implementation of the Blueprint. AITAC has an Executive Sub-committee, a Managing and Monitoring sub-committee and an Indigenous policy sub-committee. The latter is comprised entirely of AITAC's Indigenous representatives.

The Indigenous vocational education and training strategy was developed in order to:

- identify the key vocational education and training issues and activities which are most important for Indigenous community development;
- include the perspectives of Indigenous people in current and future vocational education and training policy and programmes at all levels;
- ensure that vocational education and training decisions results in better outcomes for Indigenous individuals and communities;
- show how vocational education and training programmes can be better managed for Indigenous communities;
- lay down quality and continuous improvement measures which build upon positive gains already made within the sector; and
- set out measurable objectives to improve outcomes for Indigenous Australians in vocational education and training and employment.

The four objectives of *Partners in a Learning Culture* are:

1. Increase the involvement of Indigenous people in decision-making about policy, planning, resources and delivery.
2. Achieve participation in VET for Indigenous people equal to those of the rest of the Australian community.
3. Achieve increased, culturally appropriate, and flexibly delivered training, including use of information technology, for Indigenous people.
4. Develop closer links between VET outcomes for Indigenous people and industry and employment.

State and Territory Training Authorities, who are responsible for funding programmes for Indigenous people in vocational education and training, have been asked to report in their annual vocational education and training plans on progress towards achieving the strategies in the Blueprint. A mid-term review of progress in implementing the Blueprint is due at the end of 2002. The Department of Education, Science and Training has provided funding of \$1.91 million to ANTA to support national activities outlined in the Blueprint for the period 2000 to 2003.

Footprints to the Future – Indigenous young people

A key theme of the report of the Prime Minister's Youth Pathways Action Plan Taskforce, *Footprints to the Future*, was the need for individuals and organisations to work collaboratively to build on their capacities to support the transitions of young people through school and from school to work, further education, training and meaningful participation in the community. Both the Partnership Outreach Education Model pilots and the Career and Transition pilots, launched in response to the *Footprints* report, encourage a community capacity building approach by encouraging providers to form local partnerships and local support networks during and beyond the life of the pilots.

Within this theme, Recommendation 9 of the Footprints report (reported in full at Attachment A) recommended that “all policies and programmes designed to address the needs of Indigenous young people and their communities must:

- be developed locally in consultation with the communities themselves and those communities must be empowered to deliver them;
- be designed in partnership with Indigenous peoples;
- be flexible enough to meet the diverse environments in which Indigenous people live, whether urban, rural or remote; and
- recognise the strong links between culture, land, language, kinship, identity and self-awareness”.

To realise the vision from *Footprints to the Future* governments, business, schools, community organisations and other interested parties must:

- continue to find new ways of doing business;
- design programmes and services with flexible parameters;
- develop community partnerships or relationships directly and through programmes and programme providers; and
- ensure communities reap the benefits from the goodwill that exists from government agencies and portfolios towards improved outcomes for communities and individuals.

Collaborative efforts must prevail to avoid the confusion that results for communities when many government agencies, from many different agencies, call on them.

In developing its response to *Footprints to the Future*, the Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs (MCEETYA) and its various taskforces are engaged in seeking ways for education and training provision to build community capacity in all States and Territories.

At its 12th meeting, in July 2001, MCEETYA established a short term Ministerial Subcommittee on Young People’s Transitions to develop practical options for strengthening transition pathways for young people disconnected or at risk of becoming disconnected from their families, schools and communities.

The Subcommittee surveyed Commonwealth, State and Territory initiatives supporting young people at risk. It found extensive targeted and foundational activity supporting communities to support their young people in transition. This survey was collated in a report, entitled *Stepping Forward – Sharing What Works*. The report can be found at www.curriculum.edu.au/mceetya/stepping.

Indigenous Youth Partnership Initiative

The Department funds the Enterprise and Career Education Foundation (ECECF) to deliver the Indigenous Youth Partnership Initiative (IYPI). The aim of the IYPI is to address young Indigenous people’s relative disadvantage in education, training and employment. This involves a ‘whole of community’ approach to promoting effective assistance and support for Indigenous youth to remain in or return to school, and to provide a reliable pathway from schooling to training and employment and onto independence. The programme complements and forms part of the broader National Indigenous English Literacy and Numeracy Strategy (NIELNS). To date twenty projects have been run nation-wide, the last two, in Cape York and Newcastle, under a model of collaboration between ECECF, the Department of Education, Science and Training, the Department of Employment and Workplace Relations, the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission, the Department of Family and Community Services and the Department of Health and Ageing.

Some particularly successful IYPI projects include:

- *Forster Career Aspiration Project (NSW)*

The Career Aspiration Project (CAP) was established in 1999 by the Forster Local Aboriginal Land Council to help Indigenous young people make informed life choices and a smooth transition from school to employment. Working with students from Years 9 to 12, and with school leavers studying through TAFE, the project helps young Indigenous people clarify and achieve their personal goals, focusing not only on education and employment, but also on the health, social and recreational aspects of their lives.

Each student's case is individually managed in close consultation with his or her families. Once the young person has set themselves short and long-term goals, the person meets regularly with the Project Coordinator and in some cases with mentors, to discuss their individual issues and options.

To increase the students' generic skills and chances of local employment, the project runs two vocational courses. The first, a three-day camp, allows Indigenous students in Year 9 to undertake an intensive Work Skills course in retail. The second, a National Marine Operations Certificate, gives older students a nationally recognised deck-hand qualification.

Already, the project is achieving solid outcomes, changing perceptions among the students and local employers alike. Nearly 80 per cent of the project's participants now do work-placements, half have part-time jobs and a number of graduates have gone directly to full-time employment, apprenticeships and further study.

- *Youth and Community Learning Centre (QLD)*

The Youth and Community Learning Centre was established in 2000 as an alternative place of learning for Indigenous young people for whom mainstream schooling is no longer an option. Supported by the Catholic Education Office (Toowoomba Diocese), the centre offers a highly flexible and practical programme designed to enhance young people's literacy and numeracy, life skills and preparation for work.

While the centre operates five days a week in an adapted school building and employs a principal, two teachers and a counsellor, the atmosphere of the centre is not that of a conventional school. The students follow individual programmes, set their own goals and explore their personal interests. Work placements are arranged where appropriate, and educational and work skills are developed through hands on activities like landscaping, automotive and carpentry. Twenty young people are now enrolled, most of them boys aged from 12 to 16 years. The centre has an excellent record of attendance and a growing waiting list, but because its small size is considered crucial to its' success, it does not want to expand. Instead there are plans to replicate the model. In 2001, the centre received an Award of Excellence from the Australian College of Education.

- *First Steps Employment Programme (WA)*

This programme works with Indigenous youth from all over the Perth metropolitan area. Coordinated by Red Cross Australia, it operates in nine government, independent and Catholic high schools including several Aboriginal colleges, and is particularly active in the northern suburbs around Balga, Mirrabooka and Girrawheen.

The First Steps Employment Programme helps Indigenous students in Years 10, 11 and 12 to secure part-time employment as a way to develop their skills, confidence and motivation to remain at school. Most participants gain part-time work in retail and fast food outlets. Companies like Coles, McDonalds and Kentucky Fried Chicken are ideal industry partners, providing the students with training, developing their communication skills and ensuring them a public presence that encourages others and challenges community perceptions.

All students in the programme receive individual support. They undertake extensive work-readiness training and, once employed, are visited regularly by First Steps staff, either at school, at home or in the workplace. This personal contact with the students and their families is vital. Indigenous youth deal with many complex and conflicting pressures that can make holding down jobs and studying difficult. By discussing these issues with them, and assisting with advocacy when necessary, First Steps is able to remove many of the obstacles that can cause the employer/employee relationship to break down. Employers, too, are encouraged to undertake training in cross-cultural awareness.

Since First Steps was established in 2001, almost all the 25 participants have remained at school and there is a growing demand for places on the programme. Now attracting interest from bodies like the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission (ATSIC), the model may soon be expanded and duplicated throughout Western Australia. First Steps was a finalist in the 2001 West Australian Community Services Awards.

Partnership approach

Community capacity building requires substantial time and sometimes, additional resources. The Department of Education, Science and Training has promoted a partnership approach to the delivery of both the Partnership Outreach Education Model and the Career and Transition pilots. In practice this means a lead agency receives pilot programme funding and must work through committees made up of representatives from a range of interested groups or organisations including schools, other education providers, local government, community service providers, business and communities.

Partnership Outreach Education Model (POEM) Pilots

The Commonwealth has made available \$4 million over 2002 and 2003 to fund 21 Partnership Outreach Education Model (POEM) pilot projects nationally. While all POEM projects are expected to assist at least some Indigenous young people as part of their client mix, around half have a very strong Indigenous focus. Over the duration of the pilots it is expected around 700 Indigenous young people will receive assistance. Partnerships and positive relationships with Indigenous communities are important for success.

The POEM pilots target young people aged 13-19 who are disconnected from mainstream schooling. It provides a flexible and accredited education and training option in supported community settings. The initiative helps participants to reach their full potential by providing opportunities for them to develop their education levels, life skills and employability skills. For many young people with complex issues, this process requires significant time. Therefore participation in POEMs does not have a maximum time limit. When each individual participant becomes ready to exit POEMs, the projects will help them to re-engage with a mainstream education option (eg school, TAFE or university), access further training, gain work or participate in community activities. When fully developed, sustainable local support networks will add to the success of this planned process by maintaining support for the young people while they are in POEMs and after they leave.

There are a number of ways Indigenous communities and individuals are becoming involved in POEMs. These include:

- an Indigenous organisation/community as a project partner. Project partners supply additional funding, support and/or expertise to POEM projects;
- membership of the POEM project Steering Committees which might include representatives from project partners, schools, business, youth related service providers and particular communities (including Indigenous) which reflect the mix of young people participating in the project;

- participation in the local support networks for disconnected young people;
- a young person as a POEMs participant;
- a teacher, coordinator or youth workers as an employee of POEMs;
- volunteers; or
- involvement as a parent or 'significant adult' of a participant.

Cooktown State School (Queensland) is working with a number of Indigenous communities including Lockhart River, Coen, Laura and Hopevale and offering structure and support to develop 'Local POEM Partnerships' involving key people in each community. The 'Local POEM Partners' will be responsible for recognising and incorporating appropriate cultural activities and hobbies and together with POEM staff and young people will be actively involved in the design and delivery of the education programme. 'Local POEM Partners' will also support participants with and through their issues in a direct way and by working closely with community organisations and outside agencies.

Other examples of POEM projects assisting community capacity building include:

- Wellington Shire Council (Victoria) has devolved funding to four sub projects including the East Gippsland Aboriginal Community Development Employment Programme. This organisation is designing and delivering an outreach education project directly to Aboriginal young people in the region; and
- POEM funding is helping Murgon State High School (Queensland) to expand an alternative Indigenous programme from two days per week to a full time option. The project is increasingly inclusive of parents and community members from Cherbourg.

Career and Transition (CAT) pilots

Funding of \$3.6 million has been allocated to run 23 Career and Transition (CAT) pilots for one year in a variety of settings across Australia. The pilots test ways of providing enhanced career and transition support to all young people aged 13-19 years by improving the quality of career information and advice provided to them, such as through the provision of dedicated Career Transition Advisors, and the development of Learning Pathway Plans.

There are four pilots with a specific focus on Indigenous young people, with two of these having a dedicated Indigenous advisor. While other projects are not specifically targeting Indigenous young people, all pilots have a systematic approach to the delivery of career and transition information, advice and support and which will include Indigenous young people.

A Community Partnership Committee directs each pilot. The Committee may include representatives from a variety of local organisations, governments and organisations. While the mix of people on the Community Partnership Committees will vary between projects, local Indigenous organisations are able to have a broader influence on the development of career and transition services through their involvement on the committees.

Australians Working Together

Under the *Australians Working Together* umbrella, the Commonwealth has allocated \$10 million to support senior secondary Indigenous students to complete Year 12 and go onto higher education or vocational education and training. There are two initiatives under this measure.

A National Framework to support the first element, *Working Together for Indigenous Youth*, has been finalised and approved. Through this initiative some 1,600 secondary school students in Indigenous communities will be encouraged to stay on and complete Year 12 or move into further education, training or paid employment. Facilitation agents will work to develop compacts with local companies, schools and Indigenous families. The project will bring together key local

stakeholders to discuss the barriers to a successful education experience for Indigenous students and their families and try to work out collaborative solutions to overcome the barriers.

The second element of *Australians Working Together* entails increasing education and training assistance for Indigenous Australians by providing vocational learning opportunities for Indigenous secondary school students. The intention is to build on the initiatives being undertaken by the Enterprise and Career Education Foundation (ECEF) as part of the National Indigenous English Literacy and Numeracy Strategy. Some 2,300 secondary school students will be supported through this initiative. The findings of ECEF's existing Indigenous Youth Partnership Initiative (IYPI) evaluation will be used to shape the way in which this measure is applied. Discussions with ECEF regarding this element are ongoing.

Job Pathways Programme (JPP)

The Jobs Pathway Programme operates on a regional basis with funding targeted to those regions with greatest need in terms of youth unemployment and the level of retention through to Year 12.

The Programme is designed to assist young people aged 15-19 who are thinking about leaving school or who have left school within the preceding 12 months. The programme encourages participants to stay at school or return to school, but also provides practical assistance such as:

- awareness raising;
- career information and planning;
- job search preparation skills (resume and application writing);
- and other assistance in preparation for work based on the participant's needs.

Providers are required to target their assistance to several defined disadvantaged groups, one of which is Indigenous young people. In recent years there has been a steady increase in the percentage of Indigenous participants. Since August 2001, 5 per cent of participants have identified themselves as belonging to the Indigenous target group, compared to 3.8 per cent for the year from August 2000 to July 2001, and 2.7 per cent for the year from August 1999 to July 2000.

Some of the best practice strategies adopted by providers in servicing Indigenous participants include:

- employment of Indigenous staff or people with the ability to connect with the Indigenous community to develop good working relationships based on trust, respect, confidence and understanding of the issues faced by Indigenous young people;
- creating awareness of the potential for JPP in assisting Indigenous young people through relationship building and regular contact with local Land Councils, school Indigenous Liaison Officers, parents, and Indigenous employment officers;
- engagement of young people in culturally appropriate and interesting ways;
- facilitating presentations from Indigenous role models who provide inspiration and hope through the sharing of experiences;
- conducting excursions to vocational education institutions and work places (to which they may previously have had little or no exposure) where Indigenous students are enrolled or employed;
- facilitating access to appropriate clothing and equipment for job interviews;
- working closely with other services and programmes for Indigenous young people (for example local Area Health Services).

Industry Training Strategies Programme/New Apprenticeships

The Department is currently funding a company, Ariginisle, under the Industry Training Strategies Programme to provide assistance, training and advice to New Apprenticeships Centres and

Registered Training Organisations on the range, use and customisation of nationally endorsed training packages suitable for Indigenous people, and to provide on-going and targeted information to New Apprenticeships Centres and Registered Training Organisations to increase understanding and utilisation of New Apprenticeships by Indigenous people.

Ariginisle is a national company that provides an impartial, culturally sensitive, educative and advisory service to all participants in the field of Indigenous peoples' training with a focus on New Apprenticeships.

The New Apprenticeships arrangements provide opportunities for young people and others to gain industry recognised skills, national qualifications and a career path. The Commonwealth provides employer incentives, personal benefits, and infrastructure and support services.

The number of Indigenous New Apprenticeships in training continues to grow. It is estimated that there were 6,430 Indigenous New Apprentices in training as at 31 March 2002. This represents an increase of over 13 per cent since the same time last year and an over 200 per cent increase since 31 March 1996.

Literacy and numeracy assistance for Community Development Employment Project (CDEP) participants

The impact of poor literacy and numeracy skills on employment prospects is well documented. The impact is significantly greater when combined with other disadvantages such as remoteness and reduced access to facilities. Low literacy and numeracy skills have an effect on the ability to gain sustained employment or undertake further education or training as well as having a significant impact on the quality of life.

The Department of Education, Science and Training has recognised the literacy and numeracy needs of Community Development and Employment Project participants and has been working with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission (ATSIC) and CDEP organisations to expand the provision of literacy and numeracy assistance to this client group.

A pilot exercise conducted under the former Literacy and Numeracy Programme at Port Lincoln is showing encouraging results. The pilot provided for 30 participants to undertake up to 400 hours of training assistance under the Literacy and Numeracy Programme. The selected provider has developed a good working relationship with CDEP managers and participants. The pilot currently has 30 referrals, each being recommended for training. Fifteen participants have already reached their mid point in training, and there have been no withdrawals from training to date.

The results of the pilot will be fully evaluated once all current participants have completed their training. However, initial results indicate the importance of the following critical success factors:

- the need for a strong commitment by CDEP managers and literacy and numeracy trainers to identify CDEP participants with a literacy and numeracy need, and work closely with these participants;
- selection of motivated participants and provision of support to participants;
- flexibility in the type of assistance provided, such as one-on-one training; and
- linking basic skills development with vocational skills.

To date these results indicate that qualitative factors, such as increased confidence, are important motivating factors for continued participation in literacy and numeracy training.

This programme was been replaced by a new Language, Literacy and Numeracy Programme in January 2002. CDEP participants are eligible for assistance under the new programme. The Language Literacy and Numeracy Programme provides face-to-face language, literacy and

numeracy training in over 330 locations around Australia. For those participants with carer responsibilities, or for whom a face-to-face provider is not easily accessible, distance education is also available.

Workplace English Language and Literacy (WELL) programme

The Workplace English Language and Literacy (WELL) programme funds enterprises or training providers to provide workers with English language and literacy skills to help them meet their current and future employment and training needs. It particularly targets workers who are at risk of losing their jobs because of their low literacy skills. In 2001-02, \$12.068 million was available nationally to train 19,565 workers at some 400 worksites.

Approximately 4 per cent of these workers are Indigenous. Training is conducted at a wide range of sites, including remote and isolated communities. As many Indigenous workers have low levels of literacy in English, it is difficult for them to access vocational training, such as apprenticeships, WELL funds are used to provide necessary literacy training which is usually integrated with other training in employment related and workplace skills. An example of these projects is one that is currently being undertaken in the Tiwi Islands where a literacy tutor is being funded through WELL to help workers with basic English language and literacy skills. Most of these workers had previously been unable to access vocational training because of the lack of English language and literacy skills. Now, approximately 200 workers from two generations (aged from 19 to 50) are benefiting from this training.

Another example of a WELL project which has had excellent results is one in which a consultant travels to remote communities and delivers a course specifically developed for such communities called Living Skills. This course covers such topics as budgeting, everyday calculations, personal income, everyday writing, managing yourself and health and nutrition. Many of the course participants then go onto further study, most often undertaking the Certificate II in Small Business. All of the participants go onto new activities, traineeships or employment.

The successful outcomes are largely a result of the consultant starting with the needs of the participants and being flexible about how and where the course is run. It can be held under a tree, by a riverbank, in a community centre – wherever the participants feel most comfortable. Their needs are used as the content for the training so that it is immediately relevant and useful to them.

This course in various modes has now been delivered in many communities in South Australia and Western Australia and is an excellent example of community capacity building because most of the participants also assume positions of responsibility within their communities. In one community all the participants were elected to the CDEP Board on completion of their training. In another they built an arts centre for the artists in the community.

Higher Education

The Commonwealth strongly encourages Indigenous people to take up higher education as a pathway to professional positions through which they are able to contribute to capacity building in Indigenous communities. In addition to mainstream funding programmes, the Commonwealth is assisting universities to meet to specific needs of Indigenous students and to advance the goals of the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Policy (AEP) through the Indigenous Support Funding programme. The Commonwealth also provided over \$10 million in establishment funding between 1996 and the end of 2001 for six Indigenous Higher Education Centres. The Centres are designed to encourage the development of research skills and academic excellence within the Indigenous community.

Higher education Indigenous student numbers almost quadrupled between 1987 and 2000. Between the censuses of 1991 and 1996 the proportion of 20 to 24 year old Indigenous people with a university degree tripled. The increasing trend in numbers and proportions of Indigenous commencing students continued steadily between 1996 and 1998 and then less steadily through to 1999. In 2000, there was a decrease in the number and proportion of Indigenous commencing students, which steadied in 2001 at 3 565 students or 1.5 per cent of the domestic higher education commencing student population.

The programmes detailed above provide Indigenous individuals and communities with the knowledge and skills to be able to better manage the delivery of services within their communities and to be more involved in the design, administration and delivery of these services. The most successful programmes are those where the Commonwealth works in partnerships with communities. The Department of Education, Science and Training is committed to improving educational and training outcomes for Indigenous people and through this to increasing capacity building within Indigenous communities.

On 6 August 2002, the Department released a discussion paper on Indigenous participation in higher education entitled *Achieving Equitable and Appropriate Outcomes: Indigenous Australians in Higher Education*. The paper is designed to provoke discussion on higher education issues for Indigenous Australians. A range of measures relating to higher education will be presented to Cabinet later in 2002.

Recommendation 9, Footprints to the Future

The taskforce recommends that:

- all policies and programmes designed to address the needs of Indigenous young people and their communities must:
 - be developed locally in consultation with the communities themselves and those communities must be empowered to deliver them;
 - be designed in partnership with Indigenous peoples;
 - be flexible enough to meet the diverse environments in which Indigenous people live, whether urban, rural or remote; and
 - recognise the strong links between culture, land, language, kinship, identity and self-awareness.
- the Commonwealth, together with the States and Territories, in developing policies and programmes for Indigenous young people and their communities should be prepared to consider locally identified practical initiatives. These might include:
 - tailoring school calendars to local conditions and cultural practices;
 - establishing community houses and support networks for those young people who have to leave home to go to school;
 - initiating a school exchange programme to build up knowledge of the world beyond the community;
 - developing youth centres and facilities with appropriate Indigenous staff who have access to staff development;
 - creating opportunities for youth participation and leadership, for example the trials proposed for the development of the Cape York Youth Strategy; and
 - encouraging role models and mentors.
- the Commonwealth, in association with the States and Territories, continue to implement with some urgency the National Indigenous English Literacy and Numeracy Strategy, the National Statement of Principles and Standards for more Culturally Inclusive Schooling in the Twenty-first Century, and the model of More Culturally Inclusive and Educationally Effective Schools.