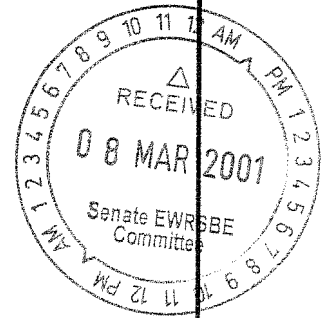


51.61.

GOVERNMENT RESPONSE



to the

**Senate Employment, Workplace Relations,
Small Business and Education References
Committee**

on

Katu Kalpa –

**Report on the inquiry into the effectiveness of
education and training programmes for
Indigenous Australians**

March 2001

GOVERNMENT RESPONSE TO THE *KATU KALPA* REPORT ON THE INQUIRY INTO THE EFFECTIVENESS OF EDUCATION AND TRAINING PROGRAMS FOR INDIGENOUS AUSTRALIANS.

Achieving educational equality for Indigenous Australians remains one of the principal educational challenges facing the nation. The Government's position is that all Australians have the right to an education which allows them to choose from the same range of opportunities.

The Minister for Education, Training and Youth Affairs has made this approach central to his efforts to making the achievement of educational equality for Indigenous Australians an urgent national priority. This has been acknowledged and endorsed by all Education Ministers. It was reaffirmed at the Ministerial Council for Employment, Education, Training and Youth Affairs (MCEETYA) meeting on 31 March 2000.

Despite some progress over recent years, the scale of educational disadvantage for Indigenous Australians remains vast. Indigenous students record markedly lower levels of literacy and numeracy achievements at primary school, have far higher rates of absenteeism and truancy, are much less likely to continue their education beyond the compulsory years, and are less likely again to achieve a post-school qualification with currency in the labour market.

The Government has adopted a comprehensive strategy that will make significant progress in closing the gaps in educational outcomes between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians by 2004. The focus is clearly on measurably raising the educational outcomes achieved by Indigenous students. It pays particular attention to the key areas of literacy, numeracy and educational attendance, thereby accelerating the pace of change, especially in the school sector. The strategy builds on a high level of State and Territory Ministerial goodwill and commitment, as well as the strong support for reconciliation at both a community level and with Australian educators.

The Government's approach, with its five major elements:

- symbolises the Government's resolve to accelerate the pace of change and make significant progress in closing the gap between the learning outcomes of Indigenous and non-Indigenous school students by 2004 through the National Indigenous English Literacy and Numeracy Strategy (NIELNS) launched by the Prime Minister on 29 March this year;
- leverages the Commonwealth's mainstream school funding to the States and Territories for the 2001-2004 quadrennium to ensure that Indigenous students are a mainstream education priority with specific reporting on Indigenous educational outcomes;
- requires education providers funded through the Commonwealth's supplementary Indigenous programmes for the 2001-2004 quadrennium to focus on accelerating the closure of gaps in the educational outcomes in literacy, numeracy and attendance between Indigenous and non-Indigenous students;
- confronts and resolves national policy and related issues, including the development of an enhanced mechanism for national reporting, the development and implementation of high quality standards in education infrastructure and service delivery to Indigenous students, through MCEETYA; and

- links the achievement of educational equality to the national reconciliation process.

Recommendation 1

The committee recommends that MCEETYA ensure that raising of literacy and numeracy skills of Indigenous students to the level obtained by non-Indigenous students remains an urgent national priority.

Supported.

The Government is working with States and Territories to ensure that all children achieve an acceptable standard of literacy and numeracy skills. Commonwealth, State and Territory Education Ministers reaffirmed their agreed commitment to the national literacy and numeracy goal in the National Goals for Schooling in the Twenty-First Century in April 1999 (the 'Adelaide Declaration'). The national goals include the aim *that students should have attained the skills of numeracy and English literacy such that every student should be numerate, able to read, write, spell and communicate at an appropriate level.*

The Commonwealth is firmly committed to achieve English literacy, numeracy, and attendance outcomes for Indigenous students at levels comparable to those achieved by other Australians. The Commonwealth's National Indigenous English Literacy and Numeracy Strategy (NIELNS) was launched by the Prime Minister on 29 March 2000. This strategy is aimed at achieving real improvements in literacy and numeracy skills, the vital skills that Indigenous students need to succeed in Australian society. It aims to address six key elements:

- lifting school attendance rates;
- addressing hearing and other barriers to learning;
- providing preschool opportunities;
- training and retaining good teachers in areas with significant Indigenous student populations;
- ensuring teachers use the most effective, culturally appropriate teaching methods; and
- increasing the accountabilities and performance measurement for schools and teachers.

The Commonwealth is making available over \$27 million during 2000-2004 to support the NIELNS.

The Indigenous Education Strategic Initiatives Programme (IESIP) provides supplementary funding to education and training providers in the preschool, school, and VET sectors to improve Indigenous students' educational outcomes. Education providers in receipt of IESIP funding are required to report their progress towards achieving equitable and appropriate outcomes for Indigenous students, in each of eight priority areas, including literacy and numeracy. Some \$616 million was provided in the 2000-2001 Budget for IESIP over the 2001-2004 quadrennium.

More generally, the Commonwealth supports the achievement of the national literacy and numeracy goal through the provision of supplementary funding under the Literacy and Numeracy Programme. The objective of the Literacy and Numeracy Programme is to measurably improve the literacy and numeracy outcomes for educationally disadvantaged students and to support the National Literacy and Numeracy Plan. It is expected that there will be a particular focus on assisting Indigenous students who have not developed adequate literacy

and numeracy skills and who are therefore having difficulty coping with the school curriculum. The Commonwealth is providing a total of approximately \$1,104 million for literacy and numeracy programmes for school students in the five years to 2003-2004. This includes an additional \$131 million provided for literacy and numeracy in the 1999/2000 Budget.

Recommendation 2

The committee recommends to MCEETYA that agreement be reached on the uniform tabulation of expenditure on Indigenous education in all states and territories.

Supported-in-principle.

This recommendation will be referred to MCEETYA.

Recommendation 3

The committee recommends that the Indigenous Education Direct Assistance (IEDA) programs should be retained as centrally funded programs administered by DETYA.

Supported-in-principle.

A review of the Indigenous Education Direct Assistance (IEDA) programme comprising the Aboriginal Tutorial Assistance Scheme (ATAS), the Aboriginal Student Support and Parent Awareness programme (ASSPA), and the Vocational and Educational Guidance for Aboriginals Scheme (VEGAS), has been completed and agreed by the Minister.

Recommendation 4

The committee recommends that DETYA investigate ways of providing greater flexibility in the use of discretionary funds, including funding for regional projects and direct funding for schools.

Not Supported.

Commonwealth funding for schooling is provided as block grants to government and non-government education systems. The Commonwealth does not normally earmark funding to systems for particular regions below the State or Territory level. Under the NIELNS, the Commonwealth is working collaboratively with systems on the development of Strategy Implementation Plans. The Implementation Plans will identify a range of specific initiatives in a number of particular areas including targeted urban, rural and remote regions. While Commonwealth funding to support the Implementation Plans will still be paid at the system level, the initiatives and locations will be specified in the Indigenous Education Agreements that providers are required to enter into in order to receive IESIP funding.

Recommendation 5

The committee recommends that a comprehensive review of the NATSIEP be undertaken in 2002, at the end of the fourth triennium of operation.

Not supported.

The Indigenous Education Strategic Initiatives Programme (IESIP), established to help achieve the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Policy (NATSIEP), will move from a triennial to a quadrennial basis from January 2001 to align with the 2001-2004 quadrennium used for most Commonwealth school education programmes. It is the Government's view, therefore that a comprehensive review of the NATSIEP should not occur before 2004, at the end of the new IESIP quadrennium.

Recommendation 6

The committee recommends that all Commonwealth, state and territory policies and strategies be developed and delivered in a context that recognises, and takes full account of, the cultural history, identity, diversity and continuing educational disadvantage of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

Supported-in-principle.

The National Goals for Schooling in the Twenty-First Century, endorsed by all Commonwealth, State and Territory Education Ministers, includes the goal that; all students understand and acknowledge the value of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures to Australian society and possess the knowledge, skills and understanding to contribute to, and benefit from, reconciliation between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians.

At their meeting in March 2000, all Australian Ministers of Education considered the report of the Taskforce on Indigenous Education and agreed to undertake a third phase of work to accelerate progress to achieve educational equality for Australia's Indigenous peoples. This work will include the promotion and implementation of:

- a statement of principles and standards for educational infrastructure and service delivery;
- a model for more culturally inclusive and educationally effective schools; and
- a framework for developing more efficient and effective cross-portfolio mechanisms.

The statement is closely tied to the National Goals for Schooling in the Twenty-First Century and uses the national goals to underpin the set of principles and standards. The principles are described in terms of rights to a high quality education. The standards are described in terms of rights of Indigenous students and their teachers to access the same level of government services as other Australians.

The model is designed for schools and systems to create a climate of sustainable change and encourage successful outcomes of Indigenous programmes to be absorbed into mainstream practice. The cross-portfolio framework gives a new perspective to approaching the planning and delivery of services and programmes.

Over 20,000 copies each of the statement and the model have been printed and are being distributed and promoted in all schools across Australia.

In addition, MCEETYA formally released a discussion paper developed in late 1999 by its Taskforce on Indigenous Education to assist with consultations within jurisdictions and Indigenous communities. The discussion paper proved useful in raising the profile of Indigenous education and includes advice on continuing educational disadvantage of Indigenous Australians, on the different perspectives that Indigenous Australians bring to the nature and purpose of education and the preliminary findings of a set of Commonwealth funded Strategic Results Projects that demonstrated accelerated Indigenous student learning outcomes.

Over 11,000 copies of the discussion paper have been printed and distributed to schools. In a separate exercise, over 10,000 copies of the final report of the Strategic Results Projects entitled '*What Works? - Explorations in improving outcomes for Indigenous students*' have been distributed in cooperation with the States and Territories to education and training institutions across Australia.

The Commonwealth has been actively involved in the development of a number of strategies which recognise, and seek to address, the educational disadvantage of Indigenous people in vocational education and training (VET). These strategies are described below.

National Strategy for VET

- *A Bridge to the Future: Australia's National Strategy for Vocational Education and Training 1998-2003*, which was endorsed by that Australian National Training Authority (ANTA) Ministerial Council, includes objectives to achieve equitable outcomes in VET. The National Strategy states that Commonwealth, State and Territory governments will: identify and remove structural barriers to access and equity in vocational education and training;
- encourage improved performance by Registered Training Organisations (RTOs) in delivering training programmes to disadvantaged clients;
- encourage development and delivery of training programmes based on Training Packages which can be customised to suit the needs of all clients, and which are sensitive to cultural differences;
- equip vocational education and training staff to address equity issues, including the development and delivery of inclusive training programmes based on training packages;
- create incentives for RTOs to address equity issues, based on a better understanding of the costs associated with delivery to clients with special needs;
- make available accurate data for monitoring equity performance;
- make efficient use of new technology to broaden opportunities for those living in rural and remote communities or unable to access institutional or work based training; and
- develop and monitor performance improvement annually.

A Bridge to the Future also identifies a specific priority for Indigenous people:

- increasing participation by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in vocational education and training, particularly higher level award programmes, improved retention and completion rates and improved employment outcomes.

A supporting paper to the National Strategy for VET, *Achieving Equitable Outcomes*, was produced by ANTA to elaborate on the work being undertaken to address equity issues in VET. The paper recognises the recent increase in participation rates of Indigenous people in VET but acknowledges that further effort is needed to ensure that access leads to successful outcomes.

National VET Indigenous Strategy

The Commonwealth has also been actively involved in the development by the Australian National Training Authority of a draft national Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Strategy for VET. The Strategy, *Partners in a Learning Culture*, Australia's National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Strategy for Vocational Education and Training 1999–2003 was developed by the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples' Training Advisory Council to ANTA in partnership and consultation with key stakeholders. *Partners in a Learning Culture* has been developed 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 the vocational education and training decisions result 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 objectives of the Strategy are to:

- increase the involvement of Indigenous people in decision making about policy, planning, resources and delivery;
- achieve VET outcomes for Indigenous people equal to those of the rest of the Australian community;
- achieve increased flexible delivery, including use of information technology for Indigenous people; and
- develop closer links between VET outcomes for Indigenous people and industry and employment.

An implementation plan for the Strategy, in the form of a Blueprint, was approved at the ANTA Ministerial Council on 30 June 2000.

Recommendation 7

The committee recommends the appointment of an independent national consultative body to advise MCEETYA on Indigenous education needs and policy; this body to include representatives of ATSIC and the Indigenous education consultative bodies that already advise state and territory education ministers.

Not supported.

MCEETYA establishes specialist taskforces from time to time to provide advice on particular education issues. At its 1999 April meeting, MCEETYA established a Taskforce on Indigenous Education to advise Council on a number of issues relevant to achieving equitable education outcomes for Indigenous students. In addition to representatives from each State and Territory government education system, the Taskforce included a representative from ATSIC, the State/Territory Indigenous education consultative bodies, the National Catholic Education Commission (NCEC) and the National Council of Independent Schools Association (NCISA). The Taskforce is able to invite individuals with special expertise to assist in developing advice.

The Commonwealth's assessment is that the Taskforce on Indigenous Education has been effective to date, helping inform the development of the National Indigenous English Literacy and Numeracy Strategy, making recommendations for a revised set of IESIP performance indicators to improve national reporting of outcomes, and developing a statement of principles and standards for educational infrastructure and service delivery. Although the Commonwealth is but one member of MCEETYA, the Commonwealth is not convinced there is a need to establish another consultative body to advise MCEETYA on Indigenous education.

Recommendation 8

The committee commends DETYA for the development of a national Indigenous school attendance strategy and recommends that all necessary resources be supplied as a matter of urgency to enable its prompt implementation.

Supported.

The National Indigenous English Literacy and Numeracy Strategy (NIELNS) is built on the requirement for education providers to more effectively target all relevant State, Territory and Commonwealth resources to ensure that Indigenous students achieve equitable and appropriate education outcomes.

Over the period 2001-2004, States and Territories will have available some \$57 billion through recurrent funding and financial assistance grants to achieve their educational objectives. The Commonwealth will be providing some \$22 billion in recurrent and capital grants.

In addition to the mainstream funding arrangements and programmes, during 2001-2004 the Commonwealth will be providing supplementary resources of some \$1.2 billion to improve educational outcomes for Indigenous students. These funds come primarily through the IESIP and the IEDA Programme.

To specifically support the implementation of the Strategy, the Commonwealth is making available over \$27 million to support a range of specific initiatives in a number of particular areas, including targeted urban, rural and remote regions in States and Territories.

Recommendation 9

The committee recommends that MCEETYA facilitate discussions with Commonwealth and states agencies to coordinate initiatives to improve the participation rates and educational outcomes of Indigenous communities.

Supported.

In 1999, MCEETYA asked its Taskforce on Indigenous Education, as part of its terms of reference, to provide advice on ways to strengthen cross-portfolio links between education/training and community development and identify the implications for employment, health and housing, paying particular attention to specific Indigenous communities, especially those in most need.

The Taskforce noted that this issue picks up on similar matters raised in the 1995 National Review of the effectiveness of the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Policy in its first triennium. The 1995 MCEETYA Taskforce for the Education of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples attempted to grapple with the complexities of addressing these cross-portfolio issues and finally recommended that individual State and Territory education and training systems should address these matters separately.

The current Taskforce re-examined the 1992 COAG Commitment to Improved Outcomes in the Delivery of Programs and Services for Aboriginal Peoples and Torres Strait Islander Peoples and developed a cross-portfolio framework which gives a new perspective to approaching the planning and delivery of services and programmes. The cross-portfolio framework is described in Chapter 5 of the Taskforce report (see attached).

In a separate exercise, Dr Kemp, Commonwealth Minister for Education, Training and Youth Affairs addressed the Ministerial Council on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs (MCATSIA) in September 1999 on the importance of cross-portfolio issues and their impact on the educational outcomes of Indigenous students.

At its meeting in March 2000, MCEETYA agreed to encourage the use of the framework and to circulate the Taskforce report to the Health and Community Services Ministerial Council and the Ministerial Council on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs with the view to encouraging discussions on cross-portfolio issues.

MCATSIA met on 28 July 2000 and agreed, in relation to the 1992 COAG commitment, to consider at its next meeting in mid-2001 a cross-portfolio status report on Indigenous outcomes. This will be the first time that such a report has been generated.

Recommendation 10

The committee recommends that coordinated strategies aimed at improving access to secondary education in remote communities be investigated by an independent national consultative body on Indigenous education established by MCEETYA.

Not supported.

See response to *Recommendation 7* above concerning the consultative body. At its meeting in March 2000, MCEETYA approved a Statement of Principles and Standards for educational infrastructure and service delivery. The statement of standards addresses the issue of access to high quality education which is necessary to enable completion of school education to Year 12 or its vocational equivalent and which provides clear and recognised pathways to employment and further education and training. MCEETYA also approved the development of mechanisms and milestones at jurisdictional level to implement the principles and achieve the standards described in the Statement of Principles and Standards.

Recommendation 11

The committee recommends MCEETYA give renewed emphasis to the provision of pre-schools for remote communities.

Supported-in-principle.

This recommendation is a matter for States and Territories and will be referred to MCEETYA.

At its meeting in March 2000, MCEETYA approved Recommendation 24 of the report of the Taskforce on Indigenous Education, seeking an extension of the Taskforce's terms of reference to enable it to provide advice on early childhood education and report back to Council in 2001.

The Commonwealth is becoming increasingly involved in early childhood education issues. Outcomes from the work that the Commonwealth is currently involved in, will help to shape future policy directions in this area:

- Australia is currently participating in the Organisation of Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) Thematic Review of Early Childhood Education and Care. Twelve countries are participating. The review requires the preparation of an Australian background report (researchers from Macquarie University have prepared a draft report) and the hosting of a review team from the OECD. The review team visited Australia in June 2000 and met with key stakeholders from around Australia. A final comparative report will be released in 2001.
- The work being undertaken for the OECD review will complement the work being undertaken through the Conference of Education Systems Chief Executive Officers (CESCEO) Early Childhood Education Working party. The working party has developed a discussion paper, containing goals and principles for effective early childhood education, which was presented to CESCEO on 25 February 2000. CESCEO endorsed the paper for wider consultation amongst key stakeholders. Ultimately the paper will be presented to MCEETYA by CESCEO for national agreement. This is not expected to occur until late 2000 or early 2001.

Recommendation 12

The committee recommends that MCEETYA develop a coordinated consultative approach to ensure that culturally appropriate best practice informs all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander education and training needs.

Supported-in-principle.

At its March 2000 meeting, MCEETYA approved a Model For More Culturally Inclusive and Educationally Effective Schools for use as a framework for action in all jurisdictions. MCEETYA also approved the printing, distribution and promotion of the model in the year 2000 to Indigenous communities and to all teachers and education workers, especially those involved in the education of Indigenous students, through staff training and development processes.

The model is designed for use by schools and systems as a means of creating sustainable change and improvement that integrates the successful outcomes of Indigenous programmes into

mainstream schooling practice. There are three focus areas: community, school and classroom, and each focus area has a number of elements to be addressed.

Over 20,000 copies of the model have been printed and are being distributed and promoted in all schools across Australia.

Recommendation 13

The committee notes the interest of ATSIC in exploring the potential for expansion of computer-aided learning for Indigenous people in remote communities and recommends that the Minister initiate a pilot project to trial the use of satellite or microwave based internet technology.

Supported.

The Government shares the concern of the Committee that Indigenous students have adequate access to technology, and supports the need for all governments to make concerted efforts to ensure that communities have access to appropriate infrastructure and facilities.

Access to quality digital education materials that support Australian school curricula and that optimise opportunities provided by new technologies for learning has been shown to encourage attendance for Indigenous students and help them take a greater interest in class activities. Access to quality digital curriculum can assist schools to increase the coverage of the courses they offer and vastly increases the amount and variety of information available to them. Work on a national initiative to scope the development of online curriculum content for schools has commenced. The Commonwealth, through DETYA, is jointly funding with the States and Territories some preliminary work on the specifications and the underpinning interoperability framework to support this.

DETYA has funded schools under the Offshore Australian Studies (OAS) programme to develop websites linking Australian schools with each other as well as schools overseas. DETYA funded the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples Training Advisory Council to develop strategies to deliver VET and other training through use of information technology. Similar projects are also supported by the Department of Communications, Information Technology and the Arts.

DETYA also funded a community access pilot project for information technology in schools which was undertaken during 1998 and 1999 as part of the Government's industry policy *Investing for Growth*. The aims of the project were to:

- provide information technology equipment and specialist assistance available outside of school hours, to ensure that groups that would otherwise be disadvantaged in the understanding of IT issues are provided with opportunities to familiarise themselves with information technology equipment and therefore the opportunities and efficiencies available;
- encourage the use of the internet, including EdNA Online (www.edna.edu.au), in the wider education and training community to support lifelong learning; and

- strengthen the role of schools as learning centres within their communities, to a broader client group than enrolled students.

A total of 50 projects, involving approximately 70 schools were funded, and at least two remote Indigenous communities were involved; one in South Australia and another in the Northern Territory. The main benefits of project activities were:

- facilitating community members' ability to use computers and the Internet;
- providing opportunities for the community to develop new skills;
- providing opportunities for the community to access and use information that is relevant to their lives;
- enhancing relationships between the school and the local community; and
- developing economies of scope in the use of IT and online services.

Other benefits were noted in individual projects including fostering information literacy of the community, enhancing community cohesion, and promoting new learning opportunities.

The telecommunications revolution potentially offers students in rural and remote areas access to a rich and comprehensive 'virtual' learning experience. However, limitations on access to bandwidth have been identified by the education and training sector as the single most important constraint on its ability to capitalise on the benefits of the online revolution. Its concerns are noted in the Education and Training Action Plan for the Information Economy entitled *Learning for the Knowledge Society*. This Plan was produced following the release of the National Office for the Information Economy's *Strategic Framework for the Information Economy* in January 1999. The Education and Training Action Plan was noted by Cabinet in December 1999 and its broad directions were supported by MCEETYA in March 2000.

The Government recognises the need to explore alternative approaches to the provision of bandwidth, especially for rural and remote Australia where the impact of competition has been limited or non-existent.

The Government has implemented a range of measures to ensure that telecommunications infrastructure, including satellite or microwave based technologies, are widely available in Australia's competitive, commercial telecommunications market. The Government provides targeted funding support and assistance for services, such as Internet access, through the Networking the Nation (NTN) Program, the Untimed Local Calls Tender and the Digital Data Service Obligation (DDSO) and the Special DDSO initiatives.

A number of NTN funded projects that support the use of satellite or microwave based Internet technology in remote Indigenous communities in the Northern Territory, Queensland, Western Australia and South Australia are under way. The Untimed Local Calls Tender, which is currently in progress, will support the upgrade of remote telecommunications infrastructure to support the provision of untimed local calls within extended zones (i.e. rural and remote areas, covering about 80 per cent of the Australian landmass). The Digital Data Service Obligation (DDSO) and the Special Digital Data Service Obligation (Special DDSO), which provide for access to digital data capacity, have been put in place to supplement the Universal Service Obligation.

Recommendation 14

The committee recommends that a set of national participation goals and outcomes be developed by DETYA for the education and training of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and that these cover the spectrum of lifelong learning with specific and designated responsibilities being allocated to the Commonwealth and to states and territories.

Supported.

The Government is committed to achieving equitable and appropriate education outcomes for Indigenous students. To address literacy and numeracy issues, the Commonwealth recently launched the National Indigenous English Literacy and Numeracy Strategy, with the objective to achieve English literacy and numeracy for Indigenous students at levels comparable to those achieved by other young Australians.

The Strategy's objectives will be achieved by:

- lifting school attendance rates of Indigenous students to national levels;
- effectively addressing hearing, health and nutrition problems that undermine learning for a large proportion of Indigenous students;
- providing preschool opportunities wherever possible;
- training sufficient number of teachers to be effective in Indigenous communities and schools and encouraging them to remain for reasonable periods of time;
- using teaching methods that are known to be the most effective; and
- establishing transparent measures of success as a basis for accountability for schools and teachers.

IESIP provides supplementary funding to education and training providers in the preschool, school, and VET sectors to improve Indigenous students' educational outcomes. Education providers in receipt of IESIP funding are required to report their progress towards achieving agreed targets for Indigenous students, in each of eight priority areas, including literacy and numeracy, participation, retention and success. Some \$616 million was provided in the 2000-2001 Budget for IESIP over the 2001-2004 quadrennium.

The Government seeks to achieve participation and outcomes for Indigenous students in higher education at the same level as non-Indigenous students. University performance data currently collected by the Commonwealth (covering access, participation, retention and success of Indigenous students as compared with non-Indigenous students) relate to this goal as does the method of calculating the allocation of Indigenous support funding to higher education institutions.

In 1998, a review of the funding allocation method recognised that the proportion of Indigenous people commencing studies in higher education had reached the same level as the proportion of Indigenous people aged between 15 and 64 years in the community and there was a need to place greater emphasis on success. The new method of allocation does this by increasing funding proportions based on success rates and on completions of Indigenous students and decreasing the funding proportion based purely on EFTSU.

Recommendation 15

The committee recommends that support for bilingual education programs be maintained in those areas where they are seen as appropriate and necessary by Indigenous communities.

Supported.

The Priority Languages element of the Languages Programme supports the learning of ten priority languages, which include Aboriginal languages.

The Community languages element supports the maintenance of relevant languages and cultures among students of non-English speaking background and promotes the learning of a community language and the understanding of the different cultures within Australia society by all students.

A community language is defined as:

- a) an Aboriginal language; or
- b) the first language of people who have migrated to Australia; but does not include English.

The 'English as Second Language–Indigenous Language Speaking Students' (ESL–ILSS) programme was introduced in 1998, to assist Indigenous students who have very limited exposure to English in their communities. In 2000, an estimated 2,500 Indigenous students are being assisted under the ESL–ILSS programme to an estimated value of about \$5.9 million.

IESIP funding can be used by education and training providers to engage in activities designed to improve education outcomes for Indigenous students, including the development and teaching of Indigenous languages and Indigenous Studies and other culturally inclusive curricula.

Recommendation 16

The committee recommends to MCEETYA the development of appropriate performance indicators for monitoring the employment of Indigenous people in education.

Supported-in-principle.

This recommendation is a matter for States and Territories and will be referred to MCEETYA.

At its March 2000 meeting, MCEETYA approved a set of IESIP core and supplementary performance indicators to provide a nationally agreed basis for negotiating IESIP agreements for 2001–2004. The indicators which relate to Indigenous Employment are:

- employment of Indigenous Australians in Education – core indicator
- numbers and full-time equivalents of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Workers and equivalents employed
- permanency rates of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Workers.

Recommendation 17

The committee recommends that the Minister initiate a pilot project in an appropriate university for the purpose of delivering teacher education programs via satellite or microwave Internet technology to Indigenous trainee teachers in remote communities.

Supported-in-principle.

Universities are autonomous bodies and are responsible for initiating such proposals. A number of universities are undertaking work in the area of remote delivery using modern communications technology.

DETYA is providing funding of \$420,000 over three years under its Quality Outcomes Programme to examine the use of information technology in delivering professional development.

Recommendation 18

The committee recommends that MCEETYA review incentives to attract and retain experienced teachers in remote areas and in schools with a large proportion of Indigenous students, and to consider the introduction of remote area teaching scholarships.

Supported-in-principle.

This recommendation will be referred to MCEETYA.

As part of its Terms of Reference, the MCEETYA Taskforce on Teacher Education provides advice to Ministers on teacher preparation aimed at improving the quality and standard of teaching and learning, including the preparation of teachers for Indigenous education.

Getting good teachers is a key element of the NIELNS. The objective of the element is to facilitate placing the best teachers, suitably skilled and paid, in the areas of greatest needs and retaining their services there. The Commonwealth will work collaboratively to extend those incentives that are already provided in WA and QLD to other States and Territories and to test a range of other incentives to attract and retain effective teachers to Indigenous communities and schools high proportions of Indigenous students.

The Commonwealth is implementing the Quality Teacher Programme, which provides \$77.7m over three years to strengthen the skills of the teaching profession. The Programme supports the commitment in the National Goals to improving educational outcomes for educationally disadvantaged students. Teachers in rural and remote areas and teachers of Indigenous students are included in the Programme target group.

Recommendation 19

The committee recommends that MCEETYA implement a strategy that provides an appropriate career and salary structure for AIEWs in all states and territories and that provides for consistency in pay and conditions across the states and territories. It further recommends that AIEWs be given incentives to gain full teaching qualifications.

Supported-in-principle.

This recommendation will be referred to MCEETYA.

The important role of the AIEWs is recognised by the Commonwealth. Recent research by DETYA, *'Positive Self-Identity for Indigenous Students and its Relationship to School Outcomes'* (2000), has found that AIEW's help Indigenous students develop positive self-identities by providing someone in the school that young Indigenous students can relate to. Through the NIELNS, the Commonwealth will encourage initiatives that will enhance the role and development of the AIEWs. The implementation of the relevant and appropriate strategies will be the responsibility of the State/Territory and education systems.

Supplementary IESIP funding can be used by education providers for such activities as the preparation and ongoing professional development of AIEWs to promote positive learning outcomes for Indigenous Australians.

Recommendation 20

The committee recommends that MCEETYA review incentives to encourage experienced and accomplished teachers to accept appointments in schools with a high proportion of Indigenous students, and especially in remote areas.

Supported-in-principle.

This recommendation will be referred to MCEETYA. See also *Recommendation 18*.

Recommendation 21

The committee recommends that university schools and faculties of education address more effectively the need to provide trainee teachers with a much stronger grounding in theory and practice relating to the teaching of Indigenous children, including ESL.

Supported-in-principle.

The content of higher education courses is determined by the institutions themselves and they are not subject to direction in this regard by the Commonwealth. The Commonwealth does, however, encourage institutions to address priority matters relating to Indigenous education. The Commonwealth has provided financial support for institutional projects in the spirit of this recommendation. The University of Western Sydney has already developed a model core unit in Indigenous Australian Studies for student teachers, with funding from the Projects of National Significance programme. It has now received additional funding from the Indigenous Education Strategic Initiatives Programme (IESIP) and the Evaluations and Investigations Programme (EIP) for further work to investigate and report on those measures which have proved most successful in equipping teachers to deal with Indigenous issues. A central objective is to encourage the wider adoption of successful measures by schools and faculties of education.

Recommendation 22

The committee recommends that MCEETYA draw up guidelines for improved induction courses for teachers posted to schools with significant Indigenous enrolments, including those teachers who are appointed to positions during the course of the year.

Supported-in-principle.

This recommendation will be referred to MCEETYA.

Recommendation 23

Accordingly, the committee recommends that the ANTA Act be amended to ensure that capital works funding for independent education providers goes directly to institutions.

Not Supported.

The recommendation will be referred to MINCO.

Under the ANTA Agreement, ANTA allocates Commonwealth funds to the States and Territories. These funds supplement those provided by State and Territory governments, which are responsible for their own training systems.

Each year the ANTA Ministerial Council determines the amount of funds to be provided for infrastructure from Commonwealth funding provided to ANTA under *the Vocational Education and Training Funding Act 1992*. States and Territories consider proposals for funding within the context of State priorities and plans and are responsible for managing the outcomes.

Recommendation 24

The committee recommends that all governments recognise in their policies, educational structures and funding allocation, the central role that education providers and their programs play in Indigenous development.

Supported.

The Commonwealth supports the recommendation, which is implicit in the preamble to the *Adelaide Declaration on National Goals for Schooling in the Twenty-first Century*. The preamble begins:

“Australia’s future depends upon each citizen having the necessary knowledge, understanding, skills and values for a productive and rewarding life in an educated, just and open society. High quality schooling is central to achieving this vision.”

Recommendation 25

The committee recommends that DETYA monitor and report on the impact of the changes to Abstudy to come into effect in 2000, and particularly their impact on mature age and rural and remote students.

Supported-in-principle.

The Government announced in December 1998 that ABSTUDY would be retained as a separate scheme, along with the special eligibility criteria related to independence, approval of travel entitlements, academic progress rules and the length of time for which ABSTUDY is payable. The changes to ABSTUDY were announced after wide consultation with Indigenous people, communities and education institutions as part of the Government’s review of ABSTUDY in the context of the introduction of the Youth Allowance.

Although the income support rates were aligned with mainstream programmes, ABSTUDY recipients aged 21 years and over were aligned with the more-generous Newstart rate rather than the Youth Allowance or Austudy payment rate. In addition, Rent Assistance was extended and Remote Area Allowance and Pharmaceutical Benefits became available to ABSTUDY living allowance recipients. Continuing students aged 21 years or more who were in receipt of the ABSTUDY living allowance in 1999 who would not receive as high a level of overall benefit in 2000 were maintained at the 1999 rate of living allowance until the completion of their current course. Similarly, Pensioner Education Supplement recipients were maintained at 1999 levels until the completion of their current course.

The changes were to align benefits payable to Indigenous students with those payable to non-Indigenous students, unless the disadvantage addressed by the benefit is unique to, or disproportionately concentrated upon, Indigenous students. ABSTUDY Supplementary Benefits, most of which are not payable under the Youth Allowance or Austudy payment, were also retained.

As part of the changes which were implemented from 1 January 2000, the 'mixed mode' course delivery away-from-base element of ABSTUDY was transferred to IESIP. Block grants are paid to institutions for the delivery of 'mixed mode' courses against performance-based Indigenous Education Agreements (IEAs). The impact of the changes will be monitored by DETYA. In the case of 'mixed mode' away-from-base assistance, this will be assisted by the performance-based IEAs which measure the educational outcomes of Indigenous students.

Courses which are delivered by 'mixed-mode' away-from-base or 'block release' are courses delivered through a combination of distance education and face-to-face teaching for students who are based in their home communities and need regular on-campus tuition to complement the distance education component of the course. This method of delivery is particularly appropriate for students from rural and remote communities as students are able to meet their cultural and family obligations while they continue to study.

A study commissioned by the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission (ATSIC) was undertaken by Deakin University to prepare an analysis of the impact of the changes to ABSTUDY. The ATSIC report contained a number of incorrect assumptions and had in many cases extrapolated too much from insufficient data. The breakdown of affected populations was inaccurate and the calculation of financial gain or loss resulting from the changes for certain student population groups was not correct. While the report acknowledged the availability of mainstream-related entitlements such as Rent Assistance and the continued availability of ABSTUDY Supplementary Benefits, these considerations were not given due weight when determining the impact of changes, and the supplementary ABSTUDY payments were ignored in the comparisons with those payable under the Youth Allowance and Newstart.

FaCS is currently undertaking a study of customer and community attitudes and responses to Youth Allowance changes, activity testing and mutual obligation in eight rural and remote communities, three of which will be Indigenous communities. One of the key questions being examined is: "What is the interaction of Youth Allowance and Newstart with other related policy interventions (eg, ABSTUDY, CDEP) at a community level and how do local factors influence this interaction?"

Some understanding of the impact of the changes to ABSTUDY and any affect the continuing differences in eligibility rules and rates of payment may have on the role of the Youth Allowance may emerge through the rural and remote study within the aforementioned FaCS report which is being finalised.

Recommendation 26

The committee recommends that policy makers take into account the particular needs of Indigenous students in post-compulsory education and provide appropriate levels of support for these students.

Supported.

The Government is committed to achieving equitable and appropriate education outcomes for Indigenous students at all levels of education. Adequate literacy and numeracy achievement levels are essential prerequisites to success in post-compulsory education. The Commonwealth's NIELNS will help Indigenous students cope better with their studies in the senior secondary years.

IESIP provides supplementary funding to education and training providers in the preschool, school, and VET sectors to improve Indigenous students' educational outcomes. Education providers in receipt of IESIP funding are required to report their progress towards achieving agreed targets for Indigenous students, in each of eight priority areas, including participation, and retention and success in Years 10, 11 and 12. Some \$151 million was provided in the 2000-2001 Budget for IESIP.

Recommendation 27

The committee recommends that funding directed towards higher education institutions for the purposes of Indigenous education should be adequate to ensure effective and appropriate educational outcomes for Indigenous Australians.

Supported.

The Commonwealth recognises the special needs of Indigenous people undertaking higher education through its requirement that higher education institutions develop Indigenous education strategies and through its provision of Indigenous Support Funding, in addition to operating grants allocated on the basis of student load. Education strategy documents are provided to DETYA each year for consideration during profiles discussions and are then published by the Department. Approximately \$22.7 million is allocated each year to higher education institutions which use these funds for support activities such as study skills and personal counselling, provision of study centres and cultural awareness activities.

The method of allocating support funds used since the beginning of 1999 has placed a greater emphasis on performance by focussing more strongly on the success and completion rates of Indigenous students and reducing the focus on Equivalent Full Time Student Unit (EFTSU) alone.

Recommendation 28

The committee recommends that more funding be targeted towards flexible community development and self-management schemes aimed at improving standards of health in Indigenous communities.

Supported.

A number of initiatives are underway through the Department of Family and Community Services (FaCS), the Department of Health and Aged Care (DHAC) and the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission (ATSIC).

Department of Family and Community Services Initiatives

Stronger Families and Communities Strategy

The *Stronger Families and Communities Strategy*, represents a new way of working. It recognises the importance of early intervention, the importance of partnerships, the significant role that the community will play in developing its own solutions to its own particular problems and perhaps most important, that the best answers come from the bottom up, not the top down.

The strategy will commit \$240 million towards Australian families and communities, \$20 million of which has been specifically earmarked as a minimum for funding projects that benefit Indigenous families and communities.

Anangu Pitjantjatjara Lands (AP Lands) Regional Stores Project

In late 1999, FaCS met with Nganampa Health Council and AP Executive to discuss the development of a Regional Stores Policy. The AP Lands, located in far North West of South Australia rate poorly on a range of socio-economic indicators and most particularly in nutrition.

The development of a Regional Stores Policy on the AP Lands is intended to:

- define the role of the store on the lands; recognising that stores should be viewed as a health service rather than an enterprise;
- create a standardised framework for the management of stores in the region;
- ensure that Anangu are actively involved in the management of stores in the region;
- bring about economies of scale in the purchase of goods generating savings that can be passed on to Anangu; and,
- employ Anangu in the stores setting.

Phase One of the AP Stores Policy is expected to be completed in June 2001.

Indigenous Housing

Under the Commonwealth State Housing Agreement, \$91 million is provided through the Aboriginal Rental Housing Program (ARHP) annually to the State and Northern Territory Governments to address the housing needs of Indigenous people.

Funds are directed to remote and isolated Indigenous communities where housing need is highest, where there are no alternative sources of housing supply and where benefits in terms of improved health for Indigenous people is greatest.

ARHP funds can be used for capital works, maintaining and upgrading of houses, and improving the housing management capacity of Indigenous community housing organisations.

There are high levels of Indigenous housing need, particularly in remote and isolated areas. Many houses have been poorly constructed and are not maintained well. Indigenous people also experience major problems with housing 'health hardware' (the physical infrastructure required for health—water supply, waste systems, toilets, washing facilities, etc). All these housing problems create an unhealthy living environment and encourage the spread of infectious diseases which has a severe impact on health. Improving the living environment for Indigenous people will enhance their opportunities for social and economic participation and contribute to strengthening families and communities.

In addition, the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission also provides around \$217 million for Indigenous housing and infrastructure through the Community Housing and Infrastructure Program.

Department of Health and Aged Care Initiatives

Health Framework Agreements

Health Framework Agreements have been signed in each State and Territory between the Department of Health and Aged Care (DHAC), the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission (ATSIC), respective State/Territory governments, and the State and Territory affiliates of the National Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation (NACCHO). These agreements ensure that the community controlled health sector has a strong voice in the development of policy on Aboriginal health across the government sector and in joint regional planning.

OATSIH initiatives

The Office for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health (OATSIH) currently funds community controlled services in each jurisdiction that have flexibility in determining the services provided to their community.

The Indigenous Coordinated Care Trials are testing new models that encourage community empowerment and involvement. These trials are currently being evaluated.

The Budget initiative announced in 1999/2000 provides additional funds to develop new or enhanced services where the need was identified through agreed joint regional plans. These services will be developed in accordance with the wishes of the local communities involved. The communities will also be involved in determining the extent of control they wish to have of the service both in the initial and future phases. Some funds will be available to allow capacity building.

The program also has some funds available to ensure that the boards and managers of community controlled services have access to appropriate training and skill development to maintain or improve their capacity for self-management.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission (ATSIC) Initiatives

The ATSIC/Army Community Assistance Project (AACAP) was established in 1996 by ATSIC, the Department of Defence and the then Department of Health and Family Services, to provide the delivery of basic infrastructure to some remote Aboriginal communities on a pilot basis. The key objectives were to provide better health and housing outcomes for Indigenous communities in remote areas. Particular attention was given to the construction and up-grade of water supplies, reticulation systems, waste water management and sewerage systems, housing, power generation, transport infrastructure and health clinics.

Seven pilot projects were chosen in communities already identified as having high priority needs under ATSIC's existing planning arrangements for distributing National Aboriginal Health Strategy (NAHS) funds. The Aboriginal communities themselves were fully consulted at all stages of the project delivery process.

The initial pilot projects have been completed and evaluated, and were found to be extremely successful. There was agreement by ATSIC and DHAC to jointly fund the programme for a further \$40million over four years. Two projects have recently been completed, two new projects are due to start early in 2001 and others are planned for 2002.

Recommendation 29

The committee recommends that relevant Commonwealth Ministers and state governments undertake immediate action through ministerial councils to coordinate programs to improve community health, including:

- identifying linkages between education and health care initiatives;*
- providing maternal, baby and early childhood health care;*
- teacher education to identify and deal with hearing impairments and other health issues in the classroom;*
- accelerating the training of more community health workers in Indigenous communities;*
- improving Indigenous access to specialist services and community and health education programs;*
- encouragement of community efforts to improve nutritional standards through education and community purchasing and cultivation initiatives;*
and
- improving provision of school based health education.*

Supported.

The Government supports the recommendation that the relevant Commonwealth Ministers and State governments work together to coordinate programs to improve community health, including in the areas specifically identified by the Committee. The Government notes that significant activity is being undertaken to this end. The Framework Agreements provide a mechanism for improving cooperation and coordination between all spheres of government and the community sector in the delivery of both Indigenous and mainstream health services to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander populations.

Recommendation 30

The committee recommends that MCEETYA look at the Northern Territory Community Care Information System's potential for other parts of Australia.

Supported.

This recommendation refers to adapting the system for tracking mobile students and is considered within the NIELNS. The student tracking and support system included in the NIELNS will support students who are mobile and obtain a better picture of student attendance patterns, through the establishment of comprehensive student tracking and support systems.

In relation to this recommendation it should be noted that OATSIH is currently assisting community controlled health services to implement patient information systems that enable them to undertake community health care planning and implement better patient health care management. In addition to developing individual health care plans, these systems maintain a register of the local population, providing key demographic data to help organisations build their community health care strategies.

These systems have a proven capacity to improve the clinical management of complex conditions such as sexually transmitted diseases, diabetes and renal disease, and enable organisations to demonstrate their effectiveness to both their communities and their funding bodies.

More than 60 services are using, or are in the process of establishing, patient information and recall systems, representing around 50 per cent of all health services considered likely to benefit from the use of computerised systems. The Office will continue to assist service to implement these systems over the next two years.

Recommendation 31

The committee recommends that responsibility for school programs and overall administration be devolved to school communities where appropriate; that this include financial self-management; and that assistance be given to local communities in developing a culture of management accountability for decisions made in their name.

Not supported.

This is the constitutional responsibility of States and Territories.

Recommendation 32

The committee recommends that funds under special purpose grants be provided to schools over a triennium.

Supported-in-principle.

Funding from the IESIP Programme has been aligned with the General Recurrent Grants quadrennium for 2001-2004. The IEDA Programme is currently funded under annual appropriations, but the Commonwealth expects it to be incorporated into the *Indigenous Education (Targeted Assistance) Bill 2000*. Sourcing IEDA funding from the Bill would provide security of funding over the 2001-2004 quadrennium.

Recommendation 33

The Committee recommends that DETYA guidelines allow for flexible use of ASSPA funding to allow school communities to apply grants that fit local educational programmes most appropriately.

Supported.

The ASSPA Guidelines are flexible, allowing for the diversity of circumstances of Indigenous students and enabling the Committee to develop activities most appropriate to the needs of the Indigenous students. Local ASSPA Committees develop activity plans for the use of the ASSPA funds. The activities are developed with the aim of improving participation and outcomes for Indigenous students and to increase the participation of Indigenous parents in decisions regarding the education of their children.

Recommendation 34

The committee recommends that the Minister initiate through MCEETYA a review of current processes for determining the allocation of capital grants to schools with a substantial Indigenous enrolment.

Not supported.

While the Commonwealth provides substantial funding for capital works in government schools throughout Australia, amounting to some \$220 million this year, responsibility for schools, educational planning and the building and maintaining of schools, rests with individual State and Territory governments.

MCEETYA has adopted the 'Statement of Principles and Standards for More Culturally Inclusive Schooling in the Twenty-First Century,' which arose from the MCEETYA Taskforce on Indigenous Education, as a framework for action in all jurisdictions.

The Statement asserts that education facilities in the States and Territories provided for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders should be constructed and maintained to the standard of facilities as for other Australian students.

Individual jurisdictions are responsible for funding and developing their educational infrastructure. In undertaking this role, they could be expected to take account of the Statement and Principles and Standards. The Taskforce will report back to Council in 2001 on progress with implementation of the Statement.