

CHAPTER 6

TEACHER EDUCATION

6.1 Teachers play a critical role in education, and the various Inquiries into Indigenous education over the past ten years have recognised this with a range of recommendations. Some of the critical issues identified in previous Inquiries include lack of experience, high turnover, poor recruitment practices, and poor living conditions. Indigenous education represents a significant challenge for teachers, particularly those from a European background, and demands teachers with high levels of skill and sensitivity to the needs of students. Yet, as the Committee observed, in many instances teachers in Indigenous communities are among the most inexperienced and least adequately prepared to meet the challenges of teaching in a demanding and unfamiliar environment. As one submission to the inquiry commented, ‘for some their appointment to an Aboriginal community is an exile which is the price to be paid to gain a metropolitan appointment’.¹

6.2 Previous inquiries have focussed on three main areas:

- the need to employ more Indigenous people in education and training;
- the need to improve the training and employment conditions of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Workers (AIEWs); and
- the need to provide appropriate pre-service training, support and professional development for staff involved in Indigenous education.

6.3 While there has been considerable effort and some progress in these areas over the past ten years, they remain relevant. Levels of employment of Indigenous people in education and training are still low, the training and employment conditions of AIEWs remain relatively poor, and too many non-Indigenous teaching staff begin their teaching careers with little or no preparation for teaching Indigenous students. The main findings and areas of concern are summarised below.

Indigenous employment in education

The reality is that there is and will be for a long time to come a dearth of qualified and willing Indigenous people in education and training.²

6.4 A common theme of inquiries into Indigenous education over the past ten years has been the need to raise the levels of employment of Indigenous people in education and training. One of the main rationales was provided in the joint policy statement on the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Policy.

1 Submission No. 21, Kakadu Employment, Education and Training Group, vol. 2, p. 83

2 Submission No. 23, Southbank Institute of TAFE, vol. 2, p. 115

‘Aboriginal youth are ... more likely to stay on and succeed at school when they see and have contact with Aboriginal people in professional roles in the school, and are exposed to Aboriginal role models.’³ It was also considered that greater involvement of Indigenous people in education, particularly in professional capacities, would help ensure that education was more relevant to the needs and aspirations of Indigenous people.

6.5 The National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Policy contained two recommendations relating to Indigenous employment in education and training. Recommendations two and four jointly called for increases in the numbers employed in all levels across the schools, vocational education and higher education sectors. The policy called for early priority to be given to the development of strategies for increasing Indigenous employment in education.⁴

6.6 The earlier Hughes report was more specific, recommending commitment to a goal of 1,000 Indigenous teachers by 1990 (recommendations 26 and 38), extension of the National Scheme for the Placement of Teachers in Aboriginal Schools (recommendation 27), and increased funding for remote area teacher education (recommendation 51).⁵

6.7 The 1994 National Review of Education for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples found that progress in increasing Indigenous employment in education had been ‘patchy’. While increases in ancillary and support staff had occurred, the number of Indigenous teaching staff was still small. There were only 572 Indigenous people employed as school teachers in the 1991 Census, representing 0.3 per cent of the teaching workforce. The Review attributed this to the limited number of Indigenous graduates who were well enough trained to compete for scarce teaching positions, and the low numbers of Indigenous students progressing through secondary and TAFE colleges and into teacher training courses. The low numbers of Indigenous teaching staff resulted in fewer role models for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students and compromised the cultural appropriateness of their education, while at the same time reducing opportunities for non-Indigenous students to ‘communicate directly with exponents of Indigenous culture’.⁶

6.8 The Review considered that state and territory governments should provide incentives to ensure the retention of tertiary educated Indigenous Australians in the education sector, and provide employment conditions which recognised the family,

3 Department of Employment, Education and Training, *National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Policy: Joint Policy Statement*, Canberra, 1989, p. 13

4 *ibid.*, pp. 14-16

5 Department of Employment, Education and Training, *Report of the Aboriginal Education Policy Taskforce*, Canberra, 1988

6 Department of Employment, Education and Training, *National Review of Education for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples: Final Report*, Canberra, 1995, pp. 41-42

social and cultural responsibilities of Indigenous employees.⁷ The Review also stated that it was important that Indigenous graduates were given priority for job vacancies in their own communities, and that provisions were made available for Indigenous educators to upgrade their qualifications.

6.9 The Review noted that less than 0.01 per cent of post-school education staff were Indigenous, with the majority in non-teaching positions. Only twenty per cent of Indigenous teachers in the higher education sector were permanent. More than half the temporarily employed teachers were on contracts of less than a year.⁸ Mentor schemes were seen as one promising avenue for the development of Indigenous academics.

6.10 The National Review recommended that all employers of Indigenous teaching staff should review existing employment arrangements for Indigenous teachers in order to ensure that their pay and conditions were comparable to their non-Indigenous counterparts (recommendation 10).⁹ The Review also recommended that employers should take steps to improve the appointment and promotion processes for Indigenous teachers.

6.11 The 1991 Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody called for specialised teacher education programs, recommending that governments and educators take note of the methodology used in programs such as that of Batchelor College in the Northern Territory (recommendation 294). The Commission argued ‘that continued development of such innovative and sensitive programs will substantially increase the number of Aboriginal graduates available to teach in Australian schools’.¹⁰

6.12 The MCEETYA national strategy reaffirmed the commitment to increase the number of Indigenous people employed in education and training (priority 2).¹¹ Specific strategies were outlined in each of the educational sectors, involving affirmative recruitment, formal training plans, and recognition of Indigenous cultural knowledge and skills.

Results

6.13 The issue of Indigenous employment in education, despite having been an identified priority of various strategies over the last ten years, has been bedeviled by a lack of good statistical information. The 1997 MCEETYA National Report on Schooling, for example, contained information on levels of Indigenous employment in

7 *ibid.*, pp. 44-45

8 *ibid.*, pp. 45-46

9 *ibid.*, p. 46

10 Submission No. 10, U Mulliko Centre, University of Newcastle, vol. 1, pp. 109-110

11 Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs, *A National Strategy for the Education of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples 1996 – 2002*, DEETYA, Canberra, 1995, p. 22

just four of the eight government school systems, and no information on the non-government sector. The figures that were quoted showed some increase in employment between 1996 and 1997 but were not comparable with each other, with some of the figures failing to distinguish between professional and para-professional employment or between permanent and casual employment.

Recommendation 16

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

6.15 The Committee found evidence of only marginal improvements in the level of employment of Indigenous people in qualified teaching positions. Most states have implemented strategies to lift Indigenous employment in education. However, the relative scarcity of Indigenous people with university qualifications means that Indigenous teachers are often recruited to other areas of employment. Many find employment in managerial positions within the public sector. Ironically, moves towards greater community control of Indigenous affairs may have increased the level of demand for Indigenous people with tertiary qualifications. Few Indigenous people appear to remain in the teaching profession for long periods of time, and should not be expected to do so if that is their choice. That their skills are used in other areas is not necessarily a loss to the community.

6.16 While the number of Indigenous people employed in education has been identified as a concern in various inquiries, there are some caveats that need to be recognised. The personal attributes of the teacher are also an important consideration. Simply being Indigenous does not necessarily mean greater cultural sensitivity or aptitude for teaching Indigenous people (although it might be fair to assume a greater likelihood of these attributes). The teacher induction package prepared by the Geraldton Aboriginal Education Centre used the term ‘warm demander’ to describe the attributes of a good teacher of Indigenous children.¹² Some evidence also suggested that some Indigenous people from rural and remote communities who left their home location to study were reluctant to return to their home location.

6.17 A number of strategies have been employed over the years to increase the level of Indigenous employment, with varying degrees of success. Tertiary institutions have targeted Indigenous students through more flexible entry requirements and more culturally appropriate teaching methods. Some of the state education departments have implemented recruitment strategies. Attempts have also been made to deliver teacher education in regional and remote locations (for example, through Remote Area Teaching Programs), avoiding the need for Indigenous people to leave their home locations in order to study.

12 <http://www.wn.com.au/abled/>

Teacher training

6.18 For educators, the central dilemma in this area is how to improve the supply of Indigenous teaching staff while maintaining quality. Rightly or wrongly, teacher education programs targeting Indigenous students have suffered from perceptions of poor quality among some educators and Indigenous communities. Claims of an increase in numbers at the expense of quality were described as a 'nagging criticism of all Aboriginal teacher education programs.'¹³

6.19 One approach to increasing supply has been to relax entry requirements for Indigenous students. In some instances, however, this raised concerns over the quality of graduates. This was a particular issue for remote locations and for institutions with large Indigenous populations, and was articulated by communities in some of the remote locations visited for the inquiry. It was raised on Thursday Island, for example, where it was commented that the language and numeracy criteria for selection into RATEP were low, and that there may have been some dilution of the quality of graduates in favour of quantity.¹⁴ These communities wanted to see high teaching standards as well as culturally sensitive delivery of teaching.

6.20 Part of this dilemma involves access to higher education. Many Indigenous people access higher education through special access programs rather than year 12 completion. In 1998, for example, all of the 141 Indigenous students who enrolled in mainstream degree courses at the University of Adelaide came through special access rather than year 12 completion. Evidence to the Committee suggested that those Indigenous students who completed year 12 had better study skills and were better able to cope with university study. However, they were very much in a minority at universities.¹⁵

6.21 A number of universities have designed teacher training courses specifically for Indigenous students. Some of these courses target students from remote or traditionally oriented communities. The Anangu Teacher Education Program (or ANTEP) at University of South Australia is designed specifically to train Indigenous people from traditional communities in the Anangu Pitjantjatjara lands of northern South Australia.

6.22 Some locations have implemented programs that enable Indigenous people to undertake teacher training in their home location. In Western Australia, Edith Cowan University operates a regional centre program. This sets up in regional centres around the state for four to five years. The program is currently operating in Geraldton, in conjunction with the Central West College of TAFE, and will be offering a Bachelor of Education course that aims to increase the number of Indigenous primary school teachers in the region.

13 Professor Robin McTaggart, *Hansard*, Townsville, 4 August 1999, p. 155

14 Community members, *Hansard precis*, Thursday Island, 3 August 1999, pp. 4-5

15 Mr Roger Thomas, *Hansard*, Adelaide, 27 July 1999, p. 101

6.23 Batchelor Institute, in the Northern Territory, offers mixed-mode delivery of teacher training. This allows students to do a significant amount of teacher training in their home location.

Local recruitment ... has the additional advantage that mixed mode delivery such as the Institute's obviates the requirement for students to spend consecutive semesters in the lecture rooms of tertiary institutions; and enables most to continue working as Assistant Teachers.¹⁶

6.24 The Committee has already referred to the possibility of delivering educational programs to remote communities via satellite-based Internet technology. Such technology also has application in remote-area teacher education as it would overcome communications difficulties which are often a problem with distance education. Community based teacher education, made possible through advanced communications technology, has the advantage of causing minimal disruption to the lives of trainee teachers would encourage the retention in remote communities of creative and dedicated young people with a commitment to the local community.

Recommendation 17

6.25 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.

6.26 Remote Area Teacher Education Programs (known as RATEP) were also being offered in a number of locations. James Cook University was running an extensive program that had evolved into a more general community based teacher education program for Indigenous students. This was being run as a partnership between the university, Education Queensland, the Tropical North Queensland Institute of TAFE and relevant Indigenous communities. Most of the education was occurring on-site, with one practical component conducted in Townsville. The students were said to be doing exactly the same subjects as those studying on campus.¹⁷

6.27 Evidence provided to the Committee suggested that some communities had not been satisfied with the quality of Indigenous teaching graduates from courses such as that at James Cook University. Concerns were raised, in particular, in the Torres Strait Islands as well as in other locations around Australia. It was also abundantly clear, however, that there were few Indigenous people working as qualified teachers. In some instances, Indigenous teacher education programs may be battling against community perceptions that the programs and their graduates are of lower quality.

16 Submission No. 36, Batchelor Institute of Indigenous Tertiary Education, vol. 5, p. 209

17 Dr Frank York, *Hansard*, Townsville, 4 August 1999, pp. 197-198

One of the problems that you face when you come out to these areas as an Aboriginal teacher is that a lot of people do not think. They still have these attitudes today that Aboriginal people cannot really be teachers, and that comes from the community as well as from within the system.¹⁸

6.28 Much of the emphasis at James Cook University was on participation. The approach included generous entry policies for Indigenous student teachers, and programs adapted and designed for Indigenous people. The University considered that the teacher education program was still in a developmental phase, and that an increased emphasis on outcomes and performance would be premature at this stage. The issue of standards was also complicated by the unique skills required to teach in Indigenous communities. For example, teachers may need to be bilingual to teach in some locations. This makes direct comparisons with the skills required to teach in mainstream locations difficult.

6.29 Staff from James Cook University were concerned that some of the perceptions of poor quality were based on isolated instances and did not accurately reflect the quality of the program. Some of these criticisms were described as ‘myths’. Staff outlined the steps they had taken to ensure that their Indigenous teaching programs were of a high quality. The decision to require RATEP students to undertake a practical component in an urban school, for example, was done partly to ensure some level of moderation and standard setting. The emphasis was on producing graduates who would be fully equipped to teach in all situations, while taking into account the specific difficulties experienced by Indigenous students from remote locations and non-English speaking backgrounds.

One of the myths was that, because these students were Indigenous and doing their pracs in community schools only, they were being pushed through out of all sorts of good intentions on the part of people to increase the number of Indigenous teachers in schools.¹⁹

6.30 It was also emphasised to the Committee that there was a need for strong support mechanisms within universities to assist Indigenous students to successfully complete their studies. These were generally considered to be critical in any mainstream higher education program for Indigenous students. Some witnesses considered that funding cuts over the last ten years had affected the ability of universities to provide support. ‘One example of the Commonwealth cuts and state response to these cuts is at the University of South Australia, where the teacher education program is probably a third the size it was ten years ago in terms of support arrangements for incoming students.’²⁰

18 Ms Alison Salt, *Hansard*, Bourke, 26 July 1999, pp. 55-56

19 Dr Kay Martinez, *Hansard*, Townsville, 4 August 1999, p. 200

20 Mr Bill Wilson, *Hansard*, Port Adelaide, 27 July 1999, p. 144

6.31 The evidence on teacher education points towards the importance of on-site delivery where this is possible, and flexible arrangements where it is not, to accommodate students from Indigenous backgrounds. These arrangements should not be at the expense of academic standards. Many witnesses commented that the aim of Indigenous teaching programs should be to produce graduates who are judged competent to teach in a range of situations. The Committee believes that Indigenous teacher training programs such as those at James Cook University are important initiatives and should be encouraged. The Committee is aware of the intensive nature of these courses both in terms of resources and staff input, and believes that there should be recognition of this in resource allocations. The Committee is also aware of the concerns of Indigenous communities with regard to standards. While perceptions of lower quality will almost inevitably accompany targeted programs such as those at James Cook University, the Committee believes that standards should not be allowed to suffer in any attempt to increase numbers.

Recruitment and retention

6.32 Some of the difficulties involved in raising the numbers of Indigenous teachers stem from problems in recruiting and retaining trained Indigenous teachers within education systems. The Committee became aware of some of these problems in its hearings. Few Indigenous people appeared to remain in the teaching profession for long. Many were recruited to other areas of employment within the public sector. In South Australia, the Committee was told that targeting of Indigenous students by universities had been successful in raising the numbers of Indigenous teaching graduates, but that few of these graduates had gone on to take up teaching appointments. The isolated location of many new teaching positions and the opportunity for alternative employment in the public sector were said to be factors involved in this outcome.

6.33 Other problems included a lack of good support networks in a predominantly European workforce. One submission from the vocational education and training sector saw a role for supportive ‘white fellas’ due to the need for Indigenous people to live in two worlds.²¹ Some of these difficulties were outlined to the Committee by an Indigenous teacher in Bourke.

There needs to be some sort of support mechanism set up for Aboriginal teachers. We are few and far between; there are not many of us around. There are only four in this whole district, and there is no networking between us. The fact that we are in the lower positions means that it is a little bit difficult in terms of accepting sometimes what schools do from an Aboriginal perspective, especially in schools with a high population of Aboriginal students.²²

21 Submission No. 23, Southbank Institute of TAFE, vol. 2, p. 115

22 Ms Alison Salt, *Hansard*, Bourke, 26 July 1999, p. 55

6.34 Cultural issues and conflict within Indigenous communities could also impact on the willingness of Indigenous teachers to remain in the teaching workforce. The complex cultural groupings in some remote communities, as well as the need to take into account cultural issues such as avoidance relationships, could put Indigenous teachers in potentially difficult situations.

6.35 Some education departments and institutions have implemented recruitment strategies for Indigenous teachers. The University of Newcastle, for instance, has an Indigenous employment strategy that aims for a 2 per cent employment level of Indigenous staff across the university's employment categories.²³

6.36 The provision of incentives to encourage Indigenous people to remain longer in the teaching profession, and the use of programs to allow Indigenous people employed as education workers to upgrade to teaching qualifications could also be used. There were a range of opinions on the effectiveness and practicality of these strategies.

One way of obtaining quality staff who remain for longer periods in remote communities is through careful structuring of incentives which result in remote area positions being of higher professional status than urban positions, i.e. a situation wherein everyone knows only 'good staff' get remote area positions. Another strategy is local recruitment, which has long been recognised as one of the influences on turnover.²⁴

6.37 One option for increasing the numbers of Indigenous teachers could be the introduction (or reintroduction) of teaching scholarships. This would involve a bonding arrangement whereby recipients would be required to remain in the profession for a certain period in return for free tuition. Some witnesses saw some merit in this idea, particularly in relation to the costs of obtaining a qualification. The perceived financial disincentives to obtaining tertiary qualifications were cited as one of the factors contributing to lower numbers of Indigenous teaching students. The example of medical scholarships, which were being offered by some of the state and territory governments, was given as one instance of a successful approach to increasing employment in certain professions. Scholarships were also seen as one way of overcoming Indigenous peoples' unease about HECS.²⁵

Recommendation 18

6.38 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.

23 Submission No. 10, Unulliko Centre, University of Newcastle, vol. 1, p. 90

24 Submission No. 36, Batchelor Institute of Indigenous Tertiary Education, vol. 5, p. 209

25 Mr Roger Thomas, *Hansard*, Adelaide, 27 July 1999, p. 105

6.39 Another potential strategy for increasing the numbers of Indigenous teachers is the recruitment of Indigenous teachers to a national teaching service (such as the old Commonwealth Teaching Service). The 1994 National Review expressed caution at calls for an independent Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander teaching service directly funded by the Commonwealth. This was felt to be impractical given the predominant role of the state and territory education systems in delivering and funding primary and secondary education, and the potential difficulties in integrating such a service with the state and territory education systems.²⁶

6.40 The MCEETYA National Strategy calls for affirmative action, just and equitable salary and working conditions, and formal training plans for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees in the various education sectors. Most state and territory education departments have been implementing recruitment and professional development strategies for Indigenous employees. To date, however, there is little conclusive evidence regarding the effectiveness of these strategies.

6.41 The Committee commends efforts to target Indigenous students in teacher training programs and believes they should be maintained. Lack of success in retaining graduates in education should not be allowed to discourage efforts in this area. As was made clear to the Committee, many of these graduates acquire skills that are put to use for the benefit of their communities in other ways. However, the Committee believes that more could be done in the area of recruiting and retaining Indigenous teachers. Scholarship programs have been successful in increasing employment levels in other areas such as health and should be considered for teaching, particularly in view of the financial commitments involved in undertaking tertiary study. Strong support systems for Indigenous teachers, involving an opportunity for networking with teachers in similar positions and good professional development programs, should also be made a priority in all education systems.

Caveat

6.42 While the overall numbers of Indigenous people in higher education are low, teaching is one of the areas of study in which they have relatively strong participation. There have been some concerns in fact that Indigenous people tend to study a relatively narrow range of subjects in higher education, and some attempts to increase the numbers in areas such as medicine. Although it would be desirable to increase the numbers studying education, this should be aimed for in the context of increasing the numbers overall. There may also be a need to be realistic about what can be expected of the relatively small number of Indigenous higher education students given the competing demands on them.

26 Department of Employment, Education and Training, *National Review of Education for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples: Final Report*, Canberra, 1995, p. 47

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Workers²⁷

6.43 There has been significant progress over the past decade in the employment of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Workers (AIEWs) in the schools sector. In 1994 there were almost 1,700 people employed as AIEWs in education systems in Australia.²⁸ In many areas, the employment of AIEWs appeared to be compensating for lack of progress in the employment of Indigenous teachers. While there were few Indigenous teachers in the schools visited for the inquiry, most of these schools had a number of AIEWs. Their role included the provision of support and assistance to classroom teachers, counseling Indigenous students and parents, and liaising between home, school and the community.

Opinions

6.44 The Committee heard on numerous occasions that Indigenous education workers were regarded highly by other staff. They were said to provide a positive role model for students. In most instances, the Indigenous education workers came from the local community and were able to provide an important link between schools and the community. They also brought to the school environment an understanding of Indigenous cultural issues and values that was of benefit to both students and staff. Indigenous education workers also provided an important source of continuity for parents and students, particularly in remote locations where it was unrealistic to expect young teachers from predominantly urban backgrounds to commit for extended periods of time.

6.45 The National Review found that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Workers provided positive role models for all students.

... there was almost universal praise for the important and positive benefits that their employment brings to the educational experiences of Indigenous students.²⁹

6.46 The *Ara Kuwaritjakutu* project examined the working conditions of AIEWs. The project was undertaken by the Australian Education Union, with principal funding from the Commonwealth Department of Employment, Education and Training. The project report documented some of the benefits of AIEWs. They were commonly the largest body of education staff who consistently worked with Indigenous students for long periods of time, were generally recruited locally, were knowledgeable about the

27 Also known as Aboriginal Teacher Aides, Assistant Teachers, Koorie Educators, Community Teachers, Aboriginal Literacy Workers, and Home School Liaison Officers.

28 Pat Buckskin and Bill Hignett, *Ara Kuwaritjakutu Project: Towards a New Way*, Department of Employment, Education and Training, Canberra, 1994, p. 35

29 Department of Employment, Education and Training, *National Review of Education for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples: Final Report*, Canberra, 1995, p. 50.

local Indigenous community and culture, and were insightful about the problems facing Indigenous children.³⁰

Pay and conditions

6.47 In discussions with the Committee, the main concerns raised in regard to Indigenous education workers related to pay and conditions. Most Indigenous education workers considered that the level of pay was insufficient to attract and retain good staff. They also felt that the career paths were relatively limited. These comments were backed up by evidence from staff at more senior levels, including regional directors from some of the state education departments.

6.48 The submission from the Australian Education Union argued that many Indigenous education workers were ‘still employed in temporary positions with no guaranteed funding to protect employment and salary scales which take little account of the demands of the job’. The submission endorsed the concerns of AIEWs, arguing that ‘the precarious employment of AIEWs is detrimental to the profession’. The submission supported the recommendations of the *Ara Kuwaritjakutu* project regarding employment stability and access to training and career paths for AIEWs.³¹

6.49 The 1994 National Review recommended a review of pay and working arrangements and the establishment of awards for Indigenous education workers to better reflect their role in assisting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to participate in education. The Review saw the development of awards as a way of combating high turnover, facilitating a shift from temporary to permanent employment, avoiding the use of AESIP funds for AIEWs, improving salary levels, providing a national definition of roles, rights and responsibilities, and providing better opportunities for professional development.³² The Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody also included recommendations concerning recognition and better remuneration for AIEWs.

6.50 The *Ara Kuwaritjakutu* project reported that the average salary level for an AIEW in 1994 was \$18,590.³³ In some areas there appeared to have been little movement in salary levels. In Geraldton, the Committee spoke to a number of AIEWs who raised issues relating to pay and conditions. Their annual salaries were said to be around the \$19,000 mark. The *Ara Kuwaritjakutu* project reported that AIEWs with tertiary qualifications were among the most poorly paid graduates in Australia. The project found a high level of staff turnover, poorly defined roles, low salary levels, a lack of access to permanent employment and related entitlements, limited

30 Pat Buckskin and Bill Hignett, *Ara Kuwaritjakutu Project: Towards a New Way*, Department of Employment, Education and Training, Canberra, 1994, p. 6

31 Submission No. 24, Australian Education Union, vol. 2, pp. 163-166

32 Department of Employment, Education and Training, *National Review of Education for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples: Final Report*, Canberra, 1995, p. 52

33 Pat Buckskin and Bill Hignett, *Ara Kuwaritjakutu Project: Towards a New Way*, Department of Employment, Education and Training, Canberra, 1994, p. 43

opportunities for training and development, and some evidence of institutionalised racism. The project recommended that the Commonwealth Government initiate action for the development of a national award or framework for the employment of AIEWs.³⁴

6.51 Some witnesses commented on difficulties in accessing training opportunities. Two AIEWs at the Geraldton Secondary College were interested in furthering their training through Edith Cowan University, which was offering teacher training in Geraldton as part of its regional centres program, but were prevented from doing so by financial factors. The money that would be available to them if they went into full-time study for four years was not sufficient for them to support themselves and their families. A better arrangement, which was in place five or six years ago, was when AIEWs could study for two or three days and work as well.³⁵

6.52 The Department of Education, Training and Youth Affairs (DETYA) has been piloting a National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Worker Traineeship. Some of the results of the pilot were reported in a recent DETYA publication.³⁶

6.53 Other concerns included the ambiguous nature of the role taken on by Indigenous education workers, and the level of training. Most Indigenous education workers considered that they were required to be more than just education workers. In many cases, they also needed to be counselors to both students and parents. Many had become AIEWs with little formal training and acquired most of their skills on the job. They expressed a desire to upgrade their qualifications but considered that family commitments, time constraints and financial issues limited their capacity to do so.

6.54 Research into year 12 completion in South Australia examined some of the school factors affecting Indigenous educational performance. This research found that Indigenous education workers were important in the lower levels of secondary schooling but had a limited role in the final years (years 11 and 12). This research also found a level of confusion over the role of Indigenous education workers among teachers, students and parents.³⁷

6.55 The submission from ATSIC also spoke of the ambiguous role taken on by Indigenous education workers. Research quoted in the ATSIC submission suggested that there was a need for more Indigenous education workers in secondary schools.

There is a concern by AEWs that in their relationship with students they have to achieve a balance between providing support and requesting

34 *ibid.*, p. 10

35 Site visit, Geraldton Secondary College, 13 September 1999

36 John Henry et. al., *Developing Best Practice with Indigenous New Apprenticeships*, REB Report 3/99, Department of Education, Training and Youth Affairs, Canberra, 1999

37 Mr Lester Irabinna Rigney, *Hansard*, Adelaide, 27 July 1999, p. 124

students to abide by school rules. Many AEWs feel a sense of conflict between what they were trying to achieve and the positions taken by their schools as well as feeling let down by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander parents.³⁸

6.56 AIEWs were generally found to lack appropriate career paths and were often poorly paid. Some areas have been developing training programs to allow AIEWs to upgrade their qualifications. These need to be supported. The working conditions of AIEWs also need to be looked into. At the general level, little appears to have changed since the 1994 Review. AIEWs remain relatively poorly paid, and have little training and limited career paths. This is not acceptable given the important role they play in Indigenous education. A system that relies on the goodwill and enthusiasm of poorly paid and untrained staff is ultimately not supportable. The Committee sees the ranks of AIEWs as a potential source of skilled and dedicated professional teachers.

Recommendation 19

6.57 The Committee recommends that MCEETYA implement a strategy that provides an appropriate career and salary structure for AIEWs in all the 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.

Strategies

6.58 The Committee considers that AIEWs are an essential part of the education system for Indigenous people and should be supported. The fact that most AIEWs come from the local community is one of the strengths of the scheme. This has allowed the involvement in education of people with strong local knowledge and connections.

6.59 Consideration should be given to the implementation of strategies that would allow Indigenous education workers to remain in schools and have the opportunity to upgrade their qualifications. One suggested option was the introduction of a para-professional level between AIEWs and teachers. This would allow Indigenous education workers to further upgrade their qualifications, and would provide a valuable opportunity for career progression.

6.60 Anecdotal evidence was cited in the submission from the South Australian Aboriginal Education and Training Advisory Council on the value of AIEWs and Aboriginal Education Resource Teachers (AERTs).³⁹ According to this submission, appropriate status, tenure and salary structures for AIEWs had recently been implemented in South Australia. The Department of Education, Training and Youth

38 Submission No. 34, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission, vol 5, p. 135

39 Submission No. 31, South Australian Aboriginal Education and Training Advisory Council, vol. 4, p. 9

Affairs has also been involved in trialing an AIEW Traineeship program.⁴⁰ While these are important initiatives, it is worth noting that the 1994 Ara Kuwaritjakutu project found evidence of similar initiatives.⁴¹ Little progress will be achieved without a strong commitment on the part of governments to follow through on these initiatives.

Teacher Preparation and Development

6.61 The central dilemma in teacher preparation is how to adequately prepare teachers from predominantly mainstream European backgrounds to teach Indigenous students from a range of backgrounds. Demographics alone make it clear that the vast majority of teachers who face a classroom of Indigenous students in any proportion will be non-Indigenous. Appropriate pre-service training, support and professional development for teachers are therefore crucial issues.

6.62 One educator with considerable experience as a principal in central Australia described the situation she frequently encountered with new teachers.

In many instances I had young non-Indigenous teachers arrive who had never actually met an Aboriginal person before in their life, who then went to live in a community which was 99 per cent Aboriginal people.⁴²

6.63 It also needs to be recognised that there are many enthusiastic, competent and committed teachers working in Indigenous education. The progress that has been achieved over the past decade in raising participation and retention rates, and in developing more culturally relevant curricula and teaching materials, owes much to the work of these teachers. There have also been significant increases in the level of acknowledgment of Indigenous issues in teacher education, as well as more general changes in teaching practice. These developments have been reflected in the pre-service education of teachers.

Teacher training

6.64 The Committee believes that the level of preparation of young teachers for teaching Indigenous students is demonstrably inadequate. Most educational institutions include some cultural awareness training for teachers. However, these programs are frequently electives rather than core units. There is evidence of some reluctance to take elective units in Indigenous education by students who fear being sent to remote locations. One witness in Townsville commented, 'if it is offered as an elective, a lot of young white teachers do not do it because they do not want to be sent to a remote Aboriginal community'.⁴³ Such provision can only be regarded as ad hoc

40 Submission No. 32, Department of Education, Training and Youth Affairs, vol. 4, p. 59

41 Pat Buckskin and Bill Hignett, *Ara Kuwaritjakutu Project: Towards a New Way*, Department of Employment, Education and Training, Canberra, 1994, p. 21

42 Dr. Christine Nicholls, *Hansard*, Adelaide, 27 July 1999, p. 103

43 Mr John Scott, *Hansard*, Townsville, 4 August 1999, p. 188

at best. The Committee is of the opinion that teacher education units in Indigenous studies should be core units rather than electives, due to the high probability of teaching Indigenous students in the early stages of a teaching career.

6.65 The 1994 National Review stressed the importance of promoting cultural sensitivity through teacher training as a means of furthering reconciliation.⁴⁴ The Review recommended that higher education institutions running teacher education courses and employers of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander educators implement the recommendations of the report *Teacher Education Pre-service: Preparing Teachers to work with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Students*.⁴⁵ This report was produced in response to the recommendations of the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody. Its main aim was to assess the preparation of teachers to fulfil the requirements of recommendation 290: ‘that Aboriginal viewpoints, interests, perceptions and expectations are reflected in curricula, teaching and administration of schools’.⁴⁶ It also addressed recommendation 295, which called for teacher training courses to include units in Indigenous history and culture.

6.66 The *Teacher Education Pre-service* report found what it described as a ‘smorgasbord approach’ to teacher preparation in Indigenous education, with no consistency of provision.⁴⁷ There was widespread support in the literature for compulsory Indigenous education subjects in teacher preservice courses. While there was general support for this among universities, however, there were some concerns over the need to maintain autonomy. Universities considered that they needed to retain some level of flexibility and control over the design of courses in order to reflect student and university needs. The report outlined a total of 22 recommendations but stopped short of recommending compulsory units in Indigenous education. The report called instead for institutions involved in teacher education to identify strategies to fulfil recommendations 290 and 295 of the Royal Commission, and to incorporate higher levels of Indigenous content in teacher training courses.

6.67 One of the persistent themes in this area has been the need for Indigenous studies as a compulsory component in teacher training courses. Much of the evidence to the Committee suggested that this was still not happening. Provision of pre-service training in Indigenous education appeared to be haphazard. Some institutions include mandatory units on Indigenous education and cultural awareness. In others, these units are electives. There was a suggestion that the fact that Indigenous studies courses were optional at some institutions meant that students were deterred from doing them

44 Department of Employment, Education and Training, *National Review of Education for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples: Final Report*, Canberra, 1995, p. 43

45 A report prepared for the then Department of Employment, Education and Training by the Aboriginal Research Institute at the University of SA in 1994

46 Eleanor Bourke et. al., *Teacher Education Pre-service: Preparing Teachers to work with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Students*, Department of Employment, Education and Training, Canberra, 1993, p. 3

47 *ibid.*, p. 1

because they might be posted to a remote area. A number of submissions called for Indigenous studies to be made mandatory in teacher education courses.

6.68 A commitment to compulsory units in Indigenous education is not a guarantee of adequate preparation to teach Indigenous students. Courses in Indigenous education can run the risk of being tokenistic. More frequently, such courses have to compete with the other demands placed on student teachers. These problems were outlined to the Committee by a lecturer from Flinders University in Adelaide. The University includes a compulsory 13 week unit in Indigenous education as part of its teacher training course. This was described as ‘a hitchhikers guide to Indigenous peoples’.

In my case, at Flinders University, Indigenous education is only a very small part of their total degree. The topic that I teach within teaching Indigenous Australian children is the last topic student teachers do before they graduate. So we do not get any topics in the first, second and third years. At the fundamental level they are trying to grasp how to master their careers. In the tool kit, in the second and third years, we have no section there to prepare them for teaching Indigenous kids, let alone teaching traditional, or those kids within the interior from the Aboriginal communities of our country. I think that first in higher education is resources and second is that teaching degrees have already been established. So Indigenous education has been tacked on to the end. It only exists at the fringe of a degree because there is so much to cram within a degree.⁴⁸

6.69 While the underlying educational question could be whether Indigenous people are better served by courses that concentrate on the fundamentals of good teaching or those that provide an insight into Indigenous educational issues, the two aims are not incompatible. Indigenous education requires good teaching, and any insights gained from a more rigorous consideration of Indigenous educational issues would undoubtedly be of benefit in the wider educational arena.

6.70 Some evidence was quite critical of the role of universities in teacher education.

Aboriginal education is not regarded as the specialisation it really is. Inter-cultural schooling is a complex task. Inter-cultural teachers must study Aboriginal anthropology, Aboriginal linguistics and Australian history. The present teacher education degrees are almost devoid of any content studies and are dominated by psychology, teaching theory and curriculum studies. One unit of Aboriginal education may affect the attitudes of the teaching profession, but actual teachers of Aboriginal students should be required to undertake further studies in anthropology and linguistics.⁴⁹

48 Mr Lester Irabinna Rigney, *Hansard*, Adelaide, 27 July 1999, p. 129

49 Submission No. 7, Mr Peter Reynolds, , vol. 1, p. 55

6.71 Other evidence was more supportive, describing the work of some of the universities as ‘outstanding’.⁵⁰ Some evidence also suggested that funding cuts in the higher education sector had adversely affected the quality of teacher education programs, and the ability of programs to incorporate Indigenous education units. One witness commented that ‘one example of the Commonwealth cuts and state response to those cuts is at the University of South Australia where the teacher education program is probably a third the size it was ten years ago in terms of support arrangements for incoming students’.⁵¹ The Queensland Teachers Union in their submission commended the recommendations of the Yatha conference held in Brisbane in 1993. The conference addressed issues of teacher education and recommended that all pre-service teacher education programs should include Indigenous studies subjects.⁵²

6.72 A number of state education departments have been undertaking reviews of teacher training. These were referred to in evidence in Canberra from the Department of Education, Training and Youth Affairs. Departmental representatives commented that the Commonwealth has been urging that the issue of adequate preparation for teachers of Indigenous people be addressed in any review, and that the employers of teachers impress this issue on universities.⁵³

6.73 Teacher preparation has also been affected by more general trends within teaching theory and practice. Of most significance in Indigenous education has been the move away from ‘deficit models’ of educational disadvantage. These approaches saw Indigenous people as disadvantaged due to cultural and socio-economic circumstances, and posed a remedial rather than a developmental role for education. Poor performance was seen in terms of inadequacies in the students and their home situation. The purpose of education was to overcome educational ‘deficits’ through compensatory input. More recent theory has seen education as a process of interaction between students and teachers, with the prior learning and skills of students recognised as an important aspect of this interaction.⁵⁴ These moves parallel developments in Indigenous education such as ‘two-way’ schooling, in which the cultural and linguistic background of the student forms an important part of the learning process.

6.74 The Committee believes that it is important that teachers should receive adequate preparation for teaching Indigenous students. The Committee considers that this preparation should be comprehensive and academically rigorous. Units in Indigenous education should be made mandatory in teacher education courses. The MCEETYA National Strategy has called for negotiation with universities and other

50 Mr Roger Thomas, *Hansard*, Adelaide, 27 July 1999, p. 100

51 Mr Bill Wilson, *Hansard*, Port Adelaide, 27 July 1999, p. 144

52 Submission No. 22, Queensland Teachers Union, vol. 2, p. 97

53 Mr Tony Greer, *Hansard*, Canberra, 30 August 1999, p. 303

54 See, for example, *Desert Schools*, 1996, vol. 3, pp. 12-17

teacher training institutions to ensure that all teaching graduates complete Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander studies as part of their pre-service training. The strategy also called on other educational institutions to ensure that all lecturers had completed such studies.⁵⁵ The Committee endorses this call but considers that progress in this area has been too slow. Departments of education are the principal employers of teaching graduates and should not be reluctant to 'call the shots'. The Committee believes that urgent attention should be given to this aspect of the MCEETYA National Strategy, including the development of appropriate performance measures to monitor progress.

Recruitment and retention

6.75 While there is much that could be done to improve the pre-service training of teachers, there may be some delays in any training actually resulting in improved classroom practice. In one location the Committee was informed that primary school teachers who were currently eligible for permanent employment within the state teaching service were those who had graduated in 1993. More recent graduates could be obtained only on a casual basis.

People that have finished university six years ago may then get a job. They are not up to speed in relation to current curriculum. Some may not have taught. Then they decide to utilise their tertiary qualifications and may get Bourke or Wanaaring or an isolated remote school out this way.⁵⁶

6.76 The implication is that any improvements in teacher training may take some time to filter through to classroom practice. A case could be made for accelerated access to permanent employment for those teachers undertaking Indigenous studies and prepared to teach in remote or difficult to staff locations.

6.77 High staff turnover also regularly affects schools in regional areas. Typical of this was the situation described to the Committee at Brewarrina Central School, a school with a predominantly Indigenous population.

... in 1998, out of the twenty three [teaching] staff we had, nineteen were new and, of that nineteen, eleven were beginning teachers.⁵⁷

6.78 Greater incentives for teachers working in remote communities could be used to encourage experienced teachers to take up appointments and to reduce the high level of staff turnover. The Committee heard of instances where the majority of teachers in schools had been replaced in a single year. While it is unrealistic to expect many young teachers to commit to extended periods of time in remote locations, the Committee believes more could be done to avoid unnecessarily high turnover, and

55 Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs, *A National Strategy for the Education of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples 1996 – 2002*, DEETYA, Canberra, 1995, pp. 40-50

56 Mr Paul Loxley, *Hansard*, Bourke, 26 July 1999, p. 58

57 Ms Ruythe Dufty, *Hansard*, Brewarrina, 26 July 1999, p. 9

high levels of turnover in particular years. The Remote Teaching Service in Western Australia was one example of a recruitment and incentive scheme for teachers in remote locations. The scheme provides financial and other incentives to teachers who take up appointments of three or more years in remote schools, and was said to have been relatively successful in reducing levels of turnover.

6.79 There is also a need for better support for teachers working in remote locations. Better housing and infrastructure are crucial. The Committee acknowledges the efforts made by some of the state and territory education systems. However, the Committee sees a need for continuing effort in this area. One submission was critical of the failure of education departments to provide secure housing in remote communities, pointing to instances in which teachers had been assaulted.⁵⁸

6.80 The Committee also heard of examples of inflexible recruitment practices that led to teaching vacancies in remote areas going unfilled. Dr Christine Nicholls, a former principal from central Australia, gave examples of positions that had remained unfilled for up to twelve months in spite of the availability of suitable applicants. Dr Nicholls was unable to attribute any reasons for the vacancies remaining unfilled but commented that ‘the entire time I was principal of Lajamanu school, we did not have our establishment staff on deck’.⁵⁹

6.81 The situation of secondary aged students being taught by primary trained teachers in some remote locations was described by some witnesses. One submission commented on the need for an appropriate ratio of teachers with English as a Second Language skills (a maximum of one teacher to ten students).⁶⁰ A persistent problem for educators is that those schools with the greatest need for this intensive level of assistance are those that are in the most remote locations and are the hardest to service. It is often not realistic to expect young teachers to commit to long periods of time in remote locations far from family and friends. Some locations such as Geraldton and Kalgoorlie were experiencing problems recruiting staff and, in some instances, considered that the quality of teachers had suffered. There were also some instances where teachers had been recruited from inter-state or overseas.

6.82 The Committee commends the efforts of some education systems to implement recruitment practices that recognise both the unique skills and difficulties involved in teaching Indigenous students, particularly in remote communities. The Committee also commends the efforts of those teachers who service these communities. However, the Committee is concerned that too many Indigenous communities continue to be served by inexperienced teachers with little or no preparation for Indigenous education. While pre-service education is the responsibility of universities, education departments as the main employers of teachers can influence the content of teacher education courses. Giving due recognition to Indigenous

58 Submission No. 21, Kakadu Employment, Education and Training Group, vol. 2, p. 84

59 Dr Christine Nicholls, *Hansard*, Adelaide, 27 July 1999, p. 102

60 Submission No. 12, Dr Christine Nicholls, vol. 1, p. 141

education studies as part of the recruitment process should be a priority. The Committee also notes the comment from some witnesses that Indigenous communities often need teachers with specialist skills such as English as a Second Language (ESL) training. (ESL issues are covered in more detail in the curriculum chapter.) The Committee believes these needs should be reflected in recruitment practices. The Committee also supports the use of incentive schemes such as the Remote Teaching Service in Western Australia and recommends their adoption in other states and territories.

Recommendation 20

6.83 The Committee recommends that MCEETYA look at ways of improving incentives to encourage experienced and accomplished teachers to accept appointments in schools with a high proportion of Indigenous students, and especially in remote areas.

Teacher induction and professional development

6.84 As previously noted, any improvements in teacher training may take some time to filter through to classroom practice. While strategies such as those outlined above can be put in place to improve the recruitment of teachers with appropriate training, the majority of teachers of Indigenous children in more populous regions will continue to be those teachers who graduated some time ago. This simple fact underlines the importance of good, continuing professional development.

6.85 There was a great need identified by the inquiry for better and more comprehensive teacher induction and in-service training. Some examples of good practice were provided to the Committee. The South Australian Education Department has a category of designated Aboriginal schools for those schools with high Aboriginal populations. Staff who are appointed to these schools have to do an orientation and undertake programs on cultural awareness and language diversity. In Western Australia, the state education department has developed an induction package that is used for teachers who will be teaching large numbers of Indigenous students. Teachers in remote schools in the Goldfields region are provided with a three day induction program prior to commencing, and with further support during the year.⁶¹

6.86 DETYA representatives informed the Committee that the Commonwealth has been attempting to monitor the quality of teacher induction. Through the IESIP program, the Commonwealth has been seeking information on the length and comprehensiveness of induction programs (for example, whether it is just a one day program or a three week program involving community visits prior to placement).⁶² The professional development indicator in IESIP agreements is one way of

61 Site visit, Goldfields District Education Office

62 Mr Peter Buckskin, *Hansard*, Canberra, 30 August 1999, p. 304

maintaining pressure on state and territory jurisdictions to improve levels of teacher preparation.

6.87 In practice, however, even with induction and in-service training most young teachers from middle-class European backgrounds will experience difficulties adapting to life in Indigenous communities. As was put to the Committee in one location, most young teachers spend the first six months trying to survive. In-service training during this period was generally wasted, and the emphasis was on more basic forms of assistance.⁶³

6.88 In the longer term, in-service teacher education and cultural awareness training are issues for both experienced and inexperienced teachers alike. The Committee was told informally of cases of experienced teachers, including headmasters, with barely concealed racist attitudes. There had been some resistance by these staff to undertaking cultural awareness training, with some staff required to undertake training through performance agreements.

6.89 Many educators working with Aboriginal people today remain the product of education in cultural deficit theories about Indigenous people. These educators need to be kept informed of changes in educational theory and practice, particularly as they affect Indigenous people. Some studies have also pointed to the differing understandings and expectations of teachers and Indigenous people. Few teachers have any knowledge or understanding of the needs and aspirations of Aboriginal people. One submission pointed to the role of education in community development and the need for teachers to be involved.

... teaching should be seen within the context of community development and advancement. Teachers of Aboriginal students must be seen as community development officers and their professional preparation planned accordingly.⁶⁴

6.90 Aboriginal parents, on the other hand, have little contact with their children's education, understand little about what they are studying or why attending school and doing homework could be essential, and lack information on assessment processes.⁶⁵

6.91 The in-service needs of teachers in large urban or regional educational institutions teaching a range of students can be quite different to those teaching in remote, predominantly Aboriginal communities. It needs to be remembered that significant proportions of the Indigenous student population attend large urban or regional institutions, where they might form perhaps ten per cent or less of the student population.

63 Goldfields District Education Office, *Hansard Precis*, 14 September 1999, p. 7

64 Submission No. 7, Mr Peter Reynolds, , vol. 1, p. 55

65 NLLIA, *Desert School*, vol 3, Canberra 1996, pp. 14-15

6.92 In-service education and professional development for teachers is an area where the Commonwealth has had some involvement. The Quality Teaching Program is a recent Commonwealth initiative that will provide funding of \$77.7 million over a three year period for targeted professional development. DETYA representatives informed the Committee that the Minister had indicated that teachers of Indigenous people would be one of the targets for the new program.⁶⁶ The Commonwealth has previously funded a national professional development scheme that was found to be successful in providing additional assistance to teachers.

6.93 Many witnesses were of the opinion that English as a Second Language (ESL) teaching should form a significant part of the professional development of teachers with Indigenous students (as it does for teachers with students from other non-English speaking backgrounds). While Aboriginal languages and Torres Strait Islander Creole are recognised for ESL purposes, there was some uncertainty over the extent to which Aboriginal English is recognised. The Indigenous languages component of the Commonwealth funded ESL program can provide some funding for professional development, although its main focus is on assistance to students.

General trends

6.94 As in other areas, there are more general developments in teacher supply and quality that have the potential to adversely affect the quality of education for Indigenous Australians. A number of recent studies have suggested that there may be teacher shortages in some areas of secondary education in the future.⁶⁷ Any consideration of issues involving the quality and nature of the teaching workforce should take account of more general trends to ensure that Indigenous Australians are not disadvantaged still further.

Conclusion

6.95 The various processes put in place under the NATSIEP appear to have been only partially successful in improving the employment of Indigenous people in education, or the levels of preparation of non-Indigenous teachers to teach Indigenous children. This undoubtedly reflects some of the difficulties involved in improving from a low starting point. Although there have been improvements, they have been limited and less wide-ranging than would have been hoped for. The Committee found too many examples of young non-Indigenous teachers with little preparation for teaching Indigenous students, and too few examples of appropriately qualified Indigenous people working as teachers. The Committee found that Indigenous people were making a significant contribution to the education of Indigenous children but that this was largely at the AIEW level.

66 Mr Tony Greer, *Hansard*, Canberra, 30 August 1999, p. 304

67 Senate Employment, Education and Training References Committee, *A Class Act: Inquiry into the Status of the Teaching Profession*, Parliament House, Canberra, 1998

6.96 Some of these concerns have been taken up by the State advisory bodies, who have incorporated recommendations from previous inquiries into their own recruitment and career development strategies. The Aboriginal Education and Training Council of Western Australia, for example, have developed a strategic plan that seeks to address some of these concerns.⁶⁸ Issues identified in community consultations included the design and implementation of career paths for AIEWs and Aboriginal Training Assistants, support for remote area teacher education programs, and cross-cultural induction for all education and training staff. The Committee believes that teacher preparation is an area of fundamental importance, and requires the urgent attention of all governments.

Recommendation 21

6.97 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.

Recommendation 22

6.98 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 a year.

68 Submission No. 16, Aboriginal Education and Training Council of Western Australia, vol. 2, p. 4