Submission

to

Senate Employment, Workplace Relations and Education References Committee

Inquiry into indigenous training and employment outcomes

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Submitter: Ms Veronica Arbon
Director

Organisation: Batchelor Institute of Indigenous Tertiary Education

Address: Post Office Batchelor
NT 0845

Phone: 08 8939 7222

Fax: 08 8939 7100

Email: veronica.arbon@batchelor.edu.au

INTRODUCTION

Batchelor Institute of Indigenous Tertiary Education (formerly Batchelor College) is pleased to have the opportunity to present a submission to the Senate Employment, Education and Training References Committee Inquiry. The Institute's submission has been prepared from our perspective as a specialist institution with a very strong interest and recognised expertise in the provision of tertiary education, at all levels, to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people not only from remote communities, but also rural and urban areas.

Currently, the Institute provides a range of professional and para-professional vocational education and training (VET) and Higher Education courses to an enrolment of almost 3 000 students – around 1 800 of these are undertaking a vocational award from the TAFE/VET system. The majority of students come to the Institute with English as a third, fourth or fifth language and many of our students have not had access to secondary education or a positive experience in primary education.

About 15 per cent of the student enrolment is from interstate, particularly from the northern parts of Western Australia, northern and western Queensland and the northern parts of South Australia.

As a provider of tertiary education and training, the Institute's interest in the Inquiry is from two perspectives: we are directly affected by the ineffectiveness of the school education programs received by the students who enrol here; and, at the same time, the Institute is one of the participants whose effectiveness comprises a factor in this Inquiry.

It should be borne in mind that, except where mentioned otherwise, our use of the terms 'education' and 'training' in this submission refer, in fact, to formal, accredited training in the 'mainstream' sense and do not encompass traditional Indigenous education and training.

THE INQUIRY'S TERMS OF REFERENCE

This response outlines Batchelor Institute's views of the main impediments to Indigenous employment and measures for improving vocational training and employment outcomes for Indigenous people.

Our submission to the *Senate Employment, Education and Training Reference Committee Inquiry: The effectiveness of education and training programs for Indigenous Australians (1999)* stated:

> There is an urgent need for a 'bringing together' of the recommendations from the plethora of inquiries and reviews into Aboriginal education and training, whether carried out at Commonwealth or other jurisdictional level. Many other inquiries,

the central themes of which were not necessarily education, have also generated recommendations related to education and training—an indication of the pivotal role which education and training play in any consideration of issues affecting Indigenous Australians. From these reviews, there is an impression of similarity of recommendations or, more bluntly, the same recommendations keep coming up so it seems that little changes.

This appears to still be the case and some of our comments in that submission are included here. This submission also includes comments based on internal Institute documents prepared by Phil Wall, Roger Feletti and Patricia Coles.

> **(a) the effect of the Community Development Employment Projects (CDEP) scheme on the education and long-term employment outcomes of Indigenous people in rural, remote and urban areas;**

Remote communities, which are often Indigenous communities, and have a very different profile from rural communities. The former has a relatively new existence on land that was considered non-productive by the early settlers, and therefore has never had adequate and continued infrastructure development. Remote communities have an economy based on the CDEP or an extremely limited formal economy. By comparison, the non-Indigenous rural communities usually have infrastructure that has been built up over a century, an established economy and reasonable access to essential services. In addition to this they attract more government funding to support this infrastructure.

Therefore funding for remote Indigenous community training must include the funding necessary to overcome infrastructure inequities. Many Indigenous communities are not equipped with the infrastructure (including the training) that would allow them to live a sustainable existence, let alone allow effective economic development. For many communities CDEP is the only economy–this perpetuates the cycle of poverty as CDEP is barely above the minimum wage and does not go as far in remote communities where the cost of living is higher.

Indigenous Australians are not a homogeneous group of people, with the same educational standards, living conditions, life experiences, needs or desires. The gap between services provided to Indigenous people in Darwin or Adelaide for example, and to those in remote communities is widening. There is inadequate access to basic services in communities, socio-economic disadvantage, limited secondary schooling, limited access to quality health services, and housing shortages – also, CDEP recipients are not even considered by the NT Department of Employment Education and Training as a training cohort.

Under the present funding system, the government identifies and funds training to meet the core requirements to address Indigenous disadvantage or need. Training is then purchased from training organisations and these funds are identified by the Government as spending on Indigenous training. However, the standardised government contract system does not negotiate the core requirements to address Indigenous disadvantage. In effect, training meets the requirements of industry or the obligations of Government more than it addresses Indigenous disadvantage.

Too often the training gets delivered without any attempt to link skills to economic benefits. This training (the bulk of it at Certificate II and Certificate III level) leads to bigger gaps, as

the fundamentals are not addressed. These fundamentals include the failure of the schooling system, the English literacy and numeracy levels and the lack of infrastructure. The gap to provide sustainable meaning or full economic outcomes for either the individual or the Indigenous community continues to exasperate the situation local. The failure of the training to effectively meet real needs and to provide sustainable economic outcomes increases local exasperation with, and lack of expectations.

Solutions could include:

- Special funding must be provided to assist the 7000 plus people on CDEP in the Northern Territory to overcome educational gaps, gain higher level training and employment outcomes.

- The present systems of training funding should be reviewed to shift the focus from an Industry base approach to a social justice based approach until it can be demonstrated that all Territorians are on an equal basis.

- An approach of whole of community support is needed rather than the individualistic approach demanded by the present industry driven approach.

> (b) the appropriateness of the current framework for the funding and delivery of vocational education and training to meet the requirements of Indigenous communities and to prepare Indigenous people for employment, especially in rural and remote settings;

1. The current framework for funding and delivery of VET programs – in general

Batchelor Institute's program profile and operations are based on the needs and realities of Indigenous Australians living in remote areas; and have been recognised as a successful strategy for delivery of education and training in this environment. For example, among the recommendations of the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody is one:

> that governments and Aboriginal Education Consultative Groups take note of the methodology employed in such programs as that at Batchelor College, Northern Territory in the training of Aboriginal teachers and others for work in remote communities. (4:318).

The additional recurrent costs that arise in the provision of Indigenous education can be classified into two broad categories: those that arise due to 'remoteness'; and those that derive from the specialised needs of the students which here are referred to as 'student characteristics.'

Starting from our actual budget, the costs for 'remoteness' and 'student characteristics' were removed, leaving a base budget for the delivery of tertiary courses to a hypothetical group of 'mainstream' students living in a large urban centre. On this basis the Institute was seen to be spending an additional 36 per cent of the base budget on 'remoteness' costs and 27 per cent on 'student characteristics.'

Remoteness costs arise in both the personnel and operational areas. Typical of the remote area benefits to staff that lead to increased personnel on-costs are rent subsidies and rebates; freight on perishable foods allowance; fares out of isolated locations (up to 3 airfares per remote area lecturer per year); family travel assistance program; electricity subsidy; and Fringe Benefits Tax on some allowances.

An example of increased on-costs to support our remote community students is an increase of from 11% for urban based lecturer, to up to 40% of salary costs for remote locality employee. This does not include the other cost factors of working in remote communities: increased operational costs which are not limited to telecommunications; vehicles; repairs and maintenance costs; freight; and increased staff travel costs (not only the airfares, but the travelling allowances and travelling time).

An addition is the cost of travel in an out of such areas and the lack of infrastructure once in such locations. These are major factors on delivery costs in remote locations.

Increased costs also arise due to the particular educational needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students. These 'student characteristics' are a reflection of several   factors:

- that English is a foreign language to most students
- that the student's language and culture is foreign to most staff
- that there is little tradition of formal education in most communities
- that there is limited or no access t secondary education
- that there is a high incidence of disabilities.

The result of these 'student characteristics' is a real need to maintain low staff:student ratios and to teach intensively. In remote situations it is imperative that realistic ratios are established that allow for intensive and specialised work that targets disabilities the student may have, and that English is taught through genuine English as a Second Language programs. A high level of support needs to be provided to the trainer/teacher by way of administrative staff and assistant teachers within the classroom.

This story can be repeated for the Institute as the issues are not addressed within the schooling system and the Institute then needs to address new content learning along with intensive work on English language development and broader contextual understandings.

To do this the Institute's average academic staff:student ratio of 1:12, approximately half that of national standards, is itself a reflection of the failure of the primary and secondary systems available to Indigenous Australians to provide an adequate level of academic achievement for entry into tertiary education. We also find ever increasing costs combined with a static revenue base constantly driving these ratios closer to mainstream levels to the detriment of the quality of our teaching.

Experience has shown that successful and appropriate tertiary education and training courses for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people from remote areas requires as

much of the delivery as possible to be on the community. However, there also needs to be special teaching and 'off-community' experiences to broaden students' perceptions and to facilitate access to facilities and resources. This has resulted in what has become Batchelor Institute's specialisation: 'mixed mode' and 'both ways' teaching. Hence, the Institute's programs are developed on three principles:

- a **'both ways' philosophy**—the Institute seeks to bring together Indigenous peoples knowledge systems and Western knowledge and academic traditions;

- **community-based**—this is not only where our programs are delivered but, equally, a reflection of the emphasis on inclusion of the experience, knowledge and issues affecting the community members in the programs ; and

- **mixed-mode in delivery**—a form of flexible delivery, evolved over a decade or so, which aims to maximise cost-effectiveness and minimise delivery costs, while taking account of the cultural, social, economic and educational needs of mature-age students, including their family and ceremonial obligations.

We believe this methodology can be adapted to a wide range of Indigenous education contexts other than those in which Batchelor Institute operates. Conversely, however, planning of strategies must also take account of each specific delivery context. To do otherwise jeopardises the likelihood of successful program outcomes.

Problems and obstacles to success

There has been little advance in the past 15 years in the numbers of Indigenous Australians in remote communities in the NT who undertake trade training through traineeships and apprenticeships to a recognised award level. Yet there remains an urgent need for community people to gain recognised trade qualifications, both to service the needs of their communities and to access the wider Australian workforce, all which contributes to self-determination.

However, one of the major obstacles to an Indigenous persons progress through traineeships and apprenticeships is the requirement to attend off-the-job training in mainstream institutions in Darwin or Alice Springs or other regional centres if sufficient funding is not provided to the RTO to work with small groups locally or a whole of community approach is not taken.. This requirement disadvantages people from remote areas as, firstly, they must enter, for several weeks at a time, a foreign environment with little, if any, emotional support; secondly, the timing of study blocks could well clash with cultural obligations at home; and, thirdly, living allowances and subsidies are unlikely to be sufficient for the costs of the student in Darwin and other dependents at home. Added to this is often a question, based on the 'track record' of employers, of whether there will be a 'real job' (as distinct from CDEP placements) at the end.

An example of the potential problems is the 'one size fits all' model of education and training. One current 'solution' to government funding constraints is the introduction of national training packages for vocational education and training. In theory, the competencies base of these packages is a step forward; but a closer examination reveals that, on several counts, this model which appears to have been developed for

urban, mainstream contexts, and has the potential to disadvantage students from remote Indigenous communities.

The packages offer limited recognition of competencies which are an integral part of life in remote Indigenous communities or that many Indigenous students from remote areas do not have the English language or academic underpinning for the required mainstream competencies. For instance, there is the loss of the former curriculum of a module which is designed to overcome the fact that many remote Indigenous communities do not have the infrastructure to support on-the-job components of courses. Again, in theory, these training packages are recommended as a base on which to build suitable training programs. But, in practice, the additional resources required for that extra step are not available. The effect of this is that students are required to conform to a base model which takes no account of the reality of their situations.

Effectiveness of the Institute's programs does not rest solely on pedagogy—in common with programs based on Western pedagogies, various types of support are needed to enhance successful implementation of the programs.

Another example is rules imposed by funding agencies on maximum course completion times. Current Abstudy guidelines state a time limit in which students can finish their course to a maximum of one year longer than the notional time. This is restrictive and fails to take account of the lack of educational opportunity – the failure of the system – in the students' background and unnecessarily increases attrition.

Similarly, proposals to prohibit the use of the Aboriginal Tutorial Assistance Scheme (ATAS) for the support of bridging or access courses completely ignores the reality of the language and disadvantaged academic backgrounds of many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students. Increased attrition at the access or foundations studies level will simply mean fewer Indigenous people entering tertiary courses, thus decreasing their opportunity to participate in education and training.

Overcoming obstacles requires, firstly, that the obstacles be recognised. The labelling of many contextual and environmental factors as obstacles to participation perpetuates the tendency to either 'blame the victim' or 'give up'. Rather than bemoaning the fact that things are the way they are, or applying all available resources to changing those factors, it may be more productive to plan with and around the factors at the same time.

What is 'appropriate training' can be determined only in the context of employment opportunities and the current and projected labour market in the local and wider environment. If this is not being monitored, there is a danger that training will become ad hoc and responsive only to perceived immediate needs, and not to future needs. Thus there is a need for the collection of data on the labour market and a projection of future needs. This is a specialist responsibility that cannot be left to training providers or Industry Training Advisory Boards (ITABs) alone.

The role of ITABs needs to be reviewed. For the most part, they are 'key' stakeholders only in urban centres and, even in this context, tend not to be adequately representative of the industries related to them. It is the experience of Batchelor Institute that most of the ITABs (with two notable exceptions) have little interest in the VET needs of remote communities and few have any expertise in dealing with Aboriginal

communities or in considering their employment needs even in the urban centres of Darwin, Alice Springs and the other smaller towns.

Having more than one provider in remote communities increases the costs of remote area delivery and, in fact, disadvantages those people who live in small communities through a splintering effect on the community. Controls should be developed that encourage collaboration between providers and not competition which increases costs and reduces the opportunity for people in remote areas to undertake training and further education.

Moves towards more appropriate and effective education and training services are impeded by apparent ignorance, or dismissal, on the part of government and many educators, of the role played by culture in the rationale, implementation and evaluation of educational services. This attitude continues what is often seen as a mainstream tradition of devaluing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures, eg. the recent decision to phase out bilingual education was justified on the basis of results of assessments in English only and completely ignores, and therefore devalues, the learning which students have acquired in their own languages. This move also devalues the importance which Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people place on bilingual education by using 'measurement' as the only criterion for value and ignoring any criteria used by Indigenous Australians. It further, denies that the approach to teaching may have been the failure and not the children – the victim.

All the strategies for overcoming obstacles have some sort of financial cost; and it appears that this itself is the major obstacle to any improvements. For education at all levels, there is a need for analysis of differential costs between the Northern Territory and national cost levels; and a need to pay attention to the real cost of remote area delivery and differentials between costs in remote and urban centres. However, the most pressing need is a recognition that improvements in participation and achievement of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in education at all levels will necessitate the spending of more funds than are currently provided.

The cost of the provision of tertiary education to this group appears relatively high but it should be remembered that, currently, it is more than offset by the funds unspent on secondary education for the same people. The cost of mixed mode delivery is also offset by the savings in unspent capital expenditure that would be required if all enrolled students were to come to one location.

The factors noted are often cited as obstacles to participation in education and training. We believe, however, that the obstacles are not these factors, but the inability or unwillingness of funding or program providers to take adequate account of these factors when considering ways to improve education participation and achievement. Attitudes and lack of knowledge constitute the major obstacle: the appropriateness and effectiveness of programs is strongly influenced by the physical and cultural context in which the programs are delivered and this must be funded.

Solutions leading to success

It is likely that the TAFE needs of Indigenous people will be best met by a 'one-stop shop' approach, rather than a multiplicity of training providers canvassing for business in the larger of the communities. The latter situation is creating confusion among the people resident in communities and much of the training being provided is short term, 'dead end' training that does not adequately respond to real employment opportunities. It also does not provide sufficient opportunity for Indigenous people to gain qualifications at an advanced level to be able to obtain employment in their own communities and elsewhere. Nor does it address the compounding years of failure of the schooling system.

A positive step towards realisation of opportunities to access tertiary education, or to provide employment opportunities, is the encouragement of local recruitment. The genesis of Batchelor Institute's role in educating remote community people is the additional advantage that mixed mode delivery obviates the requirement for students to spend time in the lecture rooms of the tertiary institution while enabling most to continue their employment within their community. Most graduates remain in their home communities after graduation but, at this stage, because of the insufficient infrastructure in remote community or lack of resources, many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people with tertiary qualifications have to undertake whatever employment is available – not necessarily the career they envisaged when they entered the tertiary education environment. Many end up on CDEP.

To take account of the characteristics of its major student base and enable students to engage productively in the range of tertiary courses offered, Batchelor Institute has developed responsive and supportive educational processes and strategies, consistent with the three principles of the Institute (bothways philosophy, community based delivery, and mixed mode). The initiatives include the following:

- *Supportive entry processes* – Student enrolment in the Institute's courses is usually not based solely on individual interests and goals or TER scores. Most students are supported by their community and workplace, and are seen as part of an overall community and workforce development plan.

- *Supportive course arrangements* – Course planning and implementation use the knowledge gained from community investigations to ensure that a student's coursework is relevant and meaningful for the individual, workplace and community. Because of this commitment, much of the work and studies are 'community-based', so that students can develop their professional skills and knowledge within the unfolding developments and debates that are occurring at the community level. This is a crucially important strategy, characterised by the term 'both ways' education. The students' engagement in the interface between their own and Western traditions of knowledge and education ensures they are in a position to contribute to community self-determination and self-management.

- *Student and community empowerment* – Indigenous Australians have been massively disempowered historically in Australian society. This is changing, but the extent to which empowerment is achieved will be determined, in large part, by the outcomes of courses such as those offered by Batchelor Institute.

These courses are intended to be generative and transformational, ie. they provide the framework within which students can examine, analyse, critique and explore the nexus between professional options for practice and avenues for overcoming obstacles to and constraints on community development and advancement.

- *Mixed mode course delivery* – Most courses (other than short VET courses developed and implemented in communities) operate through a mixed mode. Students are, for the most part, based in their home communities and attend intensive workshops several times a year at the Batchelor Campus, the Alice Springs Campus, or annexes in Katherine, Tennant Creek, Nhulunbuy, Darwin, or at a purpose built Community Study Centre in another community. In addition, students continue their studies in their own communities, and are visited by Institute staff, receiving face-to-face instruction through distance education and electronic technology such as computers.

One indicator of the success of these initiatives is the growth of the Institute. In 1985 the then Batchelor College had an enrolment of 110 students (80 EFTSU) in its only course – Teacher Education (assistant teacher). Of these students, 80 were in full-time residence on the Batchelor Campus. The Institute's current enrolment of nearly 3 000 (1 100 EFTSU) is in accredited courses that cover more than 20 discipline areas; and the emphasis in these courses are on education, health and other areas applicable to the community development aspirations of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. The levels of awards range from certificate level courses to Diploma level courses in the VET sector, leading to pathways in Higher Education such as the Higher Education preparatory courses, to Bachelors degrees, and postgraduate programs – the newly developed graduate certificate and graduate diploma courses.

In addition, more than 200 people enrol each year in shorter VET courses developed in response to specific training needs for access to employment or further education. These short courses cover a wide range of discipline areas, including basic literacy and numeracy, childcare, clerical skills, house maintenance, commercial fishing and other programs which enhance employability by identifying the natural resources available and business opportunities, to provision of basic vocational knowledge and skills relevant to employment in remote communities. Nationally recognised Statements of Attainment are usually awarded upon successful completion of these courses.

The employment status of graduates may also be used as an indicator of program effectiveness. A study by Student Services Officers in July 1997 showed the following employment status of the more than 1 000 graduates from accredited Higher Education courses since the 1970s:

Full-time employment	80.8%	Retired	3.5%
Part-time employment	3.0%	Deceased	2.6%
Employed but on leave	8.1%	Unemployed	2.0%

In Vocational Education and Training a 2001 NCVER Survey identifies an 875 success rate for employment of award graduates.

2. Difficulty in accessing skills based employment programs

Again the Institute must reiterate the lack of sustained 'mainstream' type employment opportunities in remote Aboriginal communities. Without significant input into employment policy, infrastructure, development, and sustainability, this is unlikely to change. Lack of employment translates into lack of New Apprenticeship training opportunities.

Many residents of remote Aboriginal communities wish to find meaningful employment within their own community, working with and for their people, leading towards self determination. Most have cultural and familial obligations which are major deterrents to pursuing employment and training opportunities elsewhere.

The Commonwealth Incentive (for employing New Apprentices) has a time constraint which may be culturally insensitive. Many Indigenous people who are potential New Apprentices may take longer (in excess of the 3 months of full-time, or 6 months of part-time work) to gain enough confidence to enter into training, therefore making the employer ineligible to claim the Commonwealth incentive. Ineligibility for the Commonwealth incentive is a deterrent for employers. Alternatively, some Indigenous people who do not (yet) have the capacity or confidence to undertake apprenticeships, may be unduly pressured by their employers into undertaking an apprenticeship and again fail. This adds to an ongoing cycle in many remote communities.

Another complication is that the Apprenticeships are a three year program – which means that there is an expected commitment on both parties (the apprentice and the host employer) to a three year program, and hopefully at the end of this timeframe the apprentice will have a job. Of course this scenario is true of all apprenticeships, the expectations of an employment outcome – continuing employment in one trade could be intermittent in many remote communities.

The DEWR Structured Training and Employment Program (STEP) funding is becoming increasingly difficult to obtain with the shift of emphasis to 'employment outcomes'. A very common scenario in remote communities is for a New Apprentice to be a CDEP participant, with a STEP 'top-up' to meet the funding gap between the CDEP wage rate and the apprenticeship award wage. Remote communities are often on very tight budgets which can not support New Apprenticeship training without the support of CDEP and STEP, but cannot sustain employment without additional funding.

Many industries do not have the funding support to employ New Apprentices. For example, New Apprenticeship training opportunities in both mainstream and remote Childcare facilities, museums, knowledge and art centres, and libraries are extremely limited. These are also industries with very few qualified Indigenous people employed, or even in being trained.

Some industries are subject to the seasonal and funding pressures experienced in the 'Top End'. The 'Building and Construction', and 'Tourism' industries are pertinent examples. Construction is often performed rapidly in the dry season by contractors rather than large construction or local companies. A General Construction apprenticeship takes 18 months to complete, far longer than any contractor will be

building in any one community. The tourism industry typically employs people short-term in peak tourist season (dry season).

Given that employment opportunities are limited, opportunities where there is a suitable workplace supervisor to deliver and facilitate training are rare. In many instances additional funding is required from either DEET or other government agencies to employ mentors/supervisors to travel to remote locations to provide the necessary supervision of apprentices, and/or to support the on-the-job supervisors and employers.

In some cases, applications by remote area participants for New Apprenticeships are not being approved as the proposed supervisor does not meet the current guidelines set under the New Apprenticeship scheme (often, significant industry skills and experiences are not deemed to be sufficient). Many industries, such as Childcare, Museum/Art galleries and Tourism have traditionally placed greater emphasis on their employees industry based knowledge and skills, and not the required academic background. There has been a shift in expectations by funding bodies, but not enough recognition has been given to the timeframes needed for the changes to be actioned by certain industry.

There have been occasions where Indigenous people in remote communities (who may have had limited access to primary school education) have been excluded from undertaking New Apprenticeships due to the 25% RPL rule. Some began their tertiary training as recurrent students through Batchelor Institute, but then gained relevant employment in their community (through CDEP). If they have completed more than 25% of a qualification as a recurrent student, they are then ineligible to enter into New Apprenticeship training (which would be the preferred training model since they would have an employment and skills outcome).

The 25% RPL rule also conflicts with ANTA's push to improve the RPL process by RTOs in the VET sector. If they wish RTOs to perform more RPL, they should raise the RPL percentage allowable so that people undertaking RPL can undertake New Apprenticeship training.

Travel subsidies offered to New Apprentices are inadequate and based on 1999 fare rates when now defunct carriers (Ansett and other smaller airlines) made the market more competitive. The fare subsidy may cover the airfare in some cases, but does not cover the return travel between airports and training locations (from Darwin airport to Batchelor is almost 200km return). A feasibility study into the Institute providing a travel service to apprentices found that the travel subsidies were an average 25% (range = 0% - 40%) under the total cost of travel. Having to cover the difference between the subsidy and the total cost is a major deterrent for employers and the apprentice.

The accommodation subsidy offered to apprentices is also inadequate. The current subsidy is significantly less than the total cost of accommodation and meals. The shortfall in travel and accommodation costs usually falls to the employer or apprentice to cover, which in itself further contributes to the financial burden upon individuals and their hosts.

Alternatively for staff to travel to work with students locally there is a need to have the numbers in grouped areas as the operational costs are very high. For example, if two students were based in each of the North-east Arnhemland communities, one in Lajamanu and several around Uluru and one out at Docker River, a trainer would not have the funds nor the time to train locally (off the job) for all apprentices.

Many of the Apprentices that the Institute host have a background other than English (BOTE), and as a result, also require intensive literacy and numeracy assistance during the duration of their apprenticeship. Apprentices are not eligible for ATAS support and the 'learner support' funding offered in 2002 has not been offered in 2003. RTOs are expected to find the resources to provide support from within their recurrent structure.

Apart from on-site training visits from the Registered Training Organisation (RTO), apprentices receive no mentoring or support from <u>outside</u> their employer's organisation. There is no 'industry-led' mentoring as this is another unfunded cost.

The remote allowance paid to RTOs is structured in a way that disadvantages those who perform a lot of delivery in remote locations or offer apprenticeships. For example, an RTO who delivers training 51km outside of Katherine is paid the same remote allowance as an RTO who delivers training at Timber Creek near the WA border. A more equitable system would see the remote allowance paid proportionally according to distance. As well, no allowance is paid for VET delivery at Batchelor Institute despite most students (85%) coming from remote areas and needing support between workshops in those areas.

The NT government lets standardised contracts for training. These contracts have set costs for delivery, set place of delivery and do not have any escape clauses. The shortcoming of this standardised process does not recognise variation in client base, delivery location, education levels and the mobility of remote Aboriginal groups. The targets are set by delivery of National Hours supervised[1] which is audited. Failure to meet this NHS target is loss of funding for that contract.

There is also the major factor of economic viability – not the unwillingness of RTOs to deliver in remote communities given the current government funding system which incorporates disincentives for RTOs to deliver in remote areas. In most instances communities must assure the RTO that they have a potential student base of between 8-16 people before the training program can be financially viable.

These are the many factors that both the NT and Commonwealth funding agencies have to take into consideration when determining the funding formula in terms of Australian 'remote area' delivery. These same factors would be applicable to any communities in northern Australia – this includes northern WA and far north Queensland, including the Torres Strait Islands.

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[1] AHC being one hour of training delivered to one student.

3.　　A success story

On a positive note, Batchelor Institute applied for and won funding to undertake a research project on the transformation of the Certificate III Indigenous Education Work into an apprenticeship. This involved:

- An analysis of who was funding what components - the Institute the training, the National Apprenticeship Centre (NAC) the apprentice travel if they need to come into a site as a group and the employing body the Department of Education, Employment and Training (DEET) the employer. *(the training salary)*

- An investigation into the capacity of the community to support an apprentice through a worksite, particularly a willing worksite, supervisors on a daily basis elder and family support and how often the staff of the Institute are to visit the student to undertake on-site training, assessment and academic support.

- A considered analysis of possible industrial issues; who was responsible and when, in such situations, for salaries, discipline, daily supervision, release from duty for training and so one was undertaken.

- An assessment of the English and numeracy development and support likely to be required by the students/apprentices was undertaken.

- An evaluation of who would be available locally to supervise/mentor the apprentice in the workplace was explored. To undertake an apprenticeship as an individual in itself is difficult, but it is particularly so for remote students. This was acknowledged. If no local support for supervision was/is available the times lecturers/trainers and school staff were to travel in was/is mapped out. A consideration was also the possibility of utilising a cultural mentor to support the trainee in working through sites of challenge they may confront in their training.

Models of delivery were considered to maximize training and support but minimise costs. This was necessary as a charter or road travel to some of the sites of training cost up to $1 500 per return trip.

This approach has ensured all stakeholders have considered important aspects to setting up an apprentice position and supporting training. The dialogue has increased information and knowledge on important issues likely to be confronted in remote education and training and roles and responsibilities are clarified prior to entering an agreement.

One area that could be taken further is that of elders as mentors in the training process. These people could be brought into the school environment by having a role in supporting and discussing, perhaps, once a week what the trainee is doing.

Overall, however, Batchelor Institute has developed a very pro-active model to achieving outcomes with limited funding in remote communities. I hope this provides some insights for other areas of Australia.

(c) the effectiveness of competency-based training models to deliver an appropriate level or mix of skills necessary for employment of Indigenous people, including the achievement of the necessary standards of literacy and numeracy;

(d) the effectiveness of Commonwealth, state and territory-based initiatives to engage more Indigenous people in training and to encourage higher level skill acquisition in skilled trades and professions, including health and teaching; and

The effectiveness of competency based training models to deliver appropriate levels and a mix of skills necessary for the labour market will always encounter difficulties in remote communities as noted earlier in (b).

Many of Batchelor Institute's students live in community situations which do not equip them to make the transition to Higher Education and training easily. This is partly because of the grossly inadequate or non-existent secondary education provisions that have resulted in low levels of English literacy and study skills. It is also because of the wide (although, in some areas, narrowing) gulf between communities' social and cultural values and the routines and orientations of formal education and training. Effective implementation of recommendations in this area needs to take account of factors such as the following:

- Many Indigenous Australians have had little realistic access to secondary education. Of the Institute's enrolment of almost 3 000, no more than a few hundred have any significant prior experience in secondary education. Consequently, all Institute courses must take account of a much lower level of prior academic attainment than is usually expected on entry to Higher Education, VET or other tertiary education and training programs. Thus, not only is the Institute providing tertiary education, it must also provide the equivalent of secondary education to 'bridge the gap' in prerequisite knowledge, especially in areas such as literacy, numeracy and social science.

- Educational background also means that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students will generally take significantly longer than many other students to complete their courses. At Batchelor Institute, a course leading to a 3-year Advanced Diploma is structured over a minimum of four years, and most students take significantly longer than this to complete requirements.

- Students' cultural and family obligations will normally take precedence over other obligations, including course requirements. By contrast, the ceremonial obligations of Indigenous Australians in urban areas may be less stringent or time consuming, although family obligations are usually no less.

- The geographical and communications realities of remote areas can have a strong influence on education participation and effectiveness. The realities include great distances, unsealed roads that are often impassable for months at a time, conditions ranging from deserts to tropical wetlands, lack of access to telecommunications infrastructure (e.g. one telephone line for a community) or to maintenance and repairs, and seasonal airstrips bringing complete isolation or limited access at certain times of the year.

- The cost of living, which varies widely throughout Australia, is particularly high in remote areas.

- As a group, Indigenous Australians continue to be the most impoverished section of the Australian population, and this disadvantage is reflected in the statistics relating to unemployment, income levels, life expectancy, morbidity, and other factors evidencing social trauma.

- All Indigenous Australians are part of an extended family, with extended family obligations. Most students support extended family members, as well as themselves, on any allowances they receive and, in many cases, that allowance is a significant contribution to the welfare of their families. It cannot be assumed that a student will have access to some other family income support; and to base support provisions on such assumptions will, in all likelihood, work against a student's success in education programs and, inevitably contribute to the maintenance of the relative socio-economic disadvantage of Indigenous Australians.

The development of the 'both ways' education and training philosophies and practice, mixed mode methodologies and, as far as possible, community-based delivery of shorter VET courses has formed part of Batchelor Institute's response to these factors. Our response has also included attention to the results of internal and external evaluations of the institution; the visions provided by many of those recommendations, supported by the planning, commitment and determination of staff, students and their communities, assisted the evolution of the institution from a unit in a government department, to a government agency in its own right, to autonomy separate from the public sector and under its own legislation. It is helpful to remind stakeholders that attaining a goal over time in planned stages is a realistic option that can be considered alongside options for short-term achievement of goals. In other words, the training system can and should consist of several parallel delivery models.

In the Northern Territory the present system did not appear to address Indigenous disadvantage until the release of the NT Employment Strategy, when the Commissioner for Public Employment moved to increase the numbers of Indigenous apprentices within the different public sector agencies. The disadvantage is well documented and there is nothing in the current Commonwealth or Northern Territory government training funding models or policies that address this disadvantage.

Mainstream public policy dominates the training agenda and directs the changes in that agenda. It is biased towards the restructure of the rural economy and the globalisation of the Australian economy; and is not very relevant for remote Australia and remote communities. There is no modification to mainstream requirements for Indigenous learners.

The present government funding (geared towards the mainstream) seems to have resulted in a marked reduction in access to tertiary education for Indigenous students, particularly for mainstream Higher Education programs. There is a perception among Indigenous leaders and communities that government policy is returning to older paternalistic models of social provision that excludes Indigenous people, and, more importantly – the principle of self determination.

The current culture of training policy is frustrated by policy statements and changes that promise innovation and flexibility to address Indigenous issues, but then is countered by rigid funding models. This makes it almost impossible to progress the educational models needed to secure long term and lifelong learning and skills

development. The present climate of funding and review, at best, allows for Batchelor Institute to chip away at the disadvantage, but not to make a significant change.

(e) models for engaging industry and Indigenous communities in partnerships to develop long-term employment opportunities for Indigenous people—in infrastructure development through to the arts—and the limitations and opportunities these confer.

One funding model will not suit all potential participants, given that Indigenous people and the communities from which they come are contrasting – remote communities, regional centres and urban areas. It is important to face the realities of remote area delivery:

- understand what is needed, and where;
- take a whole of community approach;
- acknowledge and be aware of local and long term historical perspectives.

One of the limitations in building the complex partnerships required for successful integrated training provision is securing the resources required to broker, nurture and sustain such complex multi-party arrangements. These resource requirements are not recognised in the funding arrangements for delivery of education and training at RTO or tertiary level, that is, the funding models across the three levels of government do not yet adequately support stated goals of integration.

Furthermore, the sustainability of 'pilot' projects (usually based on one-off grants) over the longer term, requires longer term funding. Currently incentives are not aligned with policy. It is an unfortunate fact that more rigid, less responsive models and wasteful 'stop-start' patterns are 'rewarded' under current funding models for Indigenous education and training.

More sustained, reliable funding and a more 'light touch' management environment within the VET sector is required to support training organisations such as Batchelor Institute to focus our creativity, innovation and expertise on achieving enhanced learning outcomes for Indigenous students and communities.

CONCLUSION

Current 'mainstream' education and training systems have emerged from Western academic traditions of Anglo-Australian society. Systemically, they have disadvantaged people of cultures different from the 'mainstream'. Appropriate education and training programs for Indigenous Australians will be those designed to support each community's culture and, as far as possible, operate within the student's cultural context while providing access to the Western academic knowledge and skills necessary for participation in the wider society.

To be effective, not only the programs but associated support provisions such as Abstudy must provide realistically for the fact that, for the most part, more is required of this target student group than 'mainstream' students to succeed in education and training programs. They must not only acquire the required underpinning knowledge of

the program, but the broad technical context within which that knowledge is embedded, the English language with which that know-ledge is articulated and the broad social context within which the language and the knowledge is framed. Additional accomplishments require additional resources, including time and money.

Under current arrangements, and recent proposals, Indigenous Australians, especially those from remote areas, are discriminated against in educational provision. While most governments maintain that all citizens have the same opportunities for education, if the barriers to accessing education resources are too great for the individual to overcome, or if undertaking educational programs mean individuals must ignore their own cultural and social context (in a way that is not expected of middle-class Anglo-Australians living in metropolitan areas), then equality of opportunity—and equity—do not exist.

Veronica Arbon (Professor)
Director
Batchelor Institute of Indigenous Tertiary Education
Northern Territory   0845

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